

## Visit and Tour of Houses of Parliament – 25<sup>th</sup> April 2024



### Baroness Finlay of Llandaff

It was a huge pleasure for Stephen and Kim, co-chairs of the London Group, (seen here with Master Agnes Xavier-Phillips, her Consort and Baroness Finlay) to organise this visit and tour given by Baroness Finlay of Llandaff early on in the Master's year. Members arrived

early to be 'checked in' by Kim and Stephen on the afternoon of 25<sup>th</sup> April 2024. As they were early many were permitted into the building to wait in comfort with tea or coffee before we began our tour. This started in Westminster Hall where we gathered first, and were given background to this wonderful building. Westminster Hall, we were told, was the oldest building in the Houses, and the one building still much the same as originally built (in 1097) – even the ceiling which is very broad and not typical of buildings of the time, which needed pillars to hold up wide ceilings.



This image looks back from the stairs near St Stephen's Hall and the New Dawn window below.

We heard all about the New Dawn window commissioned in 2016 to celebrate 150 years since the beginning of the campaign for women to get the vote. Its creator, artist Mary Branson has a website that explains it better than we can: <https://marybranson.com/new-dawn> and it is worth visiting, as it depicts the changing colours

that occur and show through a lighting computer program, the rise of the tide on the Thames. The window has so much symbolism depicted including the size of the debate, the individuals involved and the parliamentary scrolls. It is over the stairs into St Stephen's Hall, where many early debates were held, and here you can see



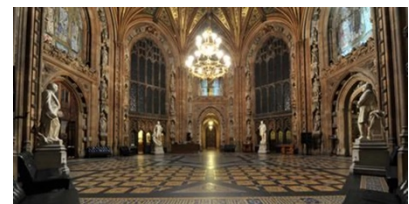


us gazing up at it before we enter St Stephen's Hall.



It was explained to us that the early Parliament met in St Stephen's Chapel which was destroyed in a 19<sup>th</sup> century fire. The hall was built to the same size and its floor has brass studs to show where the Speaker's Chair and Cross Benches stood – and if you look closely, you can see one at Stephen's foot! It was amazing to be in a place with so much history around us.

We then moved on to the Central Lobby which is at the core of the Houses of Parliament. It is octagonal and joins the two Houses. Anyone is entitled to lobby there according to the rules of Westminster although the security nowadays is very strict!



In this photo, the Baroness's researcher is explaining about the lobby as a meeting place of Lords and Commons under the watchful eyes of Edward Hyde, the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Clarendon although Past-master Kathy Seddon does not look too sure about his presence! The clock reminds us of the time though and we needed to listen in to the Parliamentary activities in the Lords and Commons before moving to Afternoon Tea in the Atlee-Reid Room.



We were not permitted to take photos in either House but all who listened in for 15-20 minutes enjoyed seeing the timer ... Yes, there is a timer in the House of Lords which counts down from 5 minutes every time a member starts speaking ... and the proceedings.

We moved at 3.15pm to Afternoon Tea and having sorted the fact that we *had* ordered Prosecco, we took our seats to enjoy a huge range of sandwiches, scones and cakes. As we ate, Baroness Finlay gave us an inspiring talk about the role of the House of Lords in particular and some of the work she has been involved in.



  
**Baroness Finlay of Llandaff**  
 On behalf of Worshipful Livery Company of Wales  
 Requests the pleasure of the company of  
*Agnes Xavier Phillips and Nigel W Phillips*  
 -----  
 For a Tour and Afternoon Tea  
 In the Atlee Reid Room, House of Lords  
 On 25<sup>th</sup> April 2024 at 2pm (3.15 for Tea)  
 Address: Palace of Westminster, House of Lords, London SW1A 0AA



The Master on behalf of the Company thanked the Baroness for taking time out of her very schedule to be with us and help co-ordinate this very interesting, informative and inspiring trip.

The Baroness was keeping an eye on the time too, as she wanted to be in the House for a debate coming up at around 5pm. She still had time to answer questions and gave a good argument why there is still a need for a Second House, not necessarily of hereditary peers, but of those who are 'experts' in their fields so as to bring professional knowledge to the debate. So perhaps the House of Lords could also be called a 'House of Experts'.



The caterers had another function on, so we had to leave very quickly, but we were not permitted to take any food away with us (more Rules of Westminster) even though there was lots left. Everyone who attended has since spoken about the excellent time they had at this early event in the Master's year.

*Kim Insley and Stephen Richards (Co-chairs, London Group)*