

JOYCE QUIN: DCL

Chancellor Dharker,

'A very chancy thing' was how Baroness Joyce Quin, whom we are honouring today, once described her selection as a Labour Member of the European Parliament. Seemingly destined for a career in academia, Joyce grew up in Whitley Bay. Her father, a veteran of the war who had been awarded the Military Cross, specialized in teaching mathematics, and was also the author of a series of intriguing detective stories. While he wasn't overly political, politics was in the household: her mother, also a teacher, was a member of the Labour Party, her uncle was a Labour MP for Durham and her paternal grandparents had been early Fabians. After attending the local grammar school, Joyce obtained a First Class Honours in French from Newcastle University, and an MA in International Relations at LSE. She then spent three years as a researcher in the International Department at Labour HQ.

Joyce's academic career seemed set after she secured teaching positions at Bath and then Durham Universities but it was whilst at Durham, that Joyce, by then a member of the Labour Party, was asked to speak at the newly formed North Tyneside Fabian Society, about the forthcoming European elections in 1979. After an enjoyable evening, Joyce was surprised to receive a phonecall from the Society's Secretary indicating that they would like to nominate her for selection for their local European Constituency, Tyne South and Wear. Academia's loss, was definitely what might be described as a political gain.

Joyce's combined expertise in language and politics came to the fore as one of the first MEPs, and the only woman in the North East in either the European Parliament or in Westminster. Her political colleague and good friend Win Griffiths recalls Joyce often bailing out more linguistically challenged colleagues, and her ability to chart the evolution of languages, something for which she was affectionately teased. The early days as an MEP were a terrific experience, with countries coming together to build something new. During her time in the European Parliament Joyce served on

several committees including Agriculture, Women's Rights, Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy. Win remembers the clear presence of the North East in Europe, thanks to Joyce's considered and dedicated work. Europe remained a key thread throughout Joyce's political career and, as well as periods as shadow Minister and then Minister for Europe, after her retirement as an MP, she served as Chair of the Franco-British Council (British Section). In 2010 she was awarded Officier de la Legion d'Honneur by the French Government.

It was while campaigning for the seat of Gateshead East in 1987 that Joyce found an unexpected love of 'knocking on doors' as it brought her closer to those who were to become her constituents. Despite holding a tiring dual role as MP and MEP for two years, colleagues recall her enviable ability to retain a meaningful connection with her constituents. As an MP Joyce held several roles in the shadow cabinet including in consumer affairs, trade and regional policy, and, following Labour's landslide victory in 1997 Joyce served as Prison's minister, Minister for Europe, and for Agriculture Fisheries and Food, as well as being elected to the Privy Council. Joyce was Minister for Agriculture at the time of Foot and Mouth, and began serving on the Intelligence and Security committee only two months before 9/11. As she once commented, being a front bench Minister – 'soft option it ain't'.

Throughout her parliamentary career, Joyce has had a passion for constitutionalism, and this came together with her love of the North East when she campaigned vigorously, albeit unsuccessfully, for a Regional Assembly in 2004. In her book on the British Constitution (2010), Joyce explains: 'it is [...] important to stress that devolution is not just about national identity, nor primarily about it. It is much more about good governance: taking decisions at the most appropriate level and bringing government closer to people.' Having been made a life peer in 2006, Joyce is actively engaged in the work of the House of Lords, appreciating the rigour of the committee work in particular, and so it is unsurprising that political colleagues praise Joyce's thoroughness, perceptiveness and commitment to positive change. They note, however, that all of this is done

without the need for personal glory often sought after in the political sphere. Unbeknown to many, as we reach that milestone of getting our free bus pass, it is Joyce we have to thank. Through meticulous evidence-gathering, Joyce persuaded then Chancellor Gordon Brown to make what was piece-meal provision for free bus passes into a national scheme, thereby transforming many lives. Labour MP Chi Onwurah commented that we cannot overestimate the trailblazing role that Joyce, as a woman from the North East, has played within regional, European and British politics – in and out of politics, she serves as a role model for many.

Joyce somehow manages to juggle numerous contributions to the region. A fervent advocate for the return of the Lindisfarne Gospels, it is perhaps appropriate that during her term as Chair of Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, Joyce oversaw the much acclaimed exhibition of the Gospels at the Laing Gallery – I think gallery staff were just pleased she didn't hide the keys when the Gospels were due to return to London! Joyce helped steward TWAM through the difficult days during and after the pandemic, and raised important issues for the cultural sector as a whole in the House of Lords. Keith Merrin, Director of TWAM, notes that Joyce's term as Chair has been marked by the care she has shown to all staff, including her leading a bespoke Newcastle City Tour for TWAM colleagues during Mental Health Awareness Week. For Joyce has *also* been volunteering as a Newcastle City Tour guide since 1976, making her one of the longest-serving guides.

Joyce's passion for the region extends to a love for traditional music, becoming not only a fine player of the Northumbrian Small Pipes, but also taking on the role of President of The Northumbrian Pipers' Society, a position she has held since 2009. Andrew Davison, Chair of the Society, pays tribute to Joyce's immense contribution as champion, and mentor. He fondly recalls when Joyce persuaded the Lord Speaker in the House of Lords to allow the Society to perform in his private rooms for members of both Houses. Andrew quipped: "Little did they know that some of the old Northumbrian tunes ... had originally been written to celebrate local characters who had been involved in efforts to overthrow Parliament [...]"

Joyce is currently working with her co-author Moira Kilkenny, on the follow-up volume to their *Angels of the North: Notable Women of the North East* - women, the book notes, to be proud of. Chancellor Dharker, it seems fitting that today we are celebrating another notable woman. In recognition of her significant public and political achievements within the North East, Westminster and Europe, I present to you Baroness Joyce Gwendoline Quin as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*.

Professor Vee Pollock,
Public Orator