

2008

Pepperdine Takes on Parliament

Anna McDermott
Pepperdine University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/globaltides>



Part of the [International and Area Studies Commons](#), and the [Nonfiction Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

McDermott, Anna (2008) "Pepperdine Takes on Parliament," *Global Tides*: Vol. 2, Article 8.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/globaltides/vol2/iss1/8>

This Journeyer's Journal is brought to you for free and open access by the Seaver College at Pepperdine Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Global Tides by an authorized editor of Pepperdine Digital Commons. For more information, please contact bailey.berry@pepperdine.edu.

Journeyer's Journal: 2008

Pepperdine Takes on Parliament

by Anna McDermott

It's the 14th of January of the New Year, 2007. The place is Holy Trinity Brompton Church in London. The main characters are four hundred surrounding congregants including myself. The general mood is largely pleasant; however, I am pouting in the corner.

I'm a friendly person. People like me! So naturally I get frustrated when I don't make automatic friends with everyone I meet. However, when living in another country for the first time I've found I easily get intimidated and self-conscious. It's difficult to become someone's new best friend while being constantly anxious about hurrying to do so.

Allow me to make things more clear. I had promised myself from the very beginning of the program that I wouldn't stay in the Pepperdine bubble that forms so conveniently when one travels abroad. The programs are quite planned and structured and it's easy to find the best friends of your life within the house itself. It's a marvelous thing, watching such strong bonds form over the course of many months and in such exotic locations. So don't ever accuse me of not being devoted to the London House, because, believe me, I am! But every Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday night I would venture out of mini-America and traverse the cobbled stones to Holy Trinity Brompton.

Alone, I might add.

For a while it wasn't going well. "This is impossible. They don't see me when I'm there. I feel like they look right through me and I'm never going to belong. To them, I'm just a passing American student," I said, talking over Skype to Mark in Malibu.

"Did you ever think maybe it's all just in your head?" asked Mark. Boy do I hate it when I'm proven wrong. However, along with this obvious issue with pride, I luckily also have stubborn qualities. And my stubborn nature would not allow me to quit. So I kept forcing myself to go.

After time I made the startling discovery that if one goes out on a limb and does something as frightening as approaching someone else in conversation, it's actually quite well received. I kept trying this brilliant new tactic out and I began to take it further by also not being shy in showing interest in their lives.

I met Kezia in the church café after Sunday service. We got to talking and I learned she was studying at the Royal Veterinary College. It took a few weeks, but the more I saw her the more she opened up. She told me she wasn't quite sure that she wanted to be a veterinarian after all and asked me to pray for her. I said I certainly would. It wasn't until one month after I returned to London that I finally felt like I belonged. I was with Kezia and was introduced to an English bloke from Imperial College. Kezia piped up, "This is Anna, she's a clever American and that's why we love her!" She doesn't know it, but that stupid little comment brightened up my world. All my hard work was paying off.

The weeks went by and I began spending more and more time with my church friends. I began to learn a lot about the British culture: they're harder to get to know. This would

make sense considering the difficulty I had in establishing friendships with in the first place. English people in particular are very concerned about each other's privacy and as such they tend to keep their distance. However, as an American, I had a perfect excuse to be outgoing and soon became great friends with the majority of the students. I learned that we're all quite alike. Most of us aren't a hundred percent sure on what we want to do with our lives. Most of us are confused about the opposite sex. Most of us had no idea what was going on in Britney Spears' head. It was just like home, except we were all brought different quirks from our different backgrounds along with us.

We met up at church two to three times a week. On Tuesday nights all the university kids would come together for a night of worshiping, teaching and socializing. Wednesday nights I attend an Alpha group, where people from all religious backgrounds come together to discuss their views on Christianity. Here I have become good friends with Joel the Aussie, Alexia the Greek and Sarah the proper English girl. We've made it a mission of ours to prove that Christians aren't all boring, so we took our friend, who I guess we'll call Emma the Agnostic, out for a good time after church. She kept exclaiming "Good God I never knew Christians could be such fun." It was great that she was so curious about church, and in the middle of dancing she would shout to me theological questions. I am now convinced this is the only way to discuss the Holy Scriptures.

That night I didn't come home until three in the morning and my entire room, including my five wonderful roommates and my RA, was awake and worried for me. It turned out that Kezia's car was clamped on the wheel when we got back to her parking spot, because

the stupid Bobbies in Soho are mean-hearted and apparently quite bored. We did survive the night, of course, and it was completely brilliant to be able to spend more and more time with Emma.

A particularly singular encounter that also sticks out in my mind is the Tuesday night on which I met David. He was the only twenty-one year old at church wearing pin stripes and carrying a very proper umbrella. After church we went out to the pub with some friends and by the next day he had asked me out for a drink. Though I was not looking for a boyfriend, I figured it would be foolish to pass up such an unusual friendship. Over the next few weeks he would barrage me with emails, calls and texts and I would overcompensate for his pride by constantly challenging him and purposefully being unimpressed at all his connections and wealth. To be honest, I really am quite impressed that the Swedish Royal family bought him a 3000 pound top hat for his last birthday and that he has a multitude of connections in Parliament. However, I'm still the daughter of hippie parents from California and the high-falooting to-do with the British aristocracy still frustrates me. Thankfully his friendship and, especially, our discussions about politics prepared me for something I certainly was not anticipating.

I recently was taken to the House of Commons to see the Prime Minister being drilled by Members of Parliament. It happens every Wednesday and, let me tell you, it's brilliant. Picture, if you will, a room crammed with overeducated, self-important people formally yelling at each other about the state of the nation and the world. The best is when they brilliantly insult each other and no one can quite decode it until about ten minutes later. I'm convinced that just sitting in and listening to a few hours of debate causes one's IQ to

shoot up at least ten points, as well as improving your vocabulary and wit. Obviously I was quite moved by the end of the session, and upon my departure I exclaimed to my friend that I thought I had never been happier in my entire life. I wanted to run for office in Britain.

Upon my return home, I had no way to direct my extra energy and excitement so I went on the internet to check my facebook and email. After replying to a cheeky message from David, I discovered I had received an email from church about internships in the House of Lords. I read it and laughed to myself out loud. They wanted graduate students ages twenty one to twenty nine who could do a three to six month unpaid internship in Parliament. I quickly talked myself out of applying for it on the grounds that I am a nineteen year old American without much knowledge about the politics of Britain. In addition to this, I had a ticket booked to return home in five weeks and a seriously finite amount of funds. If I did it, I would be homeless, most likely starving, and way in over my head. In short, it would be impossible to pull off.

I began to descend the many flights of stairs one must take from the fourth floor to the basement. As I got half way down I stopped dead in my tracks, turned around and bounded up the stairs. Fifteen minutes later I had emailed the Baron of Warwick's assistant with my resume and a list of reasons I would be a great intern, despite the fact that I'm young and American. Surprisingly she called me and within a week I was sitting in the Pass Office of Parliament, awaiting my interview. In order to calm my hyper thumping heart, I began to chat with the man and woman at the front desk. By the time

the Baron's assistant walked in, we were animatedly having a chat about Spain. I had become so at ease that the entire interview went beautifully.

It's incredible how the things you dream for can sometimes come true. I've gone from that insecure girl sulking in the corner of church to who I am today. It appears that, beyond my wildest hopes, I have somehow obtained an internship in the House of Lords and will be working in Westminster from the end of this semester until August. How will I find money to eat or a place to sleep? I'm honestly not sure, but I have confidence that my friends both in church and Pepperdine will show me ways to get by. Whether the challenges concern making friends in a new country or pursuing far-flung ambitions, I have learned one important lesson. The best things in life are those that at first seem impossible. No more will I be discouraged at that word nor will I allow it to be an excuse. Now, the impossible is simply the next challenge to overcome.