

St George's day

Today we celebrate England. We also remember England's greatest writer, William Shakespeare. Both have given so much to enrich the world. England pioneered Parliamentary democracy and fired up the prosperity from industrialisation and freer trade. Shakespeare captured so much of the human condition that his plays are as relevant today as 400 years ago.

We live with asymmetric devolution in the UK. Labour's model gave devolved governments to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. They wanted regional assemblies to break up England, but voters rightly rejected these.

The EU always refused to recognise England, also wishing to break it up into unloved regions. Most of us in England have affinity to our town or village and to our county but not to a region.

I live in Wokingham. We do not feel we belong to "the rest of the south east" or to the Thames Valley or to Berks, Bucks and Oxon, in ways government sometimes lays down.

This is all unfinished business. Today is a day to remember what is good and best about England, which has survived much in the struggles for freedom, democracy and prosperity.