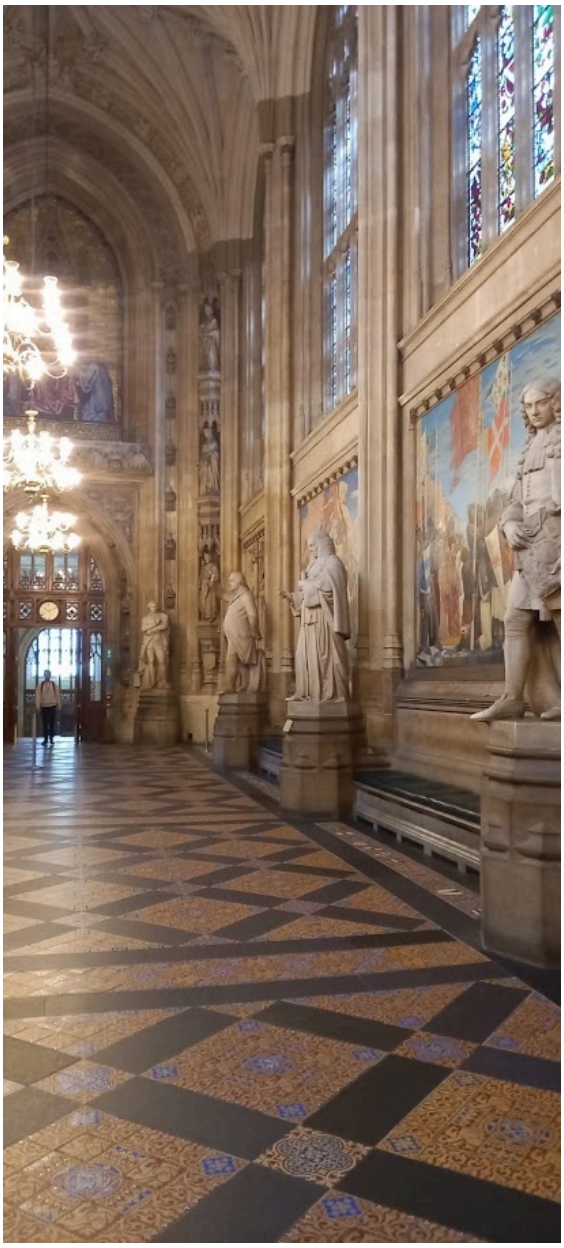
On the 13th July, we had the extraordinary opportunity to visit parliament. It was one of the hottest days of the year and, more importantly, a day we will never forget. We travelled to London by train, meeting each other at Whittlesford Parkway at 7:20 and then continuing to London Liverpool Street Station where we joined the underground. We then used the circle line to get to Westminster, arriving at 9:00. This was very exciting as it was our first time travelling to London alone! Furthermore, we were an hour early so we had time to marvel at the gothic architecture of the Palace of Westminster's exteriors before entering. When we arrived, we met Catarina Camara who was taking us for the tour as part of Pippa Heylings' team.

We were shown Westminster Hall, St Stephen's Hall, the House of Commons, the King's Robing Room, the Royal Gallery, the Prince's Chamber and the House of Lords, before peeking into the House of Commons Library. For most of the tour, we couldn't take any pictures.

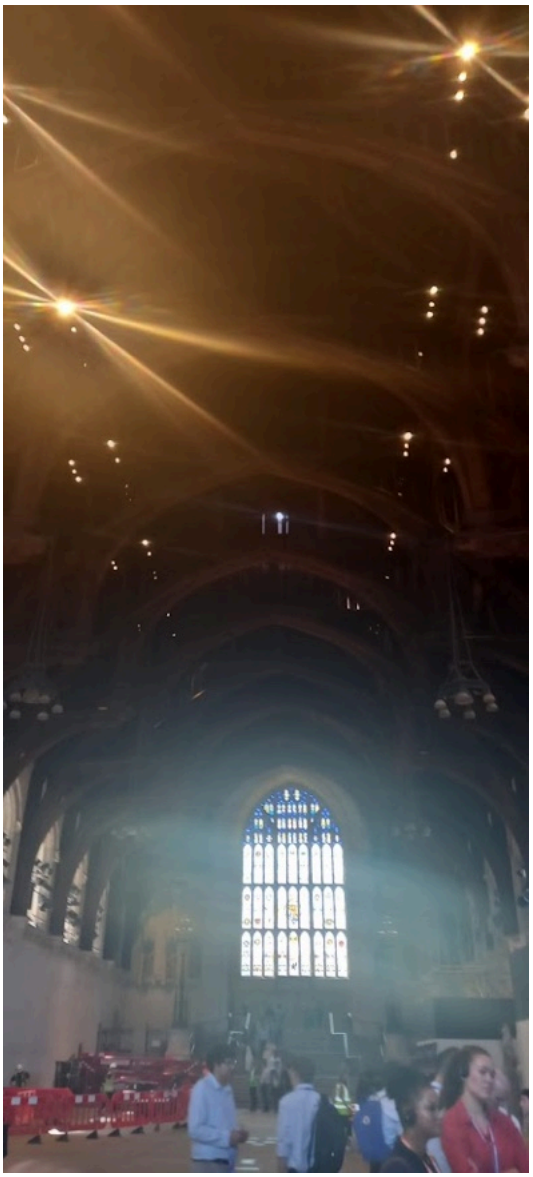
Firstly, we were shown Westminster Hall: the oldest part of the palace, dating from the Norman era! Next, we crossed into St Stephen's Hall (pictured right) and saw the very step on which Prime Minister Spencer Perceval had been shot in 1812. We were initially surprised by the absence of a plaque but Catarina explained this was due to the fact it was not a political assasination.





The main highlight of our trip was the House of Lords and the House of Commons. It was incredible to be inside the rooms that we have only ever seen from outside on video. It felt so empowering by thinking that so many important, influential people normally stand where we were then.

Our aim was to learn more about politics. One thing that interested us is the use of books in recording the actions of parliament. When we had a look around the houses of parliament, we had a quick look at Hansard. Every meeting of parliament has been recorded and written down in books that can be read by anyone. This is one of the most important parts of parliament as it holds politicians accountable and prevents misinformation. One interesting part of this is that a member of parliament can say the name of one of their team in a parliamentary debate. This is seen as a great honour as their name will be recorded forever in Hansard.



Another thing we learnt about was the architecture of the Houses of Parliament. This wasn't planned but was very interesting. For example, the layout of the Houses of Parliament is so peculiar because the original medieval palace that was on the site was mostly raised to the ground in a fire in 1834 (apart from Westminster Hall). Then, the whole style of architecture changed to gothic for the rebuilt section. Furthermore, the House of Lords is much more decorative and ostentatious than the House of the Commons as it was designed by a catholic (Augustus Pugin) whereas the House of Commons was designed by a protestant (Charles Barry).

Overall, we think that our project was extremely successful. From visiting the Houses of Parliament, our interest in politics has increased and we think that this might persuade us to look into a future in politics. We had no problems on the journey and we learnt a great deal about politics. It was an incredible trip that exceeded our expectations!
Lastly, we would like to thank Pippa Heylings, Catarina Camara and the Henry Morris Memorial Trust for making it possible.

