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Identity crisis for police officers

Sir, Who is, or is not, a police officer? In a crisis, recognition of familiar badges and uniforms legitimises the accompanying powers of arrest ("Police privatisation feared as force hires security firm staff", Apr 19). Lincolnshire's G4S contract hastens this question, not to subvert human rights, but, initially, to make ends meet. We have exceptionally low funding.

When visiting my GP (a private practitioner) I don't expect receptionists to perform medical procedures. Nor am I surprised when private companies process pathology tests. The twinkly-eyed, tranquilliser-happy, chain-smoking "doc" who never retrained was about as much use as your article's accompanying "Dixon of Dock Green" photograph. What vulnerable communities, victims of hidden crimes and their families need is clear access to legitimate power, 24/7. We expect that of doctors, however they are structured, so why not also from officers of the law?

The Police Federation is concerned that "the office of constable is being eroded". And so it will, if we overburden that office with inappropriate diversions, such as computer programs constantly needing updating, prisoners' dinner menus, homicide squad car hire excess insurance policies and the UK's thousands of mobile phones lost each day. In Lincolnshire we want to ask real questions about public safety, priorities and expectations. Surely it helps if we first put all "routine" firmly to one side?

DAVID MILLAR
 (Chair, Independent Advisory Group for Lincolnshire Police)
 Sleaford, Lincs

Anglo-Catholics

Sir, Cranmer's prayer book is not a translation of the Sarum rite (letter, Apr 18). It was a Protestant creation, with only some reference to Sarum and other liturgical traditions. That is why along with his ordinal, the Roman Catholic Church has never been able to recognise Anglican clerical orders.

The Anglo-Catholic tradition was only started in the 19th century, as the

'Church should rejoice over same-sex marriages'

GABRIEL BOUYS / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

Sir, Recent statements by church leaders past and present may have given the mistaken impression that the Church is universally opposed to the extension of civil marriage to same-sex couples. We believe that does not adequately reflect the range of opinion which exists within the Church of England. Marriage is a robust institution which has adapted much over the centuries. It has moved beyond the polygamy of the Old Testament and preoccupation with social status and property in pre-Enlightenment times. While the Prayer Book states that marriage was ordained first for "the procreation of children" the modern marriage service begins by emphasising the quality of relationship between marriage partners "that they shall be united with one another in heart, body and mind".

The Church calls marriage holy or sacramental because the covenant relationship of committed, faithful love between the couple reflects the covenanted love and commitment between God and his Church. Growing in this kind of love means we are growing in the image of God. That there are same-sex couples who want to embrace marriage should be a cause for rejoicing in the Christian Church.

We welcome current moves by the House of Bishops to consider again its view of civil partnerships and human sexuality. We hope this will lead to a recognition of God's grace at work in same-sex partnerships and



Has the Church got anything to fear from civil marriage for same-sex couples?

call on the Church to engage in theological discussion and prayerful reflection on the nature of marriage.

We also welcome statements by the Bishop of Salisbury and the new Dean of St Paul's Cathedral calling on the Church to affirm same-sex couples who want to take on the commitment of marriage. We believe that the Church of England has nothing to fear from the introduction of civil marriage for same-sex couples. It will be for the churches to then decide how they respond pastorally to such a change in the law.

CANON GILES GODDARD (General Synod, Southwark); THE VERY REV

JEFFREY JOHN (Dean of St Albans); THE RIGHT REV ALAN WILSON (Bishop of Buckingham); THE RIGHT REV MICHAEL DOE; THE RIGHT REV JOHN GLADWIN; THE RIGHT REV LORD HARRIES OF PENTREGARTH; THE RIGHT REV PETER SELBY; THE RIGHT REV DAVID STANCLIFFE; THE VERY REV DAVID BRINDLEY (Dean of Portsmouth); THE VERY REV GRAHAM SMITH (Dean of Norwich); THE VERY REV VICTOR STOCK (Dean of Guildford); APRIL ALEXANDER (General Synod, Southwark); JOHN WARD, THE REV STEPHEN COLES and THE REV CLAIR HERBERT (General Synod, London)

previous High Church tradition was loyally Protestant. Anglo-Catholicism sprang from a Victorian ritualist revival and took on many aspects of Roman Catholic teaching and ritual. Hence it is fitting that a tiny remnant of this movement, which never captured the Anglican mainstream, has now entered the Roman Catholic Church.

ROBERT IAN WILLIAMS
 Bangor-on-Dee, Wrexham

Language test

Sir, You report (Apr 18) that Andrew Lansley, the Health Secretary, has plans to ensure that doctors from EU countries will have to prove to senior colleagues that they can speak English before being able to practise in Britain.

In 1979-80 I worked as a fully registered general practitioner in Paris. In order to be registered with the Ordre National des Médecins, as regulations did not allow a formal exam, I was required to have an interview with two senior French

doctors to satisfy them that my standard of French was adequate.

Plus ça change.
 DR MARTIN GUEST
 Bath

Sinking feeling

Sir, What a disappointing sight the new Royal Rowbarge, *Gloriana*, presents (report, Apr 20). From a country famed for its naval architects, ship and boatbuilders, the nation has chosen to present world viewers with a pastiche antique as the sovereign's royal barge. What a missed opportunity for Britain.

We should have tried to dazzle the world with a vessel fit for this century. There must be scores of naval architects and boat designers wondering how we let slip such an opportunity to put British design on show. But Britons do tend to look back rather than forward. The Royal Rowbarge is a very public display of our native tendency to live in the past.

BRIAN SINGLETON
 Weybridge, Surrey

Time for lawyers

Sir, The computation of time is not exclusive to extradition cases, but is a familiar task undertaken across the whole spectrum of the law (letters, Apr 20). The position is well settled, and has been for centuries. It is astonishing that the Home Office got it wrong.

The old maxim is: "The law does not recognise a part of a day." Therefore something has to be done "within a period of three months" of an event that period begins on the whole day after the event, and ends three whole months later.

GERALD GOURIET, QC
 London EC4

Sir, I was surprised to learn that the law takes no account of a part of a day. My lawyers appear to account for every six minutes.

ALAN PHILLIPS
 Epping, Essex

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