

## Question time: a postscript

Published: January 13, 2026, 5:49 pm

---

As regular readers of this blog will know, I am a lark and not an owl. As such starting tweeting for the BBC at 10.20pm is not something for which I have a natural inclination, but as the Extra Guest on BBC's Question Time that is what I did last night. A moment's reflection on the experience seems worthwhile.

First, commenting on a panel where no-one set any debate on fire is hard. Melanie Phillips and Bob Crow were muted, the failed UKIP candidate from Eastleigh showed just why she did not deserve to win, Stephen Twigg's finest moment was beating Michael Portillo many years ago now and Ken Clarke proved he can waffle for England. In an hour they gave me remarkably few hooks to hang on whilst the BBC don't like the Extra Guest commenting on the audience, where one or two rich things might have originated. Apparently that's because they don't have a right to reply.

So, I was working with a hand behind my back and decided the best thing to do was be the Extra Guest and provide my own commentary on the questions. That gave rise to a lot of retweets and favouriting, but it failed to rattle the right wing whose trolling I ignored because, well that's by and large my policy. As a result several decided after the event that I was the worst Extra Guest ever. I'm happy with that.

There was, however, another reason for not commenting extensively. The BBC insisted I use an Internet Explorer based version of Twitter that was bizarrely laid out. Worse, it was on a tiny screen set at an apparently immovable height where try as I might I could not find a bit of my trifocals (it's an age thing) that would focus on the screen, which because of its low quality looked as if it was in a type face from an old dot matrix printer set to low quality (for those old enough to remember them). So reading anything was hard.

Enough moaning. Was it worth doing. Yes, it was. But it would have been more fun to be on the panel.