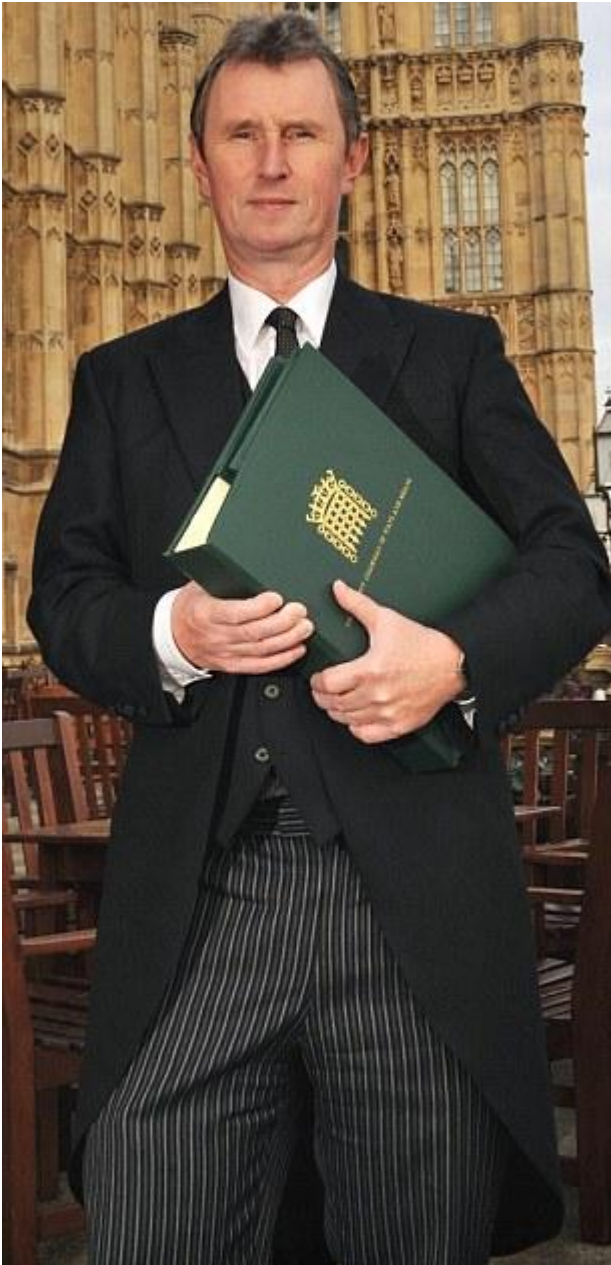


Deputy Speaker leaves police station after being quizzed over gay rape: Tory MP Nigel Evans arrested after officers swoop on cottage

- **Allegations against the Commons Deputy Speaker made by two men in 20s**
- **Alleged offences date from between July 2009 and March 2013**
- **The Prime Minister is said to have been informed about the claims**
- **'It has been a total shock' says Whitehall source**
- **55-year-old from Swansea came out as gay in 2010**

By [Simon Walters](#), [Glen Owen](#) and [Brendan Carlin](#)



Held: The Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons, Tory MP Nigel Evans, has been arrested over allegations of rape and sexual assault relating to two men

The Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons was arrested yesterday over allegations of rape and sexual assault relating to two men.

Nigel Evans was taken to a police station in Lancashire, where he is Conservative MP for Ribble Valley, and questioned over offences dating from 2009 to March this year.

Forensic teams were searching his two homes in London and Pendleton, Lancashire, as part of their inquiries.

Yesterday afternoon, they could be seen examining his white Saab convertible, which was parked near his constituency home.

By last night, no charges had been made against Mr Evans, who came out as gay in a 2010 article for The Mail on Sunday.

This is the latest, and potentially most explosive, in a series of high-profile arrests over allegations of a sexual nature, some of which go back more than 40 years.

There have been wild rumours about the involvement of politicians – but until now, none has been arrested.

The arrest of the Deputy Speaker, one of the most prestigious public positions in Britain, brings the matter right to the heart of the Establishment.

Allegations against Mr Evans, 55, concern incidents that are said to have taken place from 2009 right up to a few weeks ago, spanning the entire period during which he has officiated over Commons debates in the famous Speaker's chair.

They are understood to relate to two men in their 20s. Both Speaker John Bercow and David Cameron have been told of the arrest. Mr Bercow said: 'It's been a total shock. Nigel is a popular and well-liked character. No one can quite believe what's happened.' A spokeswoman for Lancashire police told this newspaper yesterday: 'A 55-year-old man from Pendleton in Lancashire has today been arrested by Lancashire Constabulary on suspicion of rape and sexual assault.

The man will be interviewed at a police station in Lancashire during the course of the day. The offences are alleged to have been committed in Pendleton between July 2009 and March 2013.



Arrested: Nigel Evans is pictured with David Cameron, who has been informed about the claims



Going home: Nigel Evans was last night driven from Preston police station after questioning by detectives

We take all allegations of a sexual nature extremely seriously and understand how difficult it can be for victims to have the confidence to come forward.

'As a constabulary, we are committed to investigating sexual offences sensitively but robustly, recognising the impact that these types of crimes have on victims.

'We would encourage anyone who has experienced sexual abuse, or who has information about it, to have the confidence to report it to us knowing that we will take it seriously, deal with it sensitively and investigate it thoroughly.'



Thorough: Officers search the MP's white Saab convertible parked in his home village of Pendleton in Lancashire



Quaint: This image shows Mr Evans' village in Pendleton. His white Saab is pictured to the left of the stream in the distance



Inquiries: Police enter Mr Evans' house looking for evidence

She added: 'Following the arrest, police can confirm they are searching addresses in Pendleton and London in connection with the investigation. The offences relate to two men.' A Commons spokesman said: 'This is a matter for the police and we will not be making any comment.' Swansea-born Mr Evans, who worked in his family supermarket business before entering politics, has been a Tory MP since 1992.

He held a series of senior posts and was Parliamentary Private Secretary to William Hague in 1996, when Hague was in the Cabinet as Secretary of State for Wales. In June 2010, he was elected as one of Mr Bercow's three deputies, bringing his total parliamentary salary to £102,000 a year. He has been tipped as a possible successor to the Speaker's job. Tory loyalist Mr Evans is a strong supporter of Mr Cameron. Just two weeks ago, they both took part in a photo-call to promote a campaign led by Microsoft billionaire Bill Gates to eradicate polio. In July 2010, Mr Evans chose to come out as gay in a candid article in The Mail on Sunday. He timed it to mark the launch of a group set up to help MPs and parliamentary staff be open about their sexuality. Mr Evans said he was 'tired of living a lie' and had, in the past, received threats of blackmail from political enemies threatening to expose him.

He said: 'The MP was saying to anyone who would listen, "Why is it that Nigel Evans leads a life whereby he is gay to some people and not others?"'



On patrol: Uniformed Lancashire Police officers maintain their presence in the village

Mr Evans refused to name the Labour politician, but added: 'I could not afford it to be used as leverage against me. I couldn't take the risk. I don't want any other MP to face that kind of nastiness again. I am sure there are other gay MPs who would like to be open about their sexuality but are fearful of the consequences. I hope this new group will help them to do so.' Mr Evans's decision to come out was partly as a result of a chance conversation with a friend, the actress Vicky Entwistle, who played Janice Battersby in Coronation Street and who lives in Mr Evans's Ribble Valley constituency.



Making a stand: Mr Evans, left, is pictured with Speaker John Bercow, right, at last year's Gay Pride march



Fun: Mr Evans, left, poses for a photograph in front of the Houses of Parliament with members of the circus industry in March 2011

Mr Evans said: "We went for a drink and she said to me, "You're gay, aren't you?" It's a subject I avoid usually but Vicky is very natural and I told her I was. I thought to myself, "I am now telling people I am gay – it's time I did something about it and told everyone."

He was also encouraged by fellow Welshman and rugby union star Gareth Thomas, who came out in 2009. 'If people like Gareth, who was married, can come out, it should be no big deal for me,' said Mr Evans. In 1998, Mr Evans voted against lowering the age of gay consent from 18 to 16. Two years later, he voted in favour of the measure. The law was finally changed in 2001.



Mr Evans, right, is pictured with pop group the Cheeky Girls at a Parliamentary Palace of Varieties show for charity. He is joined by Lembit Opik MP, left, and Stephen Pound MP, centre,



Mr Evans is pictured with Lembit Opik MP, left, and Stephen Pound MP, centre, at a charity show event