He was the first literary villain I encountered who had that ambiguity. Many of Stevenson's conventions - one-legged pirates, hidden treasure, or maps with "x" marking the spot have shaped almost every other pirate tale since, in print and on the screen. Yet on re-reading the book it still works. For me Treasure Island was the original boy's own story and whilst occasionally I wince at the ripe language, it remains a thoroughly enjoyable read. Mark Prisk is the Conservative parliamentary candidate for Hertford and Stortford, where he has been the MP since 2001. He is a former minister.