
A Liberal Democrat History Group fringe meeting

ELECTION 2015 IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Join us for the Liberal Democrat History Group's regular post-election analysis of the general election campaign, the vote and its aftermath, and the implications for the Liberal Democrats. Further details and speakers to be announced; keep an eye on our website and sign up for our email list (see page 46).

Speakers to include **Phil Cowley** (Professor of Parliamentary Government, University of Nottingham and co-author of *The British General Election of 2010*).

6.30pm, Monday 13 July

Lady Violet Room, National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, London SW1

The party story is what will interest most of us but the book goes on to record Hugh-Jones's speaking tours in the USA, his assistance to the National Liberal Club and his retirement time in the Wiltshire village of Avebury where all his life skills were needed.

The main conclusion for me is that he served the Liberal Party well.

David Shutt Lord Shutt of Greetingland has been Director and Chairman of the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust. He was Deputy Chief Whip in the House of Lords 2010–12.

Turnout may have been higher and political party membership considerably higher in the post-war boom years, but the reality of politics back then was a long way away from making it a period we should simply praise by comparison with today.

Despite the far greater number of members available to deliver leaflets or knock on doors, outside of election time this was often all but unknown, even in target wards and marginal seats. It is hard to see why an age when political parties were larger yet much of the time did nothing to communicate with the public should be eulogised by comparison with smaller parties, making more use of non-members and in touch far more often. As Kyrle writes in this volume:

The custom at the time [the late 1960s] was to fight an election campaign over a period of about three weeks, attend the count, pay the election expenses within the time limit required by law and then spend the rest of the year raising the money to pay for it and start putting some money by for the next election. There was no concept of 'political campaigning'.

Compared with his previous volume in this series – *Part 1: Southampton 1958–1965* – Part 2 is fairly short; but the brief main text is supplemented by plenty of appendices which contain the sorts of details that entertain, such as reproductions of press stories and leaflets (including one with a story disassociating the local Liberals from recent activities by the Young Liberals!). This sort of recording and preservation of the tenor of local politics is invaluable because it is also the sort of material that most often slips between the cracks of history, beyond the reach of future historians.

Though very much a history, the main lessons – such as targeted activity and building up your organisation – are ones which are still very much applicable to twenty-first-century campaigners armed with computers and smartphones, making this not only an enjoyable history but also a handy reminder of the core tenets of effective political campaigning.

Dr Mark Pack worked at Liberal Democrat HQ from 2000 to 2009, and prior to that was frequently a volunteer member of the parliamentary by-election team. He is co-author of 101 Ways To Win An Election.

The Liberals in Hampshire: Martin Kyrle's reminiscences

Martin Kyrle, *The Liberals in Hampshire – a Part(l)y History Part 2: Eastleigh 1965–72: out in the suburbs something stirred!* (Sarsen Press, 2013)

Reviewed by **Mark Pack**

THE SECOND IN Martin Kyrle's planned trilogy on the history of the Liberals and then Liberal Democrats in Hampshire, *The Liberals in Hampshire – a Part(l)y History Part 2: Eastleigh 1965–72: out in the suburbs something stirred!*, concentrates, as the title implies, on elections in Eastleigh Borough itself. It was here that, after many attempts, his wife became the first Liberal councillor to be elected to that council, setting the ball rolling for a pattern of electoral success that

has now seen the party successfully transfer the seat to three different MPs in a row and run the local council for many decades.

Such coalface histories of local politics in that era are all too rare. But those that do exist – such as the one written about that other area of extended Liberal and Liberal Democrat electoral success, *A Flagship Borough: 25 Years of a Liberal Democrat Sutton Council* – share a common warning about eulogising politics as it used to be.