

Victorian and Edwardian politics enriched. In their introduction, the editors refer to Charles Dickens' portrayal of a parliamentary by-election in *The Pickwick Papers* at the fictional town of 'Eatanswill', and conclude with the comment 'A visit to Eatanswill always repays'. On the evidence of this volume that is very true.

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- 1 Chris Cook and John Ramsden, *By-elections in British politics* (Macmillan, 1973).
- 2 Ian Packer, 'Contested Ground: Trends in British By-elections, 1911–1914', *Contemporary British History*, 25(1), 2011, pp. 157–73.

## Servant of the party

Sir Hugh Jones, *Campaigning Face to Face* (Book Guild Ltd, 2007)

Reviewed by **David Shutt**

**T**HIS IS A splendid book, a reminder for many of us not just of the Hugh Jones era in which he served as Secretary General of the Liberal Party but of those final years of the party, including the time of the Alliance and ultimate merger with the SDP. An earlier volume (*Diplomacy to Politics: By Way of the Jungle*, Memoir Club, 2002) deals with his time in the Diplomatic Service; this book starts with his time from 1973 to 1977 as director of the English Speaking Union in England and Wales. He had his struggles dealing with so many volunteers, but I am sure that put him in good stead for dealing with the perhaps rather different volunteers he found in the Liberal Party!

Hugh-Jones had been born into Liberalism, 'nourished by Lloyd George and the *News Chronicle*'. He had had an opportunity to take on the Head of LPO role ten years earlier, but it was in March 1977 (as a 53 year old) that he took up the post. Rather sensibly he spent several months prior to his commencement going round the country getting to know the party. He started whilst 'Thorpe Affair' matters were still troubling us, but in the early days of David Steel's leadership. He was straight in to the party side of coping with the Lib-Lab pact. The speed with which that pact was settled reminds me of the speed with which arrangements were made in our coalition agreement in 2010, so unlike the coalition

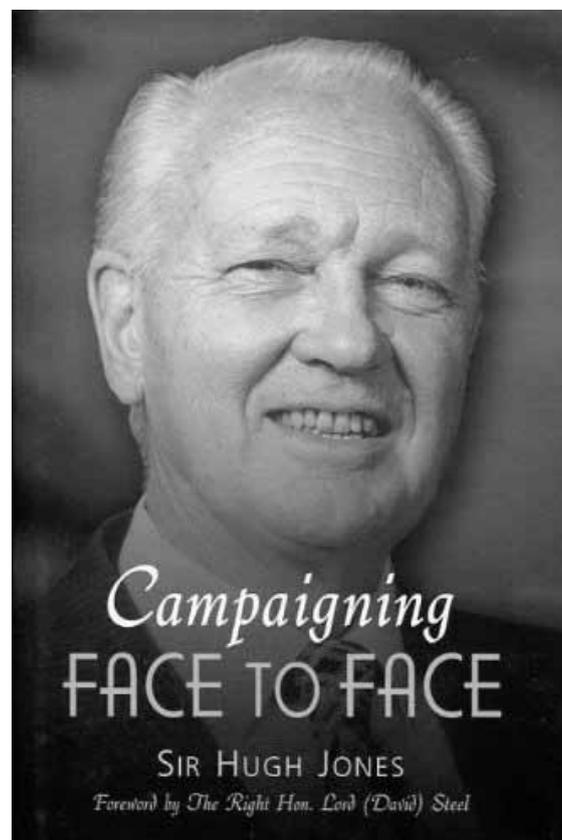
building elsewhere in Europe. He was forever troubled by the lack of resources available to the party in the run up to the expected election in October 1978 and the eventual election of May 1979.

For me the most interesting part of the book was Hugh-Jones's assessment of the difficulties he had with dealing with the Joseph Rowntree Social Service Trust Limited (now the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust Ltd) as the Liberal Party's major donor. Hugh was frustrated that all his dealings had to be via the leader, who had a direct line to Pratap Chitnis, the trust's chief executive. Hugh was told not to approach the trust direct. During all this time, I was on the other side of the fence as a JRSST director. Hugh-Jones's problem was that, apart from two Rowntree family members, those of us who had recently been recruited to serve as directors were mainly Liberal Party members and candidates who had our own ideas as to the useful ways money could be spent. We had two MPs on the board, Jo Grimond and Richard Wainwright, as well as Pratap, who had himself had Hugh-Jones's job eleven years earlier than him. Hugh-Jones may well have felt he had little influence, we in turn often felt we were offered what seemed to be a Chitnis-Steel deal.

Reading the book reawakened memories – especially of the huge contribution made by people like Joyce Rose, Gruff Evans and Geoff

Tordoff. Indeed the book covers a panoply of people and places. I only spotted one error and that was Hugh-Jones's reference to the Huddersfield and Bolton pacts (before Hugh's time – 1950 to 1959) being with Labour rather than with the Tories as was the case.

Following the 1979 election, the next party issue was the arrival of the SDP and ultimately the seats negotiations (splitting the seats between the Liberal Party and the SDP for the 1983 election). This was a tortuous and time-consuming business, and the book offers a blow-by-blow account of those often unhappy events. Hugh-Jones served through that 1983 election, where he had to use to the full his diplomatic as well as his political skills. He formally retired in October 1983, but stayed with the cause as a volunteer and one of the party's treasurers (no doubt because his own experience as Secretary General had acquainted him with the difficulties of working with a lack of resources) until the autumn after the 1987 election. Hugh was often referred to in an endearing way as 'Uncle Hugh Jones' and unlike many who both preceded and followed him, when he left as the head of our professional service it was of his own volition.



# 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.