

CRUNCH TIME LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

Adrian Slade

interviews the Liberal Democrats' Chair of Campaigns and Communications, **Tim Razzall**, and Chief Executive and Elections Director, **Chris Rennard**, about their backgrounds, views and hopes for the party. How did they end up in the positions they hold today? How has their experiences and backgrounds prepared them for the task of fighting the next general election?

The original interviews were conducted in October and November 2003 and were updated in February 2004 – before the elections for the major English city authorities, the Greater London Assembly, the Mayor of London and the European Parliament on 10 June 2004.

The Election Strategist: Tim Razzall (Lord Razzall of Mortlake)

He has held very senior positions in the Liberal Party and the Liberal Democrats continuously for the last seventeen years and yet, outside Westminster and Cowley St, Tim Razzall remains a relatively unknown and shadowy figure. He appears rarely on television, addresses few fringe or full conference meetings and manages to keep a low press profile. So let us put a few facts on the table. Yes, he was married to Deirdre, currently editor of *Liberal Democrat News*. Yes, Labour MP Bob Marshall-Andrews was his best man and is one of his closest friends. Yes, Katie Razzall of Channel 4 News is his daughter. Yes, he was Treasurer of the Liberal Party and then the Liberal Democrats from 1986 to 2000. And, yes, for the last four years

he has been chair of the party's Campaigns and Communications Committee and will chair the next general election campaign, as he did the last.

A lawyer by profession, Tim Razzall was senior partner at West End solicitors Frere Cholmeley, leaving in 1995 after nearly thirty years. Since then he has been in business in a capital finance company that he and a fellow partner founded. In a successful early life he was head boy and captain of cricket at St Paul's School and read law at Oxford but, although his father was a committed Liberal (and distinguished lawyer), he did not involve himself in politics until a year or two later.

His first venture into politics was in the 1967 parliamentary by-election in Acton, where he lived. 'It happened because the MP had been uncovered as a Czech spy. A small group of us decided to try and revive what was a moribund constituency

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for the Liberals. I suppose I was to some extent responsible for a subsequent change in the law because, at a time when no party designations names were allowed on the ballot paper, we persuaded our candidate to change his name to Frank 'Liberal' Davis. It didn't save his deposit, and Kenneth Baker won, but it was a lively campaign.'

If Acton represented Razzall's toe in the political water, the 1970s in Richmond were the full plunge. By that time he was living there and, while the teenage prodigy Chris Rennard was learning his campaigning and community politics from Cyril Carr and Trevor Jones in Liverpool, three Richmond activists in their late twenties – Tim Razzall, David Williams and John Waller – were learning theirs from the south's 'unsung Liberal hero', Stanley Rundle. In 1966 Rundle had become the very first Liberal to win a seat on Richmond Council. 'I doubt if Stanley ever

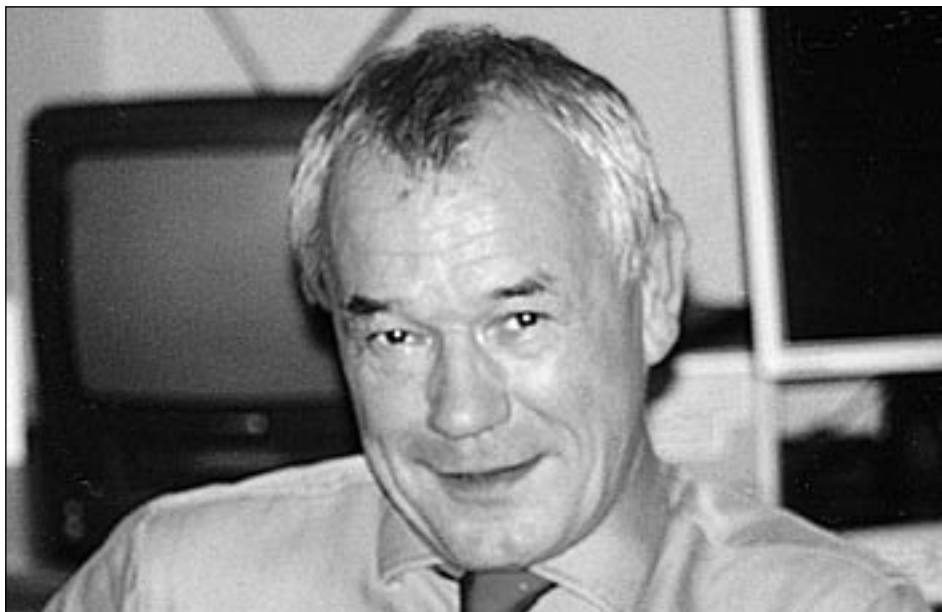
even met Cyril and Trevor,' says Tim Razzall, 'but his techniques got him elected to the GLC in '73 and ten of us Liberals elected to the council in '74. It was such a breakthrough that Jeremy Thorpe asked us all to tea on the House of Commons terrace.'

Ten years later the Liberal/Alliance was running Richmond and Tim Razzall had become Deputy Leader and Chair of Policy & Resources (Finance), a position he held almost until he stood down from the council in '98. The massive majority won by the Richmond Liberal Democrats in '86 and '90 had given him the freedom to move on to the wider stage. In 1988 the new Federal Executive elected him Treasurer of the newly merged party, and in the same year he became president of the Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors (ALDC). During his time on the council he was seen by the Tories as their *bête noire*, and was frequently viciously attacked

by them, but the joint skills of Messrs Razzall and Williams had built a successful and electorally preferred council regime. Richmond remained Liberal Democrat-controlled until 2002. 'I think change after nineteen years was inevitable,' says Razzall.

The years 1988 and 1989 were ones of acute financial crisis for the party. I asked him what he thought we, the officers at the time, had done wrong. 'We did two things,' he says. 'First, the predictions we made as to the number of members who would join the new party were overestimates, partly because the Liberal Party never knew its true membership. Secondly, we had not taken into account the effect of a rump SDP led by David Owen. That siphoned off potential SDP members. Inevitably, also, the fights between Owen and us put members off and the money dried up because we looked a shambles. Nevertheless, I don't consider the criticisms of the officers were

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ever justified. Without the rump SDP we would not have had the crisis. The party survived that crucial time financially mostly thanks to the few generous donors who came to our rescue. There are some heroes out there who will never get the credit but they saved us.' To this day Tim Razzall continues to spend time cultivating significant new donors to the party from business and other sources.

Razzall agrees with Chris Rennard that the party's turning point was in 1990 with the Eastbourne by-election win but he adds, 'You've got to remember that throughout that bad period we were still strong on the ground in local government. What Eastbourne proved, as the media said, was that the dead parrot had twitched, and we went on from there.'

In 1990, with responsibility for outside financial resources, Tim Razzall became involved with general election planning, but he confesses disappointment in the 1992 result. 'Every opinion poll had suggested a hung parliament. We expected a lot more seats than we got. Although we didn't talk about any kind of co-operation until the last week, the electorate ran away from the prospect and our vote fell away.' Echoes of February 1974? Was it a mistake ever to refer to a possible hung parliament? 'In '92

'We learned a lot of other lessons for the future about not allowing the campaign to fall away in the last week.'

it was. That, and the Kinnock factor. People didn't want him as Prime Minister. We learned a lot of other lessons for the future about not allowing the campaign to fall away in the last week.'

He recalls his support for Paddy Ashdown's re-positioning of the party after the 1992 election: 'He was right to abandon "equidistance" in our willingness to deal with the Tories and Labour. We could never have come to an arrangement with the Tories as they were under John Major, or indeed as they have remained under Hague, Duncan-Smith and Howard.'

In 1997, as a member of the strategic election planning group under Richard Holme, Tim Razzall was responsible for fundraising, for arranging Paddy Ashdown's tour (in which he was assisted by the future Mrs Charles Kennedy, Sarah Gurling) and for planning special activity in the last week. 'The momentum has to peak on polling day. That's why, for example, we organised nightly Paddy rallies and put Paddy in a helicopter, making sure that, when he landed, he was welcomed by crowds with orange placards, strategically placed for television.'

Tim Razzall has always been a shrewd political gambler. That skill, and his knowledge of the target seats, helped him win a handsome sum in 1997 by

correctly predicting the number of Lib Dem seats won on the night. And he repeated that success in 2001. He believes that, strategically, political positioning is crucial to a successful general election campaign. 'The most significant thing you have to remember is that, when the gun for the election is fired, probably 60-70 per cent of the electorate have already made up their minds how to vote. So you have to get your positioning and campaigning right long before that. The 2005 election result will be determined by what we say now and what we do now in the target seats, and, since Brent East, there are more target seats.'

More surprisingly, in this context, he had told me previously that, in 1997, he had supported Paddy Ashdown's coalition negotiations with Blair. 'Although they never came to anything, I supported them because of Paddy's insistence on the condition of PR for the next election. In the event Blair was never willing to guarantee that. But criticism of Paddy for being prepared to sell the party down the river was not fair. PR was his absolute condition.'

Wasn't the political situation always fluid and therefore strategies might change? 'Obviously you have to be flexible but, looking ahead to the next election, the building blocks for 2005 are pretty much in place now, subject to final approvals: the work done on the public sector by Chris Huhne's commission; our policies on health, education and the tax envelope; our principles and general positioning.' But in a general election how important is policy? 'Everything is important but what matters more than anything is what Peter Mandelson calls 'the narrative'. For some time now our 'narrative', which is becoming clearly understood, if not always agreed with, has been that we are the 'effective opposition' and the only effective alternative to Labour. The policies we favour are important, too, as long as their costs stand

up to scrutiny. For example, we oppose top-up tuition fees, we are in favour of free long-term care for the elderly paid for from taxation and we favour abolition of council tax and its replacement by local income tax – three very popular policies, but financially they must stand close examination by the informed political and economic commentators ... We will go into the next election with a fully costed package, including the savings we will make. And the real issue then will be getting it across by making full use of our free air time, our party politicals and our leaflets at constituency level.'

Tim Razzall, who has worked closely with three of them, agrees with Chris Rennard that the party has been lucky in its leaders. 'Paddy Ashdown and Charles Kennedy have very different strengths because they are very different personalities,' he says. 'I don't think there was a fundamental difference in the way they conducted themselves during elections. They both traversed the country energetically, made good speeches and were very articulate on television. To that extent they were similar good leaders, but in terms of personality their appeal was different. Paddy was seen as the driven politician and energetic army officer surging to go over the top, whereas Charles is seen as more relaxed and perhaps more as the non-politician's politician. In a world in which people have been become very disillusioned with politics, that can be no bad thing. In fact, I think that is the way politics is going. The other thing to remember is that in the polls Paddy always scored better with men, whereas Charles scores particularly with women.' Tim Razzall sees Charles Kennedy regularly, frequently guides him and is even rumoured to have masterminded his wedding.

At the time of our first interview Michael Howard had been Tory leader for just over two weeks and the only poll to date had shown no shift in party

allegiances. Tim Razzall was very relaxed about him: 'I think he has about three months to make an impact. Our long-term view is that, once the concentration moves away again from the leader, the paucity and populism of Tory policy – ranging from a fantasy island for asylum seekers to a two-tier national service and cuts in student numbers – will be exposed. They will soon be back to the hard slog of positioning.' Three months later (February 2004) he believed events were still justifying his view: Michael Howard was still not making an impact on the electorate as a whole. 'Three of the latest polls have shown the Liberal Democrats with a marked increase in electoral support – up to 24–25 per cent with the Tories back to 31–32 per cent. Local election results are saying much the same. When Howard says the Tories have been doing well in the fifty-five local by-elections since he became leader that is actually not true. The share for the Tories shows no change from when those seats were last fought, and that's the measure that counts, while we are up sharply and Labour are down sharply. I also think that the events of today [Oliver Letwin's announcement of proposed Tory economic priorities] demonstrate the big Tory weakness – that they are still all over the place on policy. You simply cannot have improved public services and tax cuts and the electorate recognise that.'

Did he agree that the political commentators right across the spectrum were now taking the Tory party seriously and once again treating them as the official opposition to Labour? If so, did it worry him? 'Yes I agree, and, if you were asking me whether I would prefer to have a Tory party under Duncan-Smith or Howard, there is no contest. I would prefer Duncan-Smith. But, if the question is do I think the Tories can win the next election, the answer is 'absolutely no'. Or do I think Michael Howard will be the next Prime Minister

If there is one message he wants Liberal Democrats to get across between now and the next general election it is: 'Say it the way it is. Be honest and truthful.'

– the answer again is 'no'. And, if the question is, do I think the Liberal Democrats will do better next time and the Tories worse, the answer is 'yes'.

But, when it came to the party's message, hadn't the whole notion of being the effective opposition been seriously weakened? 'The big challenge for us at the moment is to make it quite clear that we have not gone back to the two-party politics that some commentators would like to suggest. We are undoubtedly still in a three-party world as I've already said.' Was this because the party came well out of the week of the top-up fees debate and the Hutton Report? 'Yes. Top-up fees and Iraq were both issues on which we had positions distinct from Labour and the Tories and most people, even including most commentators, recognised this. We have benefited from that three-party difference in the polls.'

So he sees no fundamental change in Lib Dem strategy? 'No. 20–25 per cent of the electorate, whom neither we nor Labour will ever appeal to, will always require a Tory party of some sort. Those whose values range from xenophobia and deep Euroscepticism to a belief that all taxation is wrong and that you should be able to spend your money as you like. So politics is about the other 75 per cent of the electorate for which we compete with Labour. I don't believe Michael Howard can ever move the Tories into some kind of liberal, internationalist centre ground because they simply don't hold those views any more.'

Tim Razzall obviously likes good polls for the Liberal Democrats and seems to be equally relaxed about poor ones. When a December YouGov poll had put the Tories two points ahead of Labour, the Lib Dems down to 19 per cent and Michael Howard's rating as 'best prime minister' at 27 per cent, with Charles Kennedy down to 10 per cent, he had taken the news in his stride. 'It would have been surprising if the hype across all

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the press had not produced some effect, but I still say that, once the hype and euphoria and the journalists' love affair with the gladiatorial contest wear off, the Tory policies will be exposed.'

Already he sees reason to believe he was right. And if there is one message he wants Liberal Democrats to get across between now and the next general election it is: 'Say it the way it is. Be honest and truthful. Don't pretend you can get something for nothing – for example, pretend that you can have both tax cuts and better public services. That message is going to be even more important than last time. And, if you ask me how the Liberal Democrats will do, both Chris and I believe that we will get more votes and more seats but, no, I am not going to put a figure on it.'

Nevertheless he is able to reassure those who wish to see more women MPs in the House that there are female candidates in almost half of the most winnable

seats not currently held by the party, and that there is also a good chance of at least one non-white candidate being elected. He will not say where.

At least a year before the general election, the Liberal Democrats will face the Anglo-Euro electoral crunch of what is becoming known as 'Super Thursday'. Again, Tim Razzall will not be drawn into figures, but he expects good results from the cities and believes that, with Euro polling happening at the same time as the cities, the GLA and the poll for London Mayor, turnout could lift significantly and produce a higher Lib Dem Euro percentage, accompanied by more seats.

Breezily confident, Tim Razzall has always known what not to give away. He welcomes and enjoys political crunches, so he is not going to be scared by Michael Howard. In any case he suspects Howard is a leader who is 'sloppy on numbers'. And politically nobody gets away with that.

The Campaign Tactician: Chris Rennard (Lord Rennard)

We will target Folkestone & Hythe anyway but, with Michael Howard now Tory leader, he will lose his seat by an even bigger majority.' So predicted Chris Rennard, unchallenged king of Liberal Democrat campaigning, when I interviewed him last October. Four months later, how did he feel about Howard? 'He has undoubtedly had an effect on Conservative Party internal morale but I don't think he has actually had much effect on the voters. The latest non-internet polls suggest that his position is no better than William Hague's at the last general election, whilst the Liberal Democrat position is markedly improved.' To press the point I reminded him that a YouGov

poll had suggested a much better picture for the Conservatives. He was dismissive: 'Unlike the other polling companies, YouGov is internet based and it is only YouGov that has ever given the Conservatives a lead of 5 per cent over Labour. But then it gave Iain Duncan-Smith's Tory Party a lead of 5 per cent a week after his disastrous conference. In any case for Howard to crow about the same lead when he is doing no better than Duncan-Smith suggests that his honeymoon period is coming to an end.'

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his first election in 1974, at the age of thirteen, as the Liberal candidate in his Liverpool school election. Talent-spotted by his ward councillor, Cyril Carr, by fourteen he found himself elected as ward treasurer. 'Christopher is very good at mathematics at school,' Cyril had said, 'and no one else volunteered.'

'I was deemed too young to canvass but not to deliver *Focus* or organise other people,' Chris Rennard continues, 'so I used to stand in the road with a clipboard and boss the councillors and other canvassers about, making sure they called on everyone and got posters up.' That was the time of the first great Liberal surge in Liverpool and he learnt his early campaigning skills from the city's two great proponents of community campaigning, Councillors Cyril Carr and Trevor Jones. So was he always a bossy organiser? 'No, I'm not really bossy,' he corrects himself. 'Politeness and courtesy play a large part in politics. From quite a young age I got on well with adults and I learned how to be firm with them without appearing to organise them too much.' By 1979, and the important Edge Hill by-election won by David Alton, he was already being described by Tony Greaves as 'a future chief agent of the party'. Greaves was to be proved right.

The teenage years had not been easy for Chris Rennard. 'By the time I was sixteen both my parents had died. My elder brother was away training for the church. I could not look after my younger brother and myself, so he was taken in by a Liverpool family. I decided to move into a flat on my own and prove I could survive. I cooked for myself, did my own washing, studied hard for my A-levels, got good grades in English, history and economics and might have gone to university at Oxford, but Liverpool was where I lived and retained what I could of family possessions. Going away in term time was not a possibility so I decided that Liverpool was where I

wanted to remain.’ And where he would continue to develop his campaigning and analytical skills with the Liverpool Liberals.

Is it the active campaigning or the political analysis and prediction that goes with it that intrigues him most? ‘Politics is a mix of art and science. I like both. I like some of the mathematical and scientific principles of election analysis but I also like the creative side of campaigning – the writing and designing of material and the judgments that have to be made. I don’t do so much writing now but I learned from the pioneers in Liverpool that the best way to win elections was to write the best leaflets. Those pioneers of community campaigning in the ’60s – people like Stanley Rundle, Cyril Carr, Trevor Jones, Wallace Lawler and Tony Greaves – can in many ways be said to have laid the foundations of Liberal Democrat success.’

How does he define community politics? ‘To me it means campaigning for communities, not manipulating them but encouraging them to seize initiatives and take power for themselves. It also means effective communication of political principles and the offering of a lead. It should not be a patronising approach but an approach that enables people to fulfil their own hopes and aspirations.’

And how does this tie in with national politics and policies? ‘I think caring about small issues helps to build trust in politicians about the wider issues. By campaigning on the local issues that people mind about you get their attention. Then you can talk about the wider issues and principles. I don’t see any conflict between being a local campaigner and a parliamentary candidate who also wants to address national issues. The two can always be linked, as David Penhaligon did so effectively, using his engineering skills to earn the trust of his constituents by becoming their local spokesman on the clay pits issues that concerned them, carrying that



Chris Rennard
(Lord Rennard,
MBE)

into the Commons and becoming famous nationally on programmes like Question Time. It’s the issues in people’s minds that matter. In Brent East, for example, there were three levels of concern – local, national and international. We campaigned on them all and we were successful.’

Were there any particular reasons why the Liberal Democrats attracted the ethnic minority vote in Brent that had made such a crucial difference? ‘I think many people in the ethnic minorities feel let down by Labour and are more open to the Liberal Democrat message. We have always been the champions of anti-racism and our credentials are good but I think we get that across and win their trust more by talking to them personally than by leaflet. Sarah [Teather] and Charles [Kennedy] did that very effectively.’

How much do national party policy issues matter to Chris Rennard personally? ‘They matter a great deal. They dictate your values. The values of tolerance are key to Liberalism, and therefore appreciation of diversity, whether it’s ethnic minorities or people of different sexual orientation or allowing people to be themselves, is at the heart of your

values and policies. Any kind of discrimination makes me more angry than almost anything.’ He is not close to the detail of policy formulation but he feels strongly about other key party commitments such as good public services, sustainability and constitutional reform: ‘I just happen to believe that to achieve your overall objective you put your best and most saleable products in the shop window.’

Of all the parliamentary by-elections with which he had been involved, which had given him the most satisfaction? ‘I think Eastbourne [in 1990]. It was the most stressful: the party had been beaten by the Greens in the European elections the year before; it was nearly bankrupt; the merger looked on the brink of failure; we were at 8 per cent in the polls; I was the only campaign officer in the party. Paddy Ashdown did not want us to fight it but I felt we had a chance and managed to persuade him at the last minute. I moved down there and, with Paul Jacobs, who was an excellent agent, and a small local team, we built up a community campaign and we won. And immediately the party jumped to 18 per cent in the polls. I think in some ways

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that was the day we saved the Liberal Democrats. Certainly Paddy described it as his best day as party leader.'

How fundamentally do by-election wins, particularly Brent East, change the political scene when it comes to general elections? 'They can be very significant. I believe Edge Hill saved the Liberal Party from humiliation in '79 after the disasters of the mid '70s, just as Eastbourne helped the Liberal Democrats in the '92 election. I think Brent East signalled the end of nine years of trust in Tony Blair. It's very hard to recover trust lost, and the result also showed again that the Conservative Party simply is not challenging Labour in urban areas and that it has become a party solely of the rural south. That's why we are best placed to be the serious challengers to Labour. In many ways the result was more significant for the Conservatives than it was for Labour.'

Less public but even more important than his by-election role is Chris Rennard's involvement in the planning of general elections. The next will be his fourth in charge of campaigning at constituency level, and, for the second time, he will be working very closely with Tim Razzall, chair of the overall election campaign. 'Tim and I have known each other for many years when he was campaigning to win in Richmond and I was doing the same in Liverpool. We work well together. I see our respective roles as being like the chairman and chief executive of a company. Contrary to most predictions we helped the party to improve on its '97 position at the last election. I am even more optimistic about the next election than I have ever been because we shall have earned respect as equals and started from a much higher base. I do not see any significant recovery for Conservatives or Labour.'

Chris Rennard acknowledges that there have been contrasts of style between Tim Razzall and his predecessors Des Wilson [1992] and Richard Holme

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[1997], but he worked closely with each of them and his role in the national strategy and organisation grew with each election. He was always responsible for overseeing the target seat operation but by 1997 he was also having significant input into the way the national campaign was fought, and in 2001 he was in overall charge of general election strategy and organisation, reporting to Tim Razzall who was chair of the Campaigns and Communications Committee. 'The key difference between '92 and the two subsequent elections was in the extra resources we were able to put into the target seats. That produced the results,' he says.

How important is the leader factor in elections? 'Hugely. 80 per cent of media third-party coverage in general elections is on the leader. We have benefited very greatly in all the general elections I have fought in having leaders who were brilliant broadcast communicators. Charles was brilliant at the last election.' Chris Rennard also pays particular tribute to Charles Kennedy for the part he played in helping to win Brent East. 'I don't remember any previous leader being so closely and effectively involved in a by-election,' he says.

Looking ahead to the elections in June and the general election next year did he feel that, Iraq apart, the recent media focus on the Conservatives as the principal opposition to Labour changed Liberal Democrat tactics at all? 'You say 'Iraq apart', but in the last few weeks that has been a huge story for us, nationally and internationally, and it has helped to boost our poll rating. I also believe that the issue will continue to run and run. There's a probable Butler Inquiry white-wash to come and, rather like the Tories' use of the "winter of discontent" as a reminder of what Labour government was like, Iraq can continue to be used by us as a reminder of Blair's vulnerability on trust and honesty. It is infuriating when the commentators refer to "the two parties" or

"both parties" but we have to keep challenging that.'

He reinforces Tim Razzall's view that council by-elections since Howard became Tory leader have shown no shift in Tory support but have been good for the Liberal Democrats. 'If you look particularly at recent results and the gains we have had in Suffolk, Haringey, Richmond and Southwark we have been doing very well, at the expense of Labour and the Tories.'

He had referred in October to the importance of the ethnic minority vote to the Liberal Democrat result in Brent East. Did he see it as important in the elections to come? 'Yes, increasingly so, as we turn our guns on Labour in the inner cities. The vote is moving away from Labour. The ethnic minorities are particularly disenchanted with Tony Blair. I also believe that in the European and general elections we could well see the party's first elected candidates from ethnic minority backgrounds.' And he is equally positive about prospects for women candidates. 'It was no coincidence that, at the last general election, four of the eight gains we made were with four women candidates. Extra special efforts and resources were committed to those seats. We are making progress and not just in the obvious seats.'

In summary, wearing his hat as the man responsible for campaigns, he claims to feel even more optimistic about Liberal Democrat prospects than he felt in October. 'I think the effect we had over the Hutton Report and our resulting poll position of 24–25 per cent is close to the battlefield conditions of a general election when our profile is always high. Our profile may go up or down in between but we shall start the general election at a higher level of support than we have before.'

One significant problem he acknowledges is that the Liberal Democrats will be heavily outspent by the Tories and Labour.

Raising more money is vital. He is enjoying his relatively new role as Chief Executive, in which he retains his overall campaigning responsibility. He believes he has helped to raise headquarters morale and that he now has a very effective team to whom he can delegate, but he also knows he must raise more funds. 'That must be my principal priority. Lack of money holds us back. We need it, not to spend on advertising but to get ourselves more free publicity and to boost our target seats' he says.

With all that he takes on himself, does he ever have any spare time and what does he like doing with it? 'I have very little but I do like to switch off at Christmas and New Year and spend time with Liverpool friends, my wife's family and my younger brother, who still lives in Liverpool. In the summer we like to go to a nice house in France with good food, wine,

a swimming pool and friends. I also like cooking. I am very fortunate in my very supportive wife Ann. She's a teacher and was an activist in the party in Liverpool when we married in 1989. She comes to lots of party functions with me and in by-elections she catches up with me for an intimate Chinese meal at midnight with twenty other workers! And yes, I do enjoy being a peer but, apart from voting, I don't play a very active part.'

Well, there is an admission! If Chris did have more time for the House of Lords, it might be very different place. But, most of all, like Tim Razzall with whom he works very closely, he relishes political crunches, and there are plenty of those to come.

Shorter and earlier versions of these interviews appeared in Liberal Democrat News in November and December 2003.

the youngest King's Counsels of his day, he subsequently went on to achieve a successful business career in which he became a director of Unilever.

He was elected to Parliament for Montgomeryshire, his home county, in 1929. Liberal politics were fluid in the 1930s and Davies became a Simonite. He seconded the motion on the King's Speech in 1932. His early political career is a paradox. As Liberal Party leader Davies was to champion the party's independence. Yet in the 1930s he was a supporter of the Conservative-dominated administrations. This political inconsistency was not lost on Churchill, when Davies complained to him, in 1950, about Conservative candidates using the prefix Liberal in their nomenclature. Churchill replied:

As you were yourself for 11 years a National Liberal, and in that capacity supported the Governments of Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain, I should not presume to correct your knowledge of the moral,

REVIEWS

The forgotten leader

Alan Wyburn-Powell: *Clement Davies: Liberal Leader* (Politico's, 2003)

Reviewed by **Geoffrey Sell**

How many Liberal Democrats could name the Liberal Party's first post-war leader? Rather few, I suspect. Of course, it was all a long time ago; nearly half a century has elapsed since Clement Davies relinquished the leadership in favour of Jo Grimond. However, it is not just the passage of time but Davies' place in the Liberal hall of fame that provides the explanation. Whilst Grimond's star has shone brightly in the Liberal firmament, Davies' has

been eclipsed. He has been described as the forgotten leader. Alan Wyburn-Powell therefore performs a valuable service in rescuing his subject from political obscurity.

Davies was an emotional man, and his life story is one that stirs the emotions. It is a story of significant achievement. Born in rural Wales in 1884 and educated at a state school, he obtained a place at Trinity Hall College, Cambridge, where he obtained a first in Law. One of

