

Old Heroes for

AS WE HAVE in each of the Liberal Democrat leadership elections other than the first one (which took place in 1988, before the History Group had been formed), in June the Liberal Democrat History Group asked the two candidates for the Liberal Democrat leadership to write a short article on their favourite historical figure or figures – those that they felt had influenced their own political beliefs most, and why they had proved important and relevant. We placed no restrictions on their choices: they could choose anyone they wanted, whether a Liberal or not.

At the end of their two articles, we include a list of all previous leadership contenders' historical heroes.

Ed Davey – Paddy Ashdown

Liberals are not meant to have heroes, but I can't help it. I don't genuflect before grand or celebrity figures, but re-reading speeches or learning of the noble deeds of Liberals can move me the way opera or acts of military valour can have others dabbing a misty eye.

I love Gladstone for his insistence that: 'the sanctity of life in the hill villages of Afghanistan among the winter snows is as inviolable in the eye of Almighty God as can be your own'. Or Asquith for, in the midst of unimaginable wartime stress, ignoring press opprobrium to visit German prisoners of war to demand their good treatment. That instinctive determination to defend the vulnerable is what, I believe, makes us Liberals.



a New Leader

Hard choice though this is, my Liberal hero is more recent: Paddy Ashdown, for whom I still grieve.

As a new member of staff in 1989, what surprised me was how wonderfully Paddy treated youngsters like me. He had a reputation for being brisk – even brusque – but I discovered that was a front.

I perched, as the party's chief economics adviser, in what felt like a tiny garret atop the old Whips' Office. Here I would receive handwritten notes thanking me for a piece of work, and I've kept them all. Whether eating, chatting or indeed drinking with junior staff at conference, Paddy was like the dedicated officer with his troops. He inspired loyalty and hard work in equal measure.

Paddy's stories only added to his mystique and magnetism. A young colleague was startled to find a note on his desk from Paddy one morning: 'Call me on my car phone at 5.57am.' It wasn't so much the earliness as the preciseness of the hour that startled. Another note, upon Paddy assuming the party's leadership, read simply: 'Please remove David Steel's dead animal from my office.' It was a buffalo skin presented by Chief Buthelezi.

Sure, Paddy could be a task master, but even then I found him immense fun. Many a Monday morning my phone would bark into life: 'Edward, come to my office now, please.' From Paddy's mouth 'please' became a command. Once before him I'd find he'd read some article over the weekend extolling a new economic policy that he wanted to adopt. And I'd spend a good thirty minutes dissuading him of some crazy, ill-thought-through fancy.

My biggest disagreement with him came after I'd been elected in 1997, when he was determined to cling on to his pre-election plan with Tony Blair for close working relations with Labour – despite that strategy having been devised for a balanced Parliament, not for a Labour majority of

167. Brilliant as he was, he couldn't persuade Parliamentary colleagues or the wider party that Lib-Labbery worked in this context, for it would have hitched us to policies we disagreed with without influence to change them.

Ironically, during the five days of coalition negotiations in 2010, it was Paddy and me who tried to convince Nick Clegg and co not to rule out coalition with Labour, despite the numbers being difficult to make work.

It had been Paddy who first drew me to the party. All politicians have their causes, and for me it was the environment and education. Paddy made the green agenda a core strand of our identity when most MPs thought this a peripheral, even cranky, cause. I was hooked, and would like to think that my recently announced plan to decarbonise capitalism is one Paddy would have embraced with vim and verve.

I'm an economist by training and so appreciated deeply that Paddy was, fundamentally, so economically literate. He took over a party that had been a little corporatist in its thinking but Paddy reconnected the party to its liberal roots, asking what a policy meant for the individual. He emphasised Mill's idea of the power of education to unlock human potential. Without Paddy I'm not sure we would have had such ground-breaking Lib Dem achievements in government as the pupil premium, a development of his policy of a penny on income tax to improve education.

Finally, though a Liberal to his core, he sought to bring others into the Liberal tent. I took inspiration from Paddy when I called for a national government to deliver a people's vote. How he made the Liberal Democrats a big enough tent for MPs of other parties to join us should be our inspiration.

If elected leader, I will build on his legacy; Paddy, I miss you terribly.

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Jo Swinson – Anita Roddick

It was through Anita Roddick that I first discovered what it was to be a campaigner.

The Body Shop in the 1980s was ahead of its time: sourcing their ingredients ethically; promoting recycling; taking on its own industry on issues like body image in advertising. As a girl, I would go to the Body Shop to buy my strawberry or banana-shaped soap and sign the petitions at the till. That was how I discovered a whole range of causes: fair trade, cosmetic testing on animals, or another worthy cause.

It fuelled my early environmentalism – something that has stayed with me ever since. I even tried to persuade my Dad – a *Focus*-delivering Lib Dem – to vote Green at the European elections in 1989. He didn't, as he rightly argued that the Lib Dems were better placed to deliver green policies. One of the best gifts he ever gave me was a signed copy of Anita Roddick's book, *Business as Unusual*, which I keep in my parliamentary office to this day. By that time I was 16 or 17, and the book reinforced in me a passion for how business can be a force for good.

Unfortunately, I never got to meet Anita Roddick before she died in 2007. I have been lucky enough to meet people who knew her and worked with her, and the picture they painted to me was of a remarkable woman. She was a different kind of businessperson running a different kind of business. At a time when modern business was being defined by the Big Bang and the 'greed is good' culture of the Thatcher years, she defined an approach that declared that there was more to running a company than simply generating profits for shareholders. Her company was profitable,

but it was also about social justice, about making the world a better place one recycled plastic bottle or hemp bag at a time.

In many ways, her approach had more in common with the socially conscious capitalists of the Victorian era – social reformers like Robert Owen and the pioneers of the Co-op movement, or the Quaker-run businesses, like Cadbury, who built homes for their workers. They may have taken a more paternalistic approach but they shared an understanding of capitalism as an agent for social justice.

And it wasn't just her business philosophy that stood out like a sore thumb in the 1980s, it was who she was and how she conducted herself. She said what she thought; she dressed the way she wanted; she stood up for things she believed in. She was a determined, uncompromising, outspoken woman in an era of testosterone-fuelled alpha-male machismo – a great role model for an ambitious young woman like me.

Her example has stayed with me throughout my life and has undoubtedly shaped many of my views on policy, both explicitly and implicitly. Not only have I remained an avid environmentalist, but her vision of responsible business has shaped my thinking on business and the economy too. As an MP and a minister I have championed many of the causes I first discovered through the Body Shop – from excess plastic packaging to taking on unrealistic body image depictions in advertising. And it's why I have put creating an economy that puts people and planet first at the heart of my leadership campaign. I want to reward dynamic, innovative companies

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that focus on the long-term challenges our society faces – such as the climate emergency, health inequality and the challenges of an ageing population – and that empower individuals and prize the productivity that comes when workers are treated as human beings and not numbers on a spreadsheet.

But as important as policies and political philosophy are, Anita Roddick also ingrained in me something more practical. She was, first and foremost, a doer. She was an activist who used her career and her business as a platform to make change happen. Her example taught me that it is not enough to simply believe things, or to criticise things, but to get out there and do things to make the world better.

That spirit will be familiar to Liberal Democrats. We are a party of doers. We pound pavements in the rain. We campaign relentlessly for causes we believe in. We put in the hard work all year round because we are determined to make a difference. If I am fortunate enough to become Leader of the Liberal Democrats, above all else it is in that spirit that I want to lead.

Previous leadership candidates' heroes	
1999 (<i>Journal of Liberal History</i> 23)	
Jackie Ballard	David Penhaligon, Nancy Seear
Malcolm Bruce	David Lloyd George
Simon Hughes	David Lloyd George, Nelson Mandela
Charles Kennedy	Roy Jenkins
David Rendel	William Wilberforce, Nancy Seear
2006 (<i>Journal of Liberal History</i> 50)	
Menzies Campbell	Roy Jenkins, Jo Grimond
Simon Hughes	David Lloyd George, Nelson Mandela
Chris Huhne	David Lloyd George
2007 (<i>Journal of Liberal History</i> 57)	
Nick Clegg	Harry Willcock, Vaclav Havel
Chris Huhne	David Lloyd George
2015 (<i>Journal of Liberal History</i> 87)	
Tim Farron	William Beveridge, Simon Hughes
Norman Lamb	John Maynard Keynes
2017 (<i>Journal of Liberal History</i> 96)	
Vince Cable	Roy Jenkins

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