



## Liberal Democrat History Group Annual General Meeting Chair's Report for the Year 2022

COVID continued to damage the operation of the Group in two principal ways. Firstly, there was no 'in person' spring Lib Dem conference, and hence no opportunity for substantial membership recruitment. This was compounded by the cancellation of the autumn conference, following the death of the Queen. Secondly we are being hit by the inflation which has followed the pandemic. The cost of the Journal – printing and postage – and the hire of rooms and conference stalls have risen and are expected to be substantially higher next year.

This means that the Committee feels that it will be necessary to ask the AGM for an increase in the subscription rate, to apply from September 2023. This will be the first increase in costs to members since 2015. Our budget for the current year suggests that our costs per member amount to just over £32, of which the Journal costs nearly £24 and meetings nearly £7. The balance represents the cost of the website and administrative expenses.

We have changed the structure of membership to allow for online-only subscription to the Journal at a lower rate than the print only subscription. This is primarily for the convenience of members but also on environmental grounds. Given the cost of printing and postage, a substantial switch to online subscriptions would save costs and allow us to mitigate further inflation.

### Meetings

Although we were obliged to hold our last AGM virtually, it carried the advantage that the following discussion, on the 1992 General Election, could include Alison Holmes, who is based in California. Alison was the party's campaign co-ordinator in 1992. The other featured speaker was Dennis Kavanagh, who

wrote the definitive account of the election. The meeting was chaired by Don Foster, who shared some of his own experiences of the campaign and was able to call on Paul Tyler and Nick Harvey who were in the audience.

The next two meetings dealt in different ways with the complications of life in the balance of power. At the virtual spring conference we had Professor Paul Williamson (Durham) and Michael Meadowcroft spoke about working with Labour in the 1920s, with Michael drawing attention to the neglected but important role of the parties' chief whips in the 1923/4 crisis. Our summer meeting was hybrid, courtesy of the National Liberal Club, allowing the pleasure of meeting our speaker in person. Parliamentary business prevented Lord Lexden giving a Conservative view of the centennial of the fall of the Lloyd George coalition, but Dr Matthew Johnson (Durham) proved more than equal to the task of providing a balanced view of the event which was so influential on party political developments in the decade after the Great War.

For the autumn conference we had, unusually, planned two events, but of course neither happened. However, they were not lost but re-scheduled. In early October we were fortunate enough to have the journalist and historian Anne Perkins interview Vince Cable and his wife Rachel Smith on their new book, including why we failed to stop Brexit and on the pressures experienced by the families of those at the top of British politics.

The planned meeting on the contribution of the late Shirley Williams to Liberal Democrat and British politics is now planned as a highlight of the spring conference in 2023. For the discussion following the AGM we aim to

highlight the work of two of Asquith's lieutenants – Richard Haldane and Sir Edward Grey.

We were also pleased to advertise meetings on aspects of Liberal history organized by other groups, including a meeting on the Limehouse Declaration at the Mile End Institute, a conference on the Scottish Enlightenment at Glasgow University and the Jonathan Fryer Lecture on the Orpington By-election. Please let us know of other suitable events.

### **Journal of Liberal History**

Members will have noticed that the last two issues of the Journal have been produced in a more compact format. This was done primarily to improve its accessibility to users of tablets and other electronic devices but we are pleased to report that the reception has been unanimously positive even among those reading the print edition.

Naturally, we aim to maintain the high standards and the variety of the contents. I believe last year was a fine example of these dual aspirations. British Liberals and the American Civil War was not an obvious topic for a special issue. The British Liberal government preserved a cautious neutrality throughout but the response of leading individual Liberals was anything but, and ranged from wholehearted support for the Abolitionists of the North to unashamed backing for the Confederacy, all apparently justified using sound Liberal principles; from the *realpolitik* of Palmerston through the humanitarian confusions of Gladstone to the firm philosophy of J S Mill. We would like to thank Graham Lippiatt for suggesting the idea and for guest-editing this stimulating issue.

Other topics ranged from the radical anti-corruption Black Book in the early nineteenth century to an analysis of the 2022 local elections by Sir John Curtice; from an extended biography of Percy Molteno through the late Victorian controversy over the erection of a statue commemorating Oliver Cromwell, which involved a Liberal prime minister, to the nature of J S Mill's republicanism. Some debates never seem to get resolved. It is 100 years since the passing of the Lloyd George Coalition, the

government which successfully helped achieve victory in the First World War but, in recent popular estimation, also helped to lose the peace: the Second World War and the continued difficulties of the Middle East are still attributed to the deficiencies of the Versailles negotiations. Examining Lloyd George's role in the negotiations, the Tory peer Lord Lexden concluded that he was both wiser and more farsighted than his colleagues.

We are grateful to the editorial team and all the contributors and would encourage members to consider both new articles and to volunteer ideas for the future.

### **LDHG Online**

Our website has a huge volume of information on the history of the party to aid those wishing to learn and those undertaking research. As ever, we are looking to exploit this in the most effective manner. We are working on a redesign of the site to improve the accessibility and attractiveness of the presentation, though progress has been slower than anticipated.

We have bought a software programme for the administration of membership which is currently being tested to ensure we get the best from it. We hope that in the next year online subscribers will be able to self-administer their membership from the site and that this will give greater flexibility and convenience.

### **Thanks**

In the space available it is impossible to thank by name all who have helped the group during the year but I would like to give special thanks this year to the Editorial Board for their help, guidance and inspiration for ideas behind the *Journal* and for reviewing proposed articles to ensure that they continue to meet the high standards subscribers expect. I would also like to mention Neil Stockley, who has borne the brunt of the frustrations of assembling the speakers and chairs for our meetings against the background of COVID and fluctuating availability of rooms and conferences.

Finally my thanks to all who have served on the committee and behind the scenes.

**Tony Little**

**December 2022**

**LIBERAL DEMOCRAT HISTORY GROUP  
INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT  
YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2022**

	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>INCOME</b>		
Membership Renewals	10,717	10,465
New Memberships	700	708
	11,417	11,173
Donations	599	603
Sales	328	820
Royalties	22	21
Bank Interest	12	2
	<b>12,378</b>	<b>12,619</b>
 <b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Journal Printing	3,209	3,282
Journal Production	2,745	2,600
Journal Mailing	4,578	4,081
Conference Meetings & Other Events	619	620
Conference Stalls	33	199
Website	333	186
Membership Admin	193	134
Publications	-	64
Publications Postage	133	449
Bank Charges	91	120
Sundry Expenditure	-	-
	<b>11,934</b>	<b>11,735</b>
<b>SURPLUS FOR YEAR</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>884</b>

**LIBERAL DEMOCRAT HISTORY GROUP  
BALANCE SHEET  
30 SEPTEMBER 2022**

	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>
	£	£
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
<b>Cash at Bank</b>		
Current	140	390
Deposit	17,000	15,000
PayPal	265	-
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>17,405</b>	<b>15,390</b>
Debtors	1,072	2
Payments in Advance	-	-
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>18,477</b>	<b>15,392</b>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Receipts in Advance	(370)	(535)
Trade Creditors	(2,806)	-
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>(3,176)</b>	<b>(535)</b>
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>15,301</b>	<b>14,857</b>
<b>Represented by:</b>		
<b>ACCUMULATED FUNDS</b>		
Balance at 1 October	14,857	13,973
Surplus in Year	444	884
<b>Accumulated Funds</b>	<b>15,301</b>	<b>14,857</b>

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Paul J Fox CPFA - Hon Treasurer

**ACCOUNTANT'S REPORT**

We have examined, without carrying out an audit, the above Balance Sheet and attached Income & Expenditure Account prepared from the books and records of the Liberal Democrat History Group, and are satisfied that they are in accordance with those books and records.

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ANDREW THURBURN & Co  
Chartered Accountants  
38 Tamworth Road  
Croydon  
Surrey CR0 1XU

10th November 2022

## **Liberal Democrat History Group AGM 2022**

### **Minutes of the meeting held virtually on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022**

#### **1. *Welcome***

The Chair, Tony Little, welcomed members to the meeting and invited attendees to put any questions they might have into the Chat.

#### **2. *Apologies***

Mark Egan, Graham Lippiatt, Chris Millington and Neil Stockley.

#### **3. *Minutes of AGM 2021***

Accepted as a correct record.

#### **4. *Matters Arising***

None

#### **5. *Chair's Report***

The Chair noted that a written report from him had been circulated but said that he wished to highlight a few key points.

First that learning to live with COVID had led to some positive developments for the Group. It had survived the pandemic reasonably well financially, thanks to standing order subscriptions. Virtual meetings had ensured impressive attendance for speaker meetings and had enabled a wider recruitment of speakers and, with it, choice of topics. Virtual meetings had also enhanced the membership of and attendance at the Executive. The major drawback had been the loss of party conferences which had been the main route for the recruitment of new members. The Group needed to find ways to recruit people via the web and social media. In the meantime, the Chair urged members to encourage their friends and family to join the Group.

Other plans including making the Journal available electronically and with it a new e-membership subscription. Suitable software had been identified for it. The Journal would also be produced in a new format.

The Chair added that meetings on rivals had proved popular: David Lloyd George and Asquith and 'the two Davids'. It was hoped that a similar meeting could be held on Haldane and Grey. He also noted that he hoped that the meeting on American liberalism would set a good example for the future. The next meeting would be on working with Labour 1929-31 at the March conference.

The recent special issue had proved thought-provoking for those involved in current politics and emphasised the need to think about culture and ideas as well as policy. The next special issue would be on the American Civil War followed by one on Liberals and Empire.

Finally, the Chair noted the passing of Tony Greaves and Shirley Williams, both of whom had been friends of the Group.

The Chair's report was noted.

#### **6. *Report by the Treasurer***

The Treasurer introduced the accounts which had been circulated prior to the meeting and the recommendations associated with them.

The Treasurer noted that the Group had made a smaller surplus than it had in recent years. This was a result of fewer new members on lower sales. Virtual stands at on-line conferences had not really worked.

A revised edition of *Peace Reform and Liberation* was expected for the next Autumn Conference. This meant that costs were expected to be higher, but then so would sales. The balance sheet was healthy which should pull the group through things like the publication of new books.

AGREED: Recommendation that the accounts be formally adopted.

Recommendation that Andrew Thurburn be appointed the independent examiner of the accounts.

Recommendation that the subscription rates remain the same.

### **7. Report from Membership Secretary:**

Andrew Pinnock moved the membership secretary's report contained in the papers for the meeting.

The Membership Secretary reiterated the concern that the lack of in-person conferences made recruitment difficult. He reported that the Group currently had 384 paid up members, which was about 30 down on the previous year. Including the non-renewers, there were over 500 on the membership system.

The Membership Secretary's report was noted.

### **8. Elections**

The following were elected to the Committee unopposed: Chair: Tony Little; Secretary: David Cloke; Treasurer: Paul Fox; Membership Secretary: Andrew Pinnock; Journal Editor: Duncan Brack; Website: Chris Millington; Meetings Organiser: Neil Stockley; Ordinary Members: Daniel Duggan. Co-options: Malcolm Baines, Samuel Barratt, Russell Deacon; Elizabeth Johnson, York Membery, James Moore, Ruth Polling, Gianni Sarra, Devin Scobie and Joseph Walker.

The Chair thanked Russell Deacon, who was stepping down, for his contributions whilst a member of the Committee.

### **9. Any other business**

The Chair proposed that any other business or further questions be taken via the meeting chat. He then closed the meeting.