

## Liberal history news

year later, being re-elected with just a slight reduction in his majority. However, in 2002 he began to suffer heart problems. These continued and, after a number of heart attacks, he was persuaded that he should stand down at the next election, in 2005. It was a tribute to his personal work and the embedding of Liberal politics in the town, that he achieved the somewhat unusual trick in Liberal and Liberal Democrat history of his successor, Martin Horwood, retaining the constituency for the Liberal Democrats.

On the nomination of his party leader, Charles Kennedy, he became a life peer in 2005, taking the title Lord Jones of Cheltenham. Recently, in the light of his health problems he was permitted to contribute to Lords' sessions virtually, through which he was well able to remain effective with short and pointed questions to ministers. His Chief Whip and later Leader in the Lords, Dick Newby, said of him that: 'He was a diligent attender and a real pleasure to work with', and that: 'He was a mild-mannered man but had very deep convictions which he held with a passion'.

Newby also commented warmly on Jones' wry sense of humour. Another of Jones' interest was indicated by being the very convivial chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Beer Group. Nigel Jones is also possibly the only

parliamentarian to have been honoured by play stopping for a minute's applause at a match at his local football club.

Nigel Jones died at home several days after undergoing elective heart surgery. Perhaps

the most succinct and neutral summary of the man came from the late veteran biographer of MPs, Andrew Roth: 'Clear-minded, practical and egalitarian.'

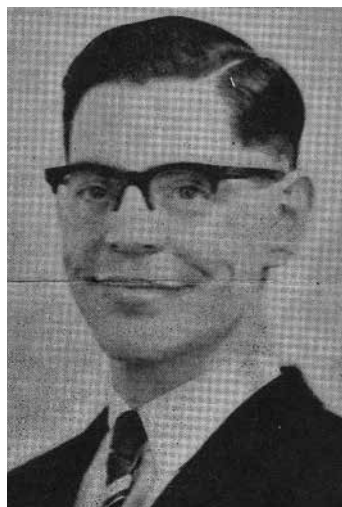
*Michael Meadowcroft*

## Liberal Party Candidate Election Photos

In an effort to build a comprehensive parliamentary candidate portrait database, *Journal of Liberal History* subscriber Graem Peters is tracking down old election addresses of Liberal Party candidates.

The project aims to preserve a photographic record of candidates that can be widely viewed and freely used. Virtually every Liberal candidate will have produced one election communication that would have contained a portrait. Liberal Party HQ, however, did not collect these portraits of their candidates, so any that still exist will either be in libraries or in the possession of relatives or old Liberal Party members. Many portraits that were reproduced by local newspapers at the time only exist as low-quality images and are restricted by media copyright.

If you have any old Liberal candidate election communications with a portrait, either scanned or in hard-copy form, please email [graempeters@hotmail.com](mailto:graempeters@hotmail.com).



A typical candidate photo: Patrick Furnell, Liberal candidate for East Grinstead at the 1959 election

# Letters to the Editor

## The Two Davids (1)

To give the label '1986 Liberal Assembly fiasco' to the debate on Liberal defence policy

(report of fringe meeting on 'The Two Davids: Owen versus Steel', *Journal of Liberal*

*History* 115, summer 2022) is misleading at best, but in reality is very inaccurate and insulting to the democratic way in which Liberal policy was (and by and large still is) determined.

The Conference Committee accepted for debate an amendment to the defence policy motion – thereby producing an excellent debate – which was carried by some 25 votes – close, but nevertheless a clear decision. This was an example of the Liberal Assembly at its best.

James Moore's report implies that the party hierarchy should have 'fixed' the debate so that it gave Owen and Steel the decision they wanted. However, the party has always emphasised that our policies are determined democratically by our members (i.e. those who attend our conferences) so he should know that 'fixing' is unacceptable. The subsequent attempts by the party's leadership to rubbish the outcome was a shoddy, disgraceful performance, not in any way in keeping with our party's ethos.

Just one more point, for the sake of historical accuracy: James Moore's report does not in fact mention who moved the amendment but in his letter on the topic (*Journal of Liberal History* 116, autumn 2022), Michael Meadowcroft says that: 'contrary to the meeting report, it was Simon Hughes who moved the key

amendment'. This was not the case; Simon summed up the debate on the amendment, but for some reason, Roger Hayes, who was chair of the Conference Committee, insisted that I should move it.

*John Smithson*

### The Two Davids (2)

Reading the latest issue of the *Journal of Liberal History* (116, autumn 2022), I was more impressed by Michael Meadowcroft's short obituary of David Chidgey than by his long rambling letter which contained at least two mis-statements.

First, that I 'didn't even like his party', which he justifies with a reference to page 135 of my autobiography *Against Goliath*. Anyone reading that can see I referred there specifically to the Liberal Party Council (subsequently and thankfully abolished!). Second, that some of my speeches were written by others. Not true; while the late Richard Holme had much regular and appreciated input, the end text was always my own.

Only two things need to be remembered about Mr Meadowcroft's contribution to Liberal history: 1) He was elected MP for Leeds West in 1983 and defeated four years later, having ignored all advice to nurture his constituency instead of touring the country at weekends with his views. 2) That having opposed the creation of the Liberal Democrats

he set up the supposed Liberal Party with himself as leader from 1989 to 2007 during which he destructively supported candidates against sitting Lib Dem MPs and failed to get any – including himself – elected.

*David Steel*

### Trevor Wilson

Trevor Wilson's (Obituary, *Journal of Liberal History* 116, autumn 2022) *The Downfall of the Liberal Party 1914–1935* is an interesting, and unusual, case of an author making a point of correcting his readers over their assumptions about his book.

In a new preface to the paperback edition in 1968 he referred to his allegory in 1966 of the Liberal Party as an ailing man run down by a rampant omnibus in the shape of the First World War. 'The allegory' he wrote, 'appears to have made its point too well'. He had originally thought of writing an account of Liberal decline from 1918 onwards but on reflection thought 1914 a better starting point. But 'for a book like this the starting point is not of paramount importance.' He never intended to argue that the war was the main cause of decline: 'This book, though it has a number of theses, has no overall thesis at all. Its object is to tell a story.'

*Martin Pugh*