



Liberal Democrat History Group Annual General Meeting

6.00 p.m. Monday 27th January 2025

In-person: Violet Bonham Carter Room, National Liberal Club,
1 Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2HE

Online, via Zoom: to register, go to the History Group website
at www.liberalhistory.org.uk, and click on the event page for
Breakthrough: The Liberal Democrat Performance in the 2024
Election, at 6.30pm.

Agenda and calling notice

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the AGM held on Monday 29th January 2024
3. Report from the Chair on activities during 2024
4. Report from the Treasurer and annual accounts
5. Report from the Membership Secretary
6. Election of Officers for 2025–26:
 - Chair
 - Secretary
 - Treasurer
 - Membership Secretary
 - Five ordinary members of the Executive CommitteeNominations, including self-nominations, may be made to the Secretary, in writing or by email (address below), at any time up until the start of the AGM.
7. Any other business

The minutes of the 2024 AGM, the annual accounts for 2023–24 and the Chair’s report on activities during 2024 are available on the News section of our website at:

www.liberalhistory.org.uk/news/

Following the AGM, at 6.30pm:

Breakthrough: the Liberal Democrat performance in the 2024 election

The outcome of the general election on 4 July 2024 was extraordinary. Compared to the 2019 election, the Liberal Democrats' share of the vote rose by less than 1 per cent, to 12.2 per cent, but the number of MPs jumped from 11 (plus 4 by-election gains) to 72, the highest number since 1923.

Highly effective targeting of campaigning resources and a narrowly focused message, combined with an unprecedented collapse in the Conservative vote and a high degree of tactical voting by anti-Tory voters meant that, for the first time ever, the first-past-the-post electoral system did not seriously disadvantage the party. With 10.9% of the total number of MPs, the discrepancy between Liberal votes and seats is the smallest since 1910. Traditional areas of strength in south-west and northern England and northern Scotland lost in 2015 were regained, and joined by new seats in East Anglia and, especially, in southern England.

Discuss the Liberal Democrat campaign and what the result means for the party with **Professor Paula Surridge** (Bristol University) and **Dave McCobb** (Director of Field Campaigns, Liberal Democrats). Chair: **Lord Wallace of Saltaire**.

The meeting will start at 6.30pm, following the Annual General Meeting of the Liberal Democrat History Group, which will start at 6.30pm. The combined meeting will be a hybrid meeting, both in-person in the National Liberal Club and online via Zoom. For Zoom access, register via the History Group website at: www.liberalhistory.org.uk/events/. For in-person attendance there is no need to register.

Liberal Democrat History Group AGM 2024 Minutes of the meeting held at the National Liberal Club and online on 29 January 2024

1. Welcome

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

Those who registered for on-line attendance at the meeting, including the AGM: Dave Besag, George Beveridge, Jackie Biggs, Phoebe Butcher, David Cannon, Amelia Castledine, Graham Colley, Andy Connell, Craig Cross, Alistair Dow, Simon Drage, David Dutton, Andrew Ellis, Nick Farnden, Lynne Featherstone, David Forrester, Katheryn Gallant, Roy Gregg, Andrew Haldane, Jim Hancock, Peter Herlinger, Grace Hickey, Desmond Hillary, Catherine Hodgkinson, John Hughes, Sue Kendrick, Margaret Lally, Sandra Lawman, Ewan Lawry, Caron Lindsay, Robert Maddock, Thomas Mandeville, Michael Meadowcroft, Christopher Millington, Rosemary Mortimer, Paul Noblet, Graeme Peters, Chris Platts, William (Bill) Powell, Alice Prochaska, David Raw, Stewart Rayment, David Rogers, Alessandra Rossetti, Margaret Rowley, Chloe Royle, Richard Sanderson, Gianni Sarra, Iain Sharpe, John Simpkins, Rhys Slater, Andy Smith, Barry Standen, Michael Steed, David Steel, Alexander Stennings, David Stevens, Joshua Sullivan, Kenneth Symon, Nigel Taylor, Mike Tuffrey, Paul Tyler, Stephen Vaughan, Susan Watson, Charles Welchman, Andrew Weston and David Williams

Those present in the room: Christy Bailey, Soon-Yeng Chiam, Craig Cross, Maeve Duncan, Paul Fox, Roger Jenking, Mark Johnston, Daryl Joyce, Thomas Knight, Derek Macauley, Gary McGill, Lisa McGill, Andrew Mackinlay, John Macrory, John Mercer, Patrick Mitchell, Simon Morrow, Richard O'Brien, John Payne, Quintin Peppiatt, Chris Read, Nick South, Cec Tallack, Victoria Trelinska, Jonathan Wallace,

2. Apologies

David Cloke, John Death, Suzanne Fletcher, Keith House, York Membership and James Moore.

3. Minutes of AGM 2022

The Chair noted that these had been circulated on-line. He invited any corrections or comments, They were 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 in advance of the meeting but said that he wished to highlight a few key points.

The Chair began by noting that 2023 had, in many respects, been a normal year for the Group after the prolonged period of COVID. He, therefore, felt it was an opportunity to reflect on what had been gained and lost over the period.

The Group also had a relatively strong balance sheet after lockdown because some of its usual costs were not incurred. But there had also been lost opportunities. The return of in person meetings had been very beneficial for the Group as it meant that it got to talk to members and engage with them in a way that was not possible on-line. Nonetheless, virtual and hybrid meetings meant that members from across the country could attend the Group's meetings and that a record had been made of them. These recordings were available via the Group's website.

The most significant negative impact on the Group had been inflation, especially the cost of printing and packaging the Journal, the cost of which had gone up more than general inflation. The Chair

noted that the executive had tried to shelter members from these increased costs by making on-line subscriptions available at a lower cost. This had meant modifying the design of the Journal to make it clearer for on-line reading.

The third recent negative had been the need to increase the subscriptions to the Group and the complexity of getting standing orders changed. This had to be done by the individual member and, unfortunately, the banks appeared to have become less efficient at processing them which had required the Group having to go back to members on a number of occasions.

The Group's most successful meeting of the year had been the launch of *What have the Liberals Ever Done for Us* at the Autumn Conference in Bournemouth helped by the thoughtful engagement by parliamentarians and the audience. As a consequence, the Group had almost sold out of the copies it brought to conference. The booklet itself was also an achievement representing the first time the Group had attempted to provide a continuous overview over a 300-year period.

The other conference meeting had been one celebrating the life of Shirley Williams, which the Chair noted perhaps reflected the fact that there was a whole generation of party members that had joined since Shirley had retired. The two meetings held at the Club were given by authors of books on key Edwardian figures (Haldane and Grey) and on the strange death and survival of Liberalism. The next meeting would be at the Spring Conference on the Greening of Liberalism.

The Chair continued by noting that the Journal continued to be the Group's flagship publication. It was now 30 years and 120 issues old and had grown considerably from the four pages of A4 paper at the start. The Chair noted that the editor, Duncan Brack, had built a great team which produced a publication of growing authority. New ideas and new areas of research would, of course, be welcome. The Journal also had guest editors for its special issues, the most recent of which was on David Lloyd George. The Chair expressed his thanks to the guest editors for their efforts.

The Group's presence on Facebook and Twitter enhanced awareness and stimulated debate, thanks to the work of Gianni Sarra and Chris Millington. The executive had been frustrated by the lack of progress on the website but hoped that the new version would enable members to manage their own membership details.

The Chair concluded by thanking all the parliamentarians, academics and authors who had spoken at events, written articles or peer reviewed them. Without the last the Group would not be able to guarantee the quality of what it produced. He also thanked the members of the committee, the editorial team and the volunteers that ran the stall at conferences and ensured that the Group continued to be able to recruit.

The Chair's report was noted.

6. Report by the Treasurer

The Treasurer introduced himself and the accounts which had been circulated prior to the meeting. He noted that the Group had made loss in 2022-23 for the first time in many years. This had led to the proposal at the last AGM to increase the subscription for hard copies of the Journal. This had come into effect with the new membership year in October. Members on the old subscription rate simply had to send a further £5 to ensure receipt of a hard copy. Members would be given two editions to amend their subscription and would then be moved to on-line only by default.

The Treasurer also noted that face to face meetings were increasingly expensive, though the NLC had kindly made the room available for free. He also reported that, with increasing interest rates, he had moved money into the Charity Bank's one-year account, which would generate some income.

A members asked about the bank charges noted in the accounts. The Treasurer replied that they were almost entirely Pay Pal costs which had high transaction charges. Members could help by paying directly from their bank or, in future, using Square, which had lower fees. He also reported that the income via PayPal was transferred to the main bank account at the end of each month.

The Chair also noted that if the arrangement with the NLC could not continue the Group would have to look to an alternative venue, charging for events or moving wholly on-line. He would welcome any feedback on the options.

AGREED: Recommendation that the accounts be formally adopted.

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

7. Report from Membership Secretary:

Unfortunately, the Membership Secretary could not be heard in the room, though there was no problem hearing him on-line. As a consequence, it was agreed that Andrew Pinnock would circulate a written report.

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:

Ordinary Member: Neil Stockley

The following were co-opted to the Committee for 2024-25: Nicholas Alderton, Malcolm Baines, John Death, Andrew Loader, York Membrey, James Moore, Gianni Sarra, Joseph Walker

The Chair thanked the following retiring members of the Committee for their contributions: Daniel Duggan, Elizabeth Johnson and Ruth Polling. He also thanked Neil Stockley for his work as Meetings Organiser and for staying on in post for an extra year.



Liberal Democrat History Group Annual General Meeting Chair's Report for the Year 2024

The early general election of July 2024 proved a moment when the Liberal Democrats opened a new chapter in their history, with more MPs than at any time since the 1920s, a more efficient distribution of Liberal Democrat votes and a more diverse group of parliamentarians. No doubt this will provide us, as a history group, with much material for future analysis; a process begun in the autumn issue of the *Journal of Liberal History* and which we plan to continue with a different perspective at the meeting to follow the AGM in January 2025.

Meetings

Although interrupted by the general election we were able to provide a full programme of meetings in 2024. Increasingly, it is proving practical to record these meetings and to make them available through our website. We hope members find this a valuable addition to our service.

The winter meeting shed a very different light on the Irish Famine of the mid-1840s. Not on the tragedy itself or the scale of suffering, unsparingly laid out by Liam Kennedy, but on the limitations imposed on the British government response. Charles Read suggested that Russell's minority Whig government were handicapped not by a laissez-faire ideology but rather by financial crisis analogous to that created by Liz Truss.

At the spring LD conference Neil Carter outlined the slow response of British political parties to environmental issues but acknowledged that they had now become a differentiator between parties. (Lady) Kate Parminter outlined the long history of Liberal engagement with these issues and how they aligned with Liberal values of stewardship and broadening empowerment.

The delayed summer meeting was perhaps more controversial, as Peter Shambrook argued for the responsibility of the Lloyd George Coalition for the post-Great-War settlement of the Middle East, which may be seen as the progenitor of the current regional complications.

For the autumn conference meeting, we gave David Laws a platform to enlarge upon the arguments in his book *Serpents, Goats and Turkeys*, as to whether over the last century Labour has been a friend or enemy of Liberals and Liberal Democrats, a position which has changed with the waxing and waning of Labour popularity. David was complemented by Jim Wallace who spoke of his experience of coalition with Labour in the devolved Scottish parliament.

We are of course very grateful to all our speakers who have given us their time and knowledge but also to the members of the parliamentary party, both Lords and Commons, who have ably chaired our meetings and been useful interrogators of our speakers. We would also like to thank the National Liberal Club for continuing to provide a venue for many of our meetings.

We are planning a meeting on the innovative Liberal economic policies of the 1920s/30s for the spring and are exploring the possibility of a one-day academic workshop in the summer to give university colleagues the opportunity to introduce us to the new research being undertaken in our field.

Journal of Liberal History

The highlight of our flagship *Journal of Liberal History* this year has to be the delayed special issue on Liberal Politics and Empire. I must give

special thanks to the guest editors, Stéphanie Prévost and Iain Sharpe, who took on a heavier burden than we had hoped for them. The relationship between Liberalism and Empire was complex, changing not only with time but with ambiguities at any given time and we are sure there are many areas yet to be explored and debated.

The topic of our next special issue has already been agreed as the survival of the party in the twentieth century and Malcolm Baines has kindly agreed to be the editor. A number of authors have already been approached.

In other issues, this past year, we have covered the range from the origins of organised Liberal thought in the mid-seventeenth century through to the general election of 2024; from interwar Finnish Liberalism to the more provincial consideration of Cobden's relationship with the constituencies he represented.

LDHG Online

We are pleased to report that, finally, we have made progress on the updating of our website, though here again the general election imposed an additional delay, as we have been employing Prater Raines to do the work and naturally, the election had a priority call on their resources. Inevitably such transformations can give rise to teething issues and we hope members will bear with us if they arise and alert us to any problems they may notice. The hope is that the new site will allow for more automation of the membership administration but more importantly that it will act as a means for providing more information about our history.

Our social media presence is modest but growing and a further mechanism for alerting the wider world to our presence and the part Liberalism plays in the life of the nation. We are conscious of the discontent that the change of ownership of Twitter/X generated and what might be considered the deterioration of the tone of debate on that platform. Consequently while not dropping X, we have added Bluesky to the media in which we operate.

Our website provides for enquiries from members and the public. While some of these reflect the routine of administration, we also

get intriguing questions about party history. Most of these are ably answered by Graham Lippiatt or other helpers but a while ago we received an enquiry which stumped us. What were the circumstances in which an award was made to Tommy, Mr T. Durrant's horse, after the 1906 election, for 20 years' service to the Liberal cause?

Publications

While there have been no new publications this year, we are planning a new booklet for 2025. *Liberalism*, our summary of the main components of liberal thought has served as a strong introduction to liberal philosophy over a long period. We intend to offer a revised updated text in our new format to match the *Journal* and our booklet, *What Have the Liberals Ever Done For Us?*, by the autumn. We are also contemplating a new *Dictionary of Liberal Biography* but this would be a longer term project as it is likely to require multiple contributors, self-publication and a substantial commitment of funds for the cost of printing. In the meantime we have worked in cooperation with authors such as Vince Cable and David Laws to allow members to buy their works at a discount.

Thanks

Thanks must first be given to our loyal membership who make the work of the Group possible and whose comments make it worthwhile.

Secondly, we would like to thank all those working behind the scenes contributing to and editing the *Journal* and website, our primary means of communicating with the wider world.

Lastly, I would like to thank my fellow committee members for all they have done during the year in directing the group. We have had some new faces on the committee refreshing our thought processes. We would still like to broaden the gender balance and increase diversity to ensure we can provide what members want from us.

Tony Little

December 2024

**LIBERAL DEMOCRAT HISTORY GROUP
INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2024**

	2024	2023
	£	£
INCOME		
Subscriptions	13,625	11,500
Donations	1,008	560
Sales	3,246	2,758
Royalties	57	16
Bank Interest	943	65
	18,879	14,899
EXPENDITURE		
Journal Printing	3,612	3,681
Journal DTP & Sub-editing	2,704	2,844
Journal Mailing	5,022	4,859
Conference Meetings & Other Events	2,103	1,895
Conference Stalls	964	872
Website	1,350	390
Membership Admin	69	323
Publications	1,618	1,081
Publications Postage	278	91
Bank Charges	204	252
Sundry Expenditure	35	91
	17,959	16,379
SURPLUS / (DEFICIT) FOR YEAR	920	(1,480)

**LIBERAL DEMOCRAT HISTORY GROUP
BALANCE SHEET
30 SEPTEMBER 2024**

	2024	2023
	£	£
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash at Bank		
Current	735	1,588
Deposit	-	500
Charity Bank	16,915	12,500
PayPal	-	503
Sub-total	17,650	15,091
Debtors	595	367
Payments in Advance	-	125
Total Current Assets	18,245	15,583
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Receipts in Advance	(1,565)	(1,295)
Trade Creditors inc Provision	(1,939)	(467)
Sub-total	(3,504)	(1,762)
NET CURRENT ASSETS	14,741	13,821
Represented by:		
ACCUMULATED FUNDS		
Balance at 1 October	13,821	15,301
Surplus in Year	920	(1,480)
Accumulated Funds	14,741	13,821

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.

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

3rd December 2024