

EVENTS

Saturday 25th March.

S.E. Regional Conference at Eastbourne. See back page.

Tuesday 28th March.

SPONSORED SWIM by Alderman Catherine Morrish

Catherine once more takes to the water to elicit your donations and sponsorship in order to raise much needed funds.

Please pledge to her by phone at: 01243 263989 (see page 10)

Saturday 20th May 10.30am to noon.

Coffee Morning (incl Raffle) - Hosted by Jason & Greg.

2B Albert Terrace, High St. Bognor Regis. (Opposite the Post Office)

We are planning a **Spring Fair** soon. We will post fundraising and social events on our web-site too (see heading for details).

CONGRATULATIONS MING

Congratulations from this Area Party to Sir Menzies Campbell on his success at being elected Leader of the Party. On accepting the position Sir Ming said that he will encourage the brightest and the best to join our party. He will lead the party in a crusade against poverty.

He said the party would champion freedom, fairness and environment protection, would be a party of democratic revolution, would tackle the secrecy which still pervades far too much of Britain, would be a party which looks beyond our shores, seeking the prosperity, security and sustainable development which is dependent on international action, would be a party which pledges to take power from Westminster and Whitehall to give it to people in their own communities.

Ming said that, under his leadership, precaution and consolidation would not do. He said there were great prizes to be won for liberals and progressives. The task now, he said, is to build a strong effective Liberal Democrat party to fight for a greener, fairer, decent Britain at peace with itself at home and admired abroad. That task, he said, begins now.



Chairman's Inner Thoughts

I know that the party has in the past been quite keen on the idea of regional government, but the resounding 'no' in the referendum held in the North East last year has I think caused us to revisit this policy. What worries me and I am sure many others, is how this government is trying to foist regionalism on a country that clearly isn't regionally-minded, via an incremental back door approach and at the same time weaken local government.

If you don't believe me, look at what has happened in recent years and is ongoing:

The Probation Service use to be administered by local government; this has now been usurped by the state.

The administration of the courts service use to be undertaken by local government; ditto. Further Education previously undertaken by local government; ditto.

Health authorities and PCT's etc have had more reorganisations than I've had hot dinners, under this and previous governments. The current plans are to amalgamate many existing trusts into larger units.

Ambulance Services are also being merged; I think Sussex is about to join with Surrey and Kent.

The government is now trying to strip Local Education Authorities of some of their remaining powers, by resurrecting the old Tory policy of Grant Maintained Schools.



Local Party Chair, Greg Burt

Fire Authorities. Many have already moved away from their traditional role within County Councils to become separate precepting organisations. Central government has now forced each county brigade to ditch its own control rooms in favour of regional ones, much to the worry of those in the field.

More recently, the Home Secretary *invited* Police forces, who, like the fire brigades have already become separate authorities away from their traditional home within County Councils, to suggest suitable mergers with adjoining forces. Whilst the official reason is to help combat terrorism and more complicated crime, this is just a smokescreen. They gave the game away on this one when Hampshire Police were told that they couldn't merge with Dorset or Wiltshire as these latter two forces were in the South West Region, and that it would only be allowed to merge with a fellow force

FUNDRAISING NEWS

Jason & Greg's 'Nine-pin Skittles and Supper' evening raised **£96.25**

A Fish & Chip Supper was held in Bognor Regis recently and the net amount raised was **£151.17**.

The Bingo Evening just before Christmas in Littlehampton raised **£55**.

Thank you to all who attended.

in the South East Region in which, apparently, it is situated. Many forces already work together on many matters; larger forces will mean that resources are targeted at the really big urban areas and everyone else, who pays towards the ever growing police part of the council tax, will have to go without as the crimes that worry them are not as important, even though everyone who is involved in community activities will tell you, it is the small local things that matter most to people. Final evidence on the police argument is that when Tony Blair was trying to get support for his plan to lock suspected terrorists up for 90 days, he persuaded several Chief Constables to lobby MP's. Such a task would be so much easier if there were fewer forces. The only power that this government has given to local authorities is in respect of licensing, and even then they have made them fund it locally. Here the government is obviously saving the money it use to cost them when it was all administered through the Magistrates Courts.

Let us not forget that this government have now stripped Counties of their duty to

prepare County Structure Plans. Only after a battle have they been allowed to have an input, in helping to prepare Regional Plans.

I have always believed in strong local government; whilst there is always room for improvement and occasionally boundaries of councils and other authorities will need tweaking, we should defend it all costs. The continual move to divest more power in fewer hands, in fewer Town and County Halls, can only lead to more remote local government that can be manipulated more and more by this centralising government.

If anyone thinks that I am an old fuddy duddy by believing in local government that really is local, then I plead guilty. A pluralism of local government leads to more innovation and best practice; centralised power is more easily abused and is something that all Liberal Democrats should fight against if we really believe in liberalism and true democracy.

(Our congratulations to Greg Burt on his election as Local Party Chair.)



CONGRATULATIONS to our two latest winners:

1st Prize: (£25.50) to Mr W Robinson

2nd Prize: (£10.80) to Mr A G Haffenden

As you can see, the more shares you have - the more times you win!!

Details of how you could become a regular winner from

Nick Wiltshire or ring 01903 716582

Apologies... again!

We are sorry that our normal quarterly Newsletter is late again. This is due to editorial difficulties. Sadly our Editor, Ian Menzies has been taken ill* and the rest of us are buckling down to try and fill all the jobs Ian normally does.. - some task! We hope to publish more regularly again with the next Issue. *(see page 6)

NOW WE ARE

63

Elation, Thrilled, Overjoyed, Ecstatic are superlatives used by many people who have spoken to me since the Dunfermline and West Fife by-election. An excellent candidate in Willie Rennie ensured a resounding victory.

I always thought it could be a winnable seat but after our recent 'difficulties', blown up by the press, I thought we would have a tough time. What made me so proud to be a Lib Dem was firstly watching our then three leadership contenders on Dimpleby's Question Time; such high calibre in our Party.

Two hours later at 1.00am (OK. I don't sleep too well!!) on the radio news, I heard the staggering result. Sleep was out of the question then, I was euphoric (another superlative!). A cup of camomile tea was needed but, I relived the joy again at the next news. All Friday the phone rang with happy members and activists rejoicing.

This proves one thing; whatever is going on in the press, keep focused, keep your head down, campaign honestly on Liberal Democrat policies, and don't waver. This is the winning formula for all of us.

Well done, Willie, welcome to Parliament - our 63rd MP.

Barbara Roberts

(remember me??!!)

THIS YEAR'S MAIN CONFERENCE:

Any fully paid up member can attend 'on the day' by producing your Membership Card (no more need for a photo as they are now issued 'on the spot').

The cost is normally £15 for a whole day, and £11 for an afternoon session only..

Mark the dates in your new diary NOW.... see you there!



The Main
Party Conference
16th - 21st September
BRIGHTON

BERYL FRANCE

Beryl was an active member of the community in Bognor Regis involving herself in the Music School in Sudley Road and various drama productions. I will however remember her for the support she gave us as Lib-Dems. When Pamela Peskett was PPC she worked for her and provided her with food and accommodation in Hawthorn Road as well as getting a non member to stuff envelopes for us. (I am in touch with this lady since Beryl's funeral on 1st December and both Pam and I had a meal with her on 21st January) This sums up Beryl's skill in getting people together, as even after the funeral when we ate together at the Chinese restaurant in Felpham my table were planning to keep in touch.

Another side of her life was the way she took on her illness. She wrote to Esther Rantzen with a letter she had sent to friends saying that she was treating her cancer like eating a large elephant, taking one bite at a time. She asked that friends treated her as they normally did filling her remaining life with stories and visits. She planned her own funeral and asked that Shripney Way had dozens of daffodils in her memory in the spring. As luck would have it the Town Force are planning to do just that so we can remember her in flowers, another hobby of hers.

She also lent her home for a committee room for a Pevensey by-election when Jeanette Warr stood and we came a very close second. Even when she had lost her hair she was still making a stand for those who needed assistance with their refuse bins, appearing on the front page of the local Observer. She is also due to appear on television soon when her final months were filmed. For those of us who feel a little down at this present time let us take note of her spirit and carry on her sterling work.

You cannot kill off memories.

Cllr Ros Kissell



WE REMEMBER THEM

Councillor Nick Wiltshire had the honour of laying the Littlehampton wreath on behalf of the Party on Remembrance Day 2005.



BARBARA ROBERTS - OUR NEW PRESIDENT

The Local Party is honoured by Barbara's acceptance of becoming our President.

As a result of the Annual General Meeting in December, the following officers have been elected to the Local Party Executive Committee:

Alderman Catherine Morrish (Vice-President)
 Greg Burt (Chair)
 Cllr Roslyn Kissell (Vice-Chair)
 Cllr Ian Menzies (Secretary)
 John Murphy (Treasurer)
 Paul Graydon (Membership Secretary)
 Cllr Simon McDougal (Parliamentary Spokesman)
 Cllr Brian Dodd
 Alan Fletcher
 Cllr Ian Harding
 Cllr David Jones
 Cllr Martin Lury
 Cllr Dave Leggatt
 Cllr Francis Oppler
 Gary Smith
 Cllr Dr James Walsh
 Cllr Mrs Jeannette Warr
 Cllr Paul Wells
 Cllr Nick Wiltshire

IAN - GET WELL SOON!

Local Party Secretary, Cllr Ian Menzies, was taken ill following a stroke during the earlier part of February.

In addition to his many Council duties and work at 'national level', Ian does a great deal of mostly unseen work for the Local Party, and it is proving quite something for the rest of us to even try to fill the current void. We all wish him well and hope that he will soon be out of hospital and able to recuperate gently at home.



Stop those annoying letters and phone calls!!

If you renew your membership each year by cheque, but occasionally forget to pay it on the due date, the chances are that you get reminder letters and even more annoying, a phone call from us whilst you're having a meal or watching your favourite soap!! If this is the case, we are truly sorry, but we value your membership and are keen not to lose you.

You can put a stop to these nuisance letters and calls though. All you have to do is to agree to pay your membership fee by Debit Debit.

The advantages to you and your local party are several fold:

You don't have to remember to send it.

You save a stamp.

We don't have to bother you.

More of your membership fee is directed to the local party, so it is spent on local elections and campaigns run by the local party on local issues.

What better reasons could you have?

If we have convinced you, then please contact the Membership Secretary, Paul Graydon, Freepost 21437, Bognor Regis, PO22 6BR

or 'phone 01903 716582

CHARLES KENNEDY

Whilst people can read the tributes that were paid to Charles in the LibDem News and those of us who were at the Meeting the Challenge meeting in London heard the then four contenders promise to continue his legacy, it is also important to concentrate on the other areas of his leadership. Charles did not cosy up to Labour but had his own distinctive way of dealing with issues. His stance on Iraq earned him immense respect in the country and this was born out in research into the 2005 general election, when his personal ratings soared way above those of Blair. Howard's don't even deserve a mention. With him as leader we increased our vote by over 1 million and if we had had P.R. this would have been reflected in our seats. However we still increased our seats as well as the number of women in the House of Commons. I have no doubt, as do the contenders, that he will be back after he has his illness under control. In the meantime let us carry on the good work. This is the best way to pay tribute to him and wish him and his family all the best for 2006.

Cllr Roslyn Kissell, ViceChair

There is no such thing as a holiday in London the first week in May!!

Most of you will remember our friend Cllr Sue Stears from the London Borough of Sutton. I have been invited, very kindly, to a couple of their Council functions recently, where all Sue's colleagues were most welcoming and very friendly. Could this be because I shall be in 'town' the first week in May when the Boroughs are up for full elections? Spot the catch? Mind you, it will be good to see a council get re-elected (hope!) after being in control for 20 years and just received 4 stars for excellent service. I have promised Paul Graydon I will write you an entertaining piece after the event (successful, I hope!). By the way, I've been told they drink champagne whether they win or not! I'm packing my case now!!

p.s.

Sitting next to Council Leader, Sean Brennan, at a dinner I learned how much they miss a previous councillor of theirs. Their loss is our gain of course as David Biss came to live here and is now a much respected and hardworking District Councillor at Arun for us.

Barbara Roberts

Sutton, the longest ever Lib-Dem run authority, celebrates becoming a 4-star authority under the Audit Commission. *Front row left: Lib Dem peer, Cllr Graham Tope; Front row centre: Cllr Sean Brennan (Leader), with others members of the 43-strong Lib Dem Council Group.*

(Sue Stears-arrowed!)



Ever thought of standing up for your community?

When you are actively involved in local politics, as soon as you think that one set of elections are out of the way, than another suddenly come on to the horizon.

Locally, our next challenge is the elections for Arun District, Littlehampton Town and Bognor Regis Town Councils in May 2007. That may seem a long way off, but we aim to have all candidates provisionally in place by this spring, so that they can start campaigning by way of delivering newsletters etc and getting themselves known by being in all the right places at all the right times. We are currently asking all existing Lib Dem councillors on these councils to let us know if they want to restand, so that will give us an idea of how many spaces there are to fill. This is where you come in.

Being a councillor, like many things in life is largely what you make of it. Some choose to sit on every committee there is, others prefer just to concentrate on one or two areas, for example, things that interest them or subjects that may particularly be relevant to their ward. Either way, all we ask is that you do your very best to uphold the broad principles of Liberal Democracy, be a team player and are prepared to help the party help you get elected and stay elected. The latter point refers to good old delivering, some door knocking and also holding/attending fund raising events.

Liberal Democrats councillors regularly tell us that the most satisfying role of being a councillor is when you can help a constituent and make life slightly better for them; that can mean anything from assisting with a housing problem, to getting the street light fixed outside their house that hasn't been working for 6 months.

If we have whetted your appetite, why not give us a call to discuss it further?

We look forward to hearing from you.

Greg Burt 01243 862287



DINNER GOES DOWN A REAL TREAT!

An originally unintended treat was in store for those of us who attended the East Arun Dinner in February when the Guest Speaker was Chris Huhne, one of the Party's leadership contenders. Despite his busy schedule, Chris spent the whole evening at our neighbouring Local Party's Branch annual social gathering. In addition to chatting informally to most of the guests he gave a very positive and up-lifting after dinner speech. Amongst many topics Chris spoke to some extent about environmental issues. Sir Ming has this week appointed Chris as Shadow Environment Spokesman. We congratulate Chris Huhne on his most successful leadership campaign. Well done, Chris, your time will certainly come! - and, thank you for making the evening even more enjoyable and interesting.

BY-ELECTION in RUSTINGTON

Following the sad death of Cllr Harold Parris (Con) there is to be a by-election on April 20th for the Arun District Council seat of Rustington West. The Lib-Dem candidate is local activist, Andrew Lauretani. Details of how you can help from Daniel Purchase (Agent) on: 01903 256299 or email daniel@eald.org.uk

ALDERMAN CATHERINE MORRISH'S SPONSORED SWIM



Yet again our 'water babe', Catherine will again be swimming for Local Party Funds. The date is set for Tuesday 28th March so she will be approaching you very soon with her sponsorship form.

If you miss her, she can be contacted at: 01243 263989.

Catherine has raised a lot for the Local Party, regularly with this event, please give her as much support as you can. Thank you.

THE HARROGATE CONFERENCE

by Alderman Catherine Morrish

I had a really early start from Chichester to catch the Southampton train to Leeds and thence to Harrogate by 2.00pm. A wonderful sunny day all the way until it began snowing just outside Harrogate - their first snow! After signing in I made my way to the Consultation Session on 'Regenerating Communities'. Some of us said it was a weak document, but there were some excellent Councillor speakers and others commending the work of various Liberal Democrat councils, particularly Liverpool, Newcastle and Watford! (The Mayor and Deputy of Watford spoke at the end of Conference of what had been achieved over the last 4 years since the Lib-Dems had been in control.) It was suggested in the meeting that we should be listening to the quiet majority as well as the vociferous minority(!) and being aware of, and looking after, the surrounding areas and peoples of the community as well as the centre. In the evening the Rally was, as always, excellent and absolutely packed out! Quite superb speeches from Willie Rennie, Sarah Tether and Mark Hunter were greatly appreciated, and Menzies Campbell spoke excellently, a rousing speech complimenting Simon Hughes and Chris Huhne. Menzies especially thanked and congratulated Charles



Kennedy on all his wonderful work and leadership over the last six years culminating in the best Party position in the country since the early 20th century. Menzies Campbell particularly asked us to support the Post Office motion the next day. In the Post Office Debate there was opposition and a 'reference back' was refused by Conference. There were some good speakers for and against, particularly Chris Huhne who was enjoyable to listen to, and he made a strong speech persuading, I think, a number of representatives to vote for the Post Office motion, which was passed by quite a big majority. The point was made more than once over the weekend and in the Post Office Debate 'Don't oppose' something unless you can put something in its place. Vincent Cable's speech was very good. He mentioned I.D. cards ('a white elephant' he said!) The money

contd../

THE HARROGATE CONFERENCE

should be spent on essential services. Sustainable development with the environment should be at the heart of the Budget. £56 billion was needed for old nuclear power de-commissioning, and this, Vince said, precluded new nuclear power stations being built without research and a solution to nuclear waste storage required for thousands of years. He also mentioned that Society was not saving enough, and the Banks are hugely reckless with debt. Personal debt is increasing by £1 million every 5 minutes!! The danger of this is only just beginning to be recognised. Liberal Democrats believe in an economic policy of Redistribution. They would be clear and consistent with environmental sustainability, Fair Taxes, and Freedom, which in economic terms means REAL localism and not centralisation.

Other major debates were about the NHS and Air Traffic control but time and space does not permit me to write more now, simply to say I will write more again in the next Newsletter and other reps may well contribute and note my gaps. I spent long hours voting and objecting to various constitutional motions, and I am constantly staggered by the commitment and loyalty of all members of the Lib-Dems, and by no means least the wonderful commitment of all stewards and organisers without whom the Conference would not take place.

Menzies Campbell gave a quite excellent speech which I will write about next time, and if you hear, read or see anything different it is because both the Tories and Labour have a pact to diminish the Liberal Democrats at every possible opportunity, because we are now a real threat to the undemocratic two-party state!

Catherine Morrish.

For those of you who have computer internet access, the main Party website has lots about the Harrogate conference.

It can be seen at:

<http://www.libdems.org.uk/conference/>

Saturday 25th March.

Regional Conference at Eastbourne.

Policy motions on regional matters only to

Cllr Ros Kissell at: roslyn@kissell.fsnet.co.uk

And Finally.....

**A Ladies Black coat was left at the Christmas Fair in Bersted Green Court.
If you wish to claim it, please contact Cllr Francis Oppler 01243 583906**