

History Group at Lib Dem conference

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presuppositions regarding where to look when embarking on this endeavour and revealing some of the historical depths of why we have become muddled with these assumptions. Which liberalism has greater claims to rule the present is often unclear, premised on what is perceived to be threatened and receding from view. The problem is that some histories are irretrievably lost and some are more complex than the stories we tell as we try to piece a tradition from fragments, given the shifting and incompatible

definitions and accounts of liberalism's history. Liberalism has perhaps always been an elusive tradition.

Alex Tebble is a PhD student in Politics at the University of York; the title of his research is 'On the Genealogy of Liberalism'. This review was originally published on the LSE Review of Books blog at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks/2019/01/04/book-review-the-lost-history-of-liberalism-from-ancient-rome-to-the-twenty-first-century-by-helena-rosenblatt/>.

The shift from politicians only doing much to contact voters at election time to (outside of safe seats) having to be active all year round has been a major alteration in how politicians spend their time and how voters interact with politicians. It is also a shift that gets only little attention, and even less detail, in more general political histories. It is only local histories such as Martin Kyrle's and *A Flagship Borough: 25 Years of a Liberal Democrat Sutton Council* which help record and explain this shift in a way that many grander political histories from professors completely miss.

This volume of Kyrle's is more a scrapbook of useful information for other historians and interested political activists than a conventional history in its own right. The book is dominated by appendices full of past election leaflets (often reproduced in colour), election results, and other scraps of information (including how the Conservatives ended up paying his election expenses in one general election). There are plenty of names and events here to be enjoyed by those whose memories stretch back to some of these times, and also plenty for future historians to make good use of. There is rather less of the prose retelling of events than in earlier volumes, but the wealth of detail provided by the leaflets and other information means the story is still clearly there to be seen, enjoyed and learnt from.

Dr Mark Pack worked at Liberal Democrat HQ from 2000 to 2009, and prior to that was frequently a volunteer member of the parliamentary by-election team. He is co-author of 101 Ways To Win An Election.

How the Liberal Party in Eastleigh grew in the 1970s

Martin Kyrle, *The Liberals in Hampshire – a Part(l)y History: Part 3 Eastleigh 1972–81: The thorn in the flesh bursts into flower* (Sarsen Press, 2017)

Review by Mark Pack

FOLLOWING ON FROM his two previous volumes, Martin Kyrle's latest foray takes the story of the Liberal Party in his part of Hampshire through to the years of growing political success.

Kyrle's volumes add vital colour to the political historical record, featuring the sort of detail of politics at the grassroots that is vital for understanding how the overall political system really works, but which is often not preserved in the historical record. Even the leaders of local councils, let alone the charismatic first councillor from a party or their demon-organising election agent, frequently leave very little trace

behind in conventional records, and although social media means there is more data for future historians to mine, the decline of local media coverage cuts the other way. Obscurity continues to beckon for the personalities who played a key role in shaping the long-term politics of communities. Unless, that is, local histories such as this one preserve them.

But it is not only the people who tend to be forgotten. So, too, the developments in electoral tactics that tell a broader picture about how the operation of elections was changing in the eyes of voters.