



Liberal Democrat History Group Annual General Meeting

6.30 p.m. Monday 29th January 2024

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
the '1847 Financial Crisis and the Irish Famine' meeting at
7.00pm.

Agenda and calling notice

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the AGM held on 30th January 2023
3. Report from the Chair on activities during 2023
4. Report from the Treasurer and annual accounts
5. Report from the Membership Secretary
6. Election of Officers for 2023–24:
 - 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.
8. Any other business

The minutes of the 2023 AGM, the annual accounts for 2022–23 and the Chair's report on activities during 2023 are available on the News section of our website at:

www.liberalhistory.org.uk/news/

PTO for details of the speaker meeting following the AGM

Following the AGM, at 7.00pm:

The 1847 Financial Crisis and the Irish Famine

The Irish famine of the 1840s remains the worst humanitarian crisis in the United Kingdom's history. Within six years of the arrival of the potato blight in Ireland in 1845, more than a quarter of its people had died or emigrated.

Despite this, Lord John Russell's Whig government decided in spring 1847 – long before the famine ended – to cut Treasury spending on public relief efforts. The move is generally attributed by economic historians to the pervasive influence of 'laissez-faire' ideas on Russell and his colleagues. But they also faced a deepening financial crisis, which severely limited the government's options. The Bank Charter Act of 1844 required all bank notes issued by the Bank of England to be fully backed by gold. A major harvest failure in Ireland and England the previous year had led to large price increases and trade deficits, which had in turn caused a sharp drain of gold reserves from the Bank of England in March and April 1847. The Bank responded by lifting the discount rate at which it would lend money to other banks. This led to a drastic curtailment of available commercial credit and contributed to the collapse of numerous businesses in the autumn.

By October 1847, Russell and his cabinet faced a choice: between suspending the Bank Charter Act to permit the Bank of England to discount more freely and to issue banknotes in greater volume, or sticking to economic orthodoxy. They also had to tread carefully through the two crises because the government lacked a parliamentary majority.

Dr Charles Read (Faculty of History, University of Cambridge and author of *The Great Famine in Ireland and Britain's Financial Crisis* (2022)) and **Liam Kennedy** (Emeritus Professor of History at Queen's University, Belfast) will discuss the Russell government's response to the 1847 financial crisis and the Irish Famine. Chair: **Baroness Kramer**.

The meeting will start at 7.00pm, 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 2023

Minutes of the meeting held at the National Liberal Club and online on 30 January 2023

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 recorded as being present for at least part of the AGM: Jackie Biggs, Duncan Brack, David Cloke, Simon Drage, David Dutton, Andrew Ellis, Suzanne Fletcher, Katheryn Gallant, Andrew Haldane, Jim Hancock, John Hughes, Michael Meadowcroft, Christopher Millington, Rosemary Mortimer, William Powell, David Rogers, Richard Sanderson, Gianni Sarra, Michael Steed, Nigel Taylor, Paul Tyler, Charles Welchman.

2. *Apologies*

Malcolm Baines, John Death, Mark Egan, Gareth Epps, Jonathan Hunt, Roger Jenking, Graham Lippiatt, Graem Peters, Andrew Pinnock, and Alan Sherwell.

3. *Minutes of AGM 2022*

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.

As he had noted at the previous AGM the move to on-line meetings brought about by COVID had had two major effects: widening participation in meetings but limiting the Group's ability to recruit. It had also enabled the Group to call on speakers from further afield, such as Alison Holmes from California. Other speakers had included Michael Meadowcroft and Paul Williams on the difficulties of working with Labour in the 1920s and, in particular, the role of the whips.

The summer 2022 meeting had been a hybrid one on the fall on the Lloyd George coalition. There had not been an Autumn Conference because of the death of The Queen but there had been a successful meeting at the NLC to launch Vince Cable's book. The meeting on Shirley Williams planned for the autumn conference had been postponed to the spring conference. This would be followed by a summer meeting on Vernon Bogdanor's latest book.

There had also been relevant lectures organised by other groups including the Limehouse Lecture and the Jonathan Fryer lecture on the Orpington By-Election. The chair asked members to inform the Executive of any other such meetings they were aware of.

The Journal remained the Group's crowning achievement and, in particular, its recent special issue on Liberals and the US Civil War. He also noted the recent change in format to aid reading the Journal on-line. Feedback would be welcomed. He also encouraged members to contribute articles and suggest authors and thanked the members of the editorial board.

The Journal, and much else, was archived on the website and the Executive was working on an upgrade to the site, including a membership plug-in. This work had been led by Sam Barratt who sadly had to step down from the executive because of work commitments.

The Chair also noted the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on the finances of the Group which had led to the decision to increase the subscription rates. However, members could stick to the current rate by opting for the new on-line only rate which helped keep costs down and was better for the environment.

Finally, he thanked Neil Stockley for his work as meetings organiser and invited members to let themselves be known if they would like to assist with the work.

The Chair's report was noted.

6. Report from Membership Secretary:

The Chair noted that Andrew Pinnock had given apologies to the meeting and read out the report that he had provided in advance of the meeting (**Appendix 1**).

The key points were that 64 people was still due to renew and that the Membership Secretary was hopeful that the return of in-person meetings would improve renewals,

The Membership Secretary's report was noted.

7. Report by the Treasurer

The Treasurer introduced the accounts which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The Treasurer noted that the Group had made a smaller surplus than it had in recent years because of the effects of inflation. In addition, sales remained low because of the lack of an in-person conference. Meanwhile, he was investigating a better deposit account for the Group.

He also noted that the Group had got to the point where it needed to raise subscriptions, possibly a bit earlier than had been expected. The proposals recognised that prices had gone up but gave members the option of retaining their existing subscription by taking the digital only option, and made it possible for the Group to reflect the costs of international distribution of the Journal better.

With regard to the proposed change to the structure of the Group's subscriptions, there was a question from the floor asking why the print and digital rate had not been increased to £32 to cover the full costs noted in the Treasurer's report. The Treasurer reported that there were further sources of income for the Group that enabled it to cover this additional cost. The Chair also noted that it was hoped that the move to digital only subscriptions would reduce costs.

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 be amended as proposed with the amendment that the standard digital subscription rate be £25 and the unwaged digital subscription rate be £15 and that the non-UK digital subscription rates be the same as those for the UK.

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, Elizabeth Johnson, York Membery, James Moore, Ruth Polling, Gianni Sarra and Joseph Walker.

The Chair thanked Sam Barratt and Devin Scobie, who were stepping down, for their contributions whilst members of the Committee.

Appendix 1

Membership Secretary's Report 2023

I must give my apologies to all who are here this evening, whether in person or via Zoom. I was hoping to be with you (probably via Zoom), but a meeting has very recently been arranged so that the Boundary Commission can explain to the members of my local authority (Kirklees) how they will approach the next review of ward boundaries within the local authority.

The membership of the Group has fluctuated in the last year, around the sort of level it is now. There are at present 381 paid-up members. Of these 7 individual memberships are complimentary. There are 6 legal deposit libraries that receive free copies, and we have 7 other libraries who are members and pay the institutional subscription. Therefore there are 361 individuals who pay subscriptions (35 unwaged). There are also 64 members who have not yet paid their subs for the current year. I would expect at least some of those to renew in the next few months; in fact I think the numbers could well be higher this year as we will at last have an in-person conference. These are always the best generators of new and renewing memberships.

One change this year is that members need to choose whether they would like a print or a digital subscription. So far 17 members have opted for the digital subscription. We would like to hear from the rest of you what your preference would be. So I look forward to a busy few months of membership activity.

Andrew Pinnock
29 January 2023



Liberal Democrat History Group Annual General Meeting Chair's Report for the Year 2023

The highlight of the group's year has been the publication of our booklet '*What Have The Liberals Ever Done for Us?*', setting out 300 years of practical achievements by British Liberal governments and Liberal Democrat parliamentarians – not just because of the content or because it has set a new standard for presentation but because it marks a return to normality. We were able to launch the booklet at a well-attended physical meeting where the contents were discussed by five leading Liberal Democrat parliamentarians and purchasers were able to examine what they were buying and take delivery in person.

Meetings

That occasion was at Bournemouth during the first live autumn conference for the Liberal Democrats since COVID. We were particularly pleased by the thoughtful engagement of the parliamentarians and the audience with the achievements of Liberalism. Our other conference meeting, in York, celebrated the life of Shirley Williams with her biographer Mark Peel and two of Shirley's colleagues in the Lords, Julie Smith and Tom McNally.

We organised two other meetings during the year at the National Liberal Club, which revolved around recently published books, with the authors as the principal speakers. Last January, John Campbell and Thomas Otte reminded us of those neglected heroes of the 1906 Liberal Government, Richard Haldane and Sir Edward Grey. In the summer, Vernon Bogdanor and Richard Toye also revisited the Edwardian period to discuss the strange death and survival of Liberalism in the context of Prof Bogdanor's latest publication for which we were able to obtain a favourable discount for members.

All of these meetings were also made available online and consequently they can be revisited on YouTube via our website.

We are very grateful to all our speakers and chairpeople for their time and their commitment to elaborating and explaining Liberal history. I would especially like to thank Neil Stockley who stayed on longer than planned as our principal organiser. He leaves a gap which we could still use help in filling.

Room hire costs have been particularly hard hit by inflation and this has been reflected in prices for conference fringe meetings. It has made us especially grateful to the National Liberal Club which has generously hosted our summer and winter meetings over many years at no charge.

Journal of Liberal History

2023 marked thirty years and 120 issues of the *Journal*. Originally a modest newsletter, it has grown not just in size but in quality and authority.

Slightly belatedly, this year we marked the centenary of the passing of the last government led by a Liberal Prime Minister – the Lloyd George coalition. We were honoured that this special issue was guest-edited by Lord (Ken) Morgan, the doyen of this period and included among its contributors Lord Lexden, Chris Wrigley and David Dutton.

The revival of in-person meetings has enabled us to engage with and learn from our *Journal* readers. Consequently, we have added a new feature to the *Journal* introducing aspects of Liberal history to those without prior knowledge. So far there have been three articles in the series, on Free Trade, New Liberalism and *On Liberty*, with more to come.

Naturally we have continued to provide articles about the whole variety of Liberal and Liberal Democrat history, ranging from the 1830s to the 2023 local elections, taking in the Boer War and Peter Hain's perspective on the Young Liberals' fight against apartheid. Probably the most important was John Powell's analysis of Gladstone and slavery in the early part of his long career, examining the subject in the complexity that has so often been missing from the wider public debate on the role of commemorative statuary of political figures.

In the year ahead we are planning a special issue on Liberals and the British Empire, a multi-faceted topic with which we anticipate we will need to engage well into the future. In addition, the editor has promised a freshening of the internal layout of the *Journal* in 2024 to take advantage of its new handier size.

LDHG Online

The committee's greatest frustration in the last year has been our website. One of the big lessons from COVID, for us, is that we need an online presence not only for the purpose of providing engaging and educational information about history but also as a marketing tool, making people aware of our existence and allowing them easily to subscribe.

With volunteer support we had hoped both to give the website a new, more attractive, look and foreground the opportunities for membership while providing an easy-to-use mechanism for managing our new wider range of subscriptions, including the environmentally friendlier online-only *Journal*.

On reflection, we have concluded that we need more professional assistance to complete these tasks and are currently undertaking due diligence to allow for action in the new year. It is intended that the work will be funded from the surplus saved over the COVID period when we were unable to organise in-person meetings.

One of the surprises of the last year has been the number and range of enquiries we have received via the website seeking information about our past. These range from how to preserve archive material to emigration policy in the 1850s, from the location of a Liberal Club

in a northern town to the personnel involved in Young Liberal activities. We cannot promise to find answers to all of these but I am constantly amazed at how many have been satisfactorily tackled. I believe this growing traffic reflects not only our integrity as an information provider but the world-wide interest there continues to be in Liberal history

Our Facebook and Twitter (X) presence have continued to enhance awareness of our existence and stimulated debate within and about the Liberal Democrats. We would also like to thank the Liberal Democrat Voice blog site for promoting interest in our meetings and publications during the year.

Finance and Subscriptions

At our last AGM members agreed a change to the subscriptions after many years of stability. Standing order members wishing to retain a print subscription are reminded they need to contact the bank to make the appropriate adjustment and to pay an additional £5 if their 2023/4 standing order has already been paid.

Inflationary pressures remain and, as indicated earlier, are having a heavy impact on the cost of meetings. The Committee may need to review venues or switch some meetings to online-only to avoid a subscription increase next year.

Thanks

We are grateful to many people for making our activities possible and I would like to start by thanking the Liberal Democrat parliamentarians who have participated in and chaired our meetings. Secondly I would like to thank the academics and authors who have given freely of their time to speak at events, write *Journal* articles and provide the quality control through the *Journal's* peer review process.

Finally my thanks to all who have served behind the scenes, particularly those editing and producing the *Journal* or running the stall at conferences and to all on the committee.

Tony Little

December 2023

**LIBERAL DEMOCRAT HISTORY GROUP
INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2023**

	2023	2022
	£	£
INCOME		
Membership Renewals	10,520	10,717
New Memberships	980	700
	11,500	11,417
Donations	560	599
Sales	2,758	328
Royalties	16	22
Bank Interest	65	12
	14,899	12,378
 EXPENDITURE		
Journal Printing	3,681	3,209
Journal DTP & Sub-editing	2,844	2,745
Journal Mailing	4,859	4,578
Conference Meetings & Other Events	1,895	619
Conference Stalls	872	33
Website	390	333
Membership Admin	323	193
Publications	1,081	-
Publications Postage	91	133
Bank Charges	252	91
Sundry Expenditure	91	-
	16,379	11,934
(DEFICIT) / SURPLUS FOR YEAR	(1,480)	444

**LIBERAL DEMOCRAT HISTORY GROUP
BALANCE SHEET
30 SEPTEMBER 2023**

	2023	2022
	£	£
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash at Bank		
Current	1,588	140
Deposit	500	17,000
Charity 1 year	12,500	-
PayPal	503	265
Sub-total	15,091	17,405
Debtors	367	1,072
Payments in Advance	125	-
Total Current Assets	15,583	18,477
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Receipts in Advance	(1,295)	(370)
Trade Creditors	(467)	(2,806)
Sub-total	(1,762)	(3,176)
NET CURRENT ASSETS	13,821	15,301
Represented by:		
ACCUMULATED FUNDS		
Balance at 1 October	15,301	14,857
Surplus in Year	(1,480)	444
Accumulated Funds	13,821	15,301

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

14th November 2023