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EDITORIAL

'It is a known fact of human nature that its affections grow weak in proportion to the distance or diffuseness of the object. Upon the same principle that a man is more attached to his family than to his neighbourhood, to his neighbourhood than to the community at large, the people of each State would be apt to feel a stronger bias towards their own local government than towards the government of the Union; unless the force of that principle should be destroyed by a much better administration of the latter.'

Alexander Hamilton: from the Federalist Papers.

The introductory paragraph from Hamilton is illustrative of an earlier concern with an issue very much with us today: the relationship between small local societies, where democracy should be close enough to touch, and society at large, whose interest is taken care of by large central government.

For people of a certain disposition, the root meaning of democracy is having a say in things that most immediately affect our lives, and having been listened to, being allowed to cast a vote. Local democracy is as near as we can get to this, and this is achieved most efficiently through local self-government.

At the basic level this can be realised directly, but even at the next level, representatives will be people from our locality and with the interests of our locality at heart. Central government is, of course, as the repository of state power, the prime mover in bringing about increased participation at ground root level and it seems clear that, in a democracy, a government should make strenuous efforts to empower people at local level and facilitate local self-government.

For people of another disposition, efficient and fair government for the people at large is best achieved through a centralised state. Local self-government is not seen as necessarily efficient at fulfilling people's real needs - and might even be regarded as an unnecessary distraction from the common purpose.

In this view, a fair-minded but centralising government, on its ideological credentials and at the higher level able to access the most informed opinion and utilise the best brains in the land, is better equipped to decide what will most benefit the people of all localities.

This is the ultimate joined-up system, with a bureaucracy running like a smooth machine, ensuring that people get what is good for them and the nation.

Britain, at present, appears to be experiencing the second system. It is a centralised state, which is moving even further in the direction of what is euphemistically called a 'nanny state'. Power flows from the state. The national electoral system, relying on First-Past-The-Post, perpetuates the adversarial politics of the two big parties. If one of them gets too big a vote they assume almost dictatorial powers. Where is the participation in that!

To both of them it must be clear by now that the general public is heartily sick of them. This is not only because they seem only able to lie and squabble and bully; it is because the general public can see that central government does not, after all, for all the expertise at its command, know best.

The British experience, hitherto, has been of the nation state. It hasn't always been bad. And it isn't even utterly bad at present - plenty of food on the table, lots of toys

to buy. What would it be like in the Union, that is, fully governed from top to bottom by Brussels? Would we be better off without our current effete leaders, leaders who cannot even talk in normal language anymore but only in some form of code, leaders who...well, lead us not into temptation.

We are now contemplating a gigantic step, undoubtedly the biggest in our entire history, and that is to join the European Union once and for all, lock, stock and barrel, and with the sure knowledge that it is to be a confederation of states with all that it entails.

How sure are we that this will happen? It seems as inevitable as gravity, especially as our own prime minister seems hell bent on signing us up for good. Mr Howard doesn't want to leave the Union, but wants reform it. He wants to re-negotiate our powers within the system while we still can, for it is still possible to withdraw intact from the community - at least we think so.

But once we sign that document, accept the European Constitution as binding, we will be in up to our necks and have even less control of our own affairs than we have now. It may still be possible to leave the Union, but even an outright withdrawal will have to be 'negotiated'. That has an ominous sound to it. Perhaps part of the dowry we brought with us, our fishing grounds, will be retained. There is the feeling of loss. Roman, Saxon and Norman conquests, English victories over continental tyrants like Philip II, Napoleon or Hitler, and all the blood and sweat and tears of the many wars, will now be subsumed by membership of the Union.

The United Kingdom itself will become just a note in European history books. England, will live on as a state.

We might even be a key player in the internal struggle for advantage. And if, one day, national names are dropped in favour of regional names, (who knows) the word 'English' may appear on the map as, 'The English Midlands', together with Scotland and Wales.

These are early days yet. A Constitution may be amended. The Union will surely seek to ensure that no state has the slightest chance to secede if it doesn't like the club. It will naturally seek to replace 'local' law, as it will seek to replace other national institutions: police, military, social. With nations as diverse as Britain and Turkey, Sweden and Greece, the aim will be to 'harmonise' as much as possible and iron out extreme differences, so that we have a one-size-fits-all diversity that neatly dovetails into the bureaucratic machinery.

And here we have the inevitable march of bureaucracy, where we serve the interests of the 'state' rather than the 'state' serving our interests - as Seidenberg describes it: a world with justice for all and freedom for none.

And again we have the two ways of thinking. Some will be nostalgic for the old nation, with its feeling of freedom in spite of all. Others will see the big picture: the need to build up a federation that can take on America, China, India or Brazil on their own terms.

This is coupled with the idea of all European nations blending into a grand European brotherhood - the great culmination of European history. What use is all this tradition and mythology in the modern urban age, when people the world over are growing together under the irresistible force of globalisation?

Better to move on quickly and design a society for the future.

Still, there may be wonderful things about being in such a community. It is more diverse than we think and we only need to take a trip over to the continent to see all those healthy, smiling people in Holland, Italy or France. We hear that the English Regions are a preparation to fit into the scheme of local government the Union will adopt. But

there are still quite a selection of systems. The French is very centralised; the German one is so democratic that every tier has its own constitution. Perhaps, as British, we should just stop thinking for ourselves, and go along with the inevitable.

KEY TERMS

Hamilton speaks in the context of an emerging United States of America. The fight for independence just over, the Founding Fathers had to think hard about what kind of country they wanted theirs to be. Living in the days of the Enlightenment, which put much stress on the ideals of human rights, liberty and equality, and owing much to the ground roots support of local towns and villages, they must have considered the notion of local self-government as fundamental to democracy- as if acknowledging that, in some way, the nation was founded on the communities. The stubborn ex-colonies were now to become States in a new American Union, a republic. In their system they opted for a bicameral system, as the British had. Congressmen represented the population as a whole; senators were State delegates, the same number of senators for each state, regardless of size. But instead of lords, they people it with State delegates, each State having the same number of senators. Here he gives a very clear idea of what he means by the terms, 'local' and, 'local government'. We can also discern an allusion to what we now call, 'subsidiarity'. Let's take a look at some of the common terms we are using on a daily basis these days. This is just a useful exercise since politicians tend to prefer to use terms in a more flexible or abstract manner.

Local

One thing that Hamilton makes clear is that local means small. In England, there's the local pub, the local library, the local brewery, local industries, local fishing spots, local town hall, local towns, all to be found within fairly close range, say the area of a small county. Beyond that, as we pass into new areas, things begin to look and sound less familiar the further away they are. It happens to be the way people feel - not by any means the only way we feel, but it does echo common sentiment over the centuries.

Local Government and Local Self-Government

When we hear the Government promising 'extra cash' for Local Government, we should remind ourselves of the distinction between 'local government' (LG) and 'local self-government' (LSG).

The first, we take to mean the local government is merely acting as a local administrative unit of central government. In this role they are subject to central administrative officers who are responsible to central government - not to the local people. The Government defines and funds (not always generously) their obligatory duties.

The second, in complete contrast, means that local people govern themselves, through their own elected officials, in affairs to do with the locality, and accountable to the local electorate. They may get discretionary funding for their local projects but these will be less than generous. In some more democratic countries like Switzerland or the USA, local self-governments are encouraged to flesh their grants by looking for other ways of funding themselves, that do not mean increasing local taxes and victimising car users.

Devolution

Two main meanings. Both are granted by central government, who contrived in the last few centuries to assume almost total power, and now have quite a lot they could give back. Not that the word means giving back anything.

For local government as defined above, 'devolution' means that central government has delegated a certain set of duties to the local centre, to be carried out on behalf of central government. This is a process of de-concentration, whereby the government has its officers operating locally and making use of the local infrastructure instead of concentrating everything in Whitehall.

As we pointed out earlier, the activities are administered by people who represent central government, and are responsible to it - not to the locality.

For local self-government 'devolution' means something quite different: it means that actual power has been transferred from central government to the locality, whereby locally elected officials have authority to deal with local issues and to be innovative, and are responsible to the locality and its electorate. This is a process of de-centralisation.

Subsidiarity

Essentially a deal hammered out with central government and local government, or, on a higher level, between, say, Britain and the European Union.

Hamilton recognised the benefit of central power, but thought of local forces as influential in controlling the appetite for power that may afflict people with state centrist tendencies of a quasi-totalitarian nature.

If we think of Subsidiarity as practised the traditional (and modern) American way, where towns and counties are positively encouraged to develop a local ethos and responsibility, we see it contrasts rather bleakly with that of the EU Constitution, where Subsidiarity seems to mean, 'if we think you locals (meaning, regions, and eventually nations) can do something well enough on your own, we'll let you get on with it. Otherwise, we'll take over those responsibilities. And we think that's what we'll do, anyway, as it facilitates our social programme'.

Representation

On the subject of local government and its elected councillors, let's see how numbers stack up if Britain were fully and irretrievably inside the European Union's frontiers. These are very roughly averaged figures of the populations involved.

1	The EU	x 7	460, 000, 000
2	Britain	x 12	60, 000, 000
3	Region	x 5	5, 000,000
4	County	x 10	1 ,000,000
LBC/MDC/ joined districts/ UC's			
5	District	x 10	1 00, 000
6	Parish/town	x 10	10, 000

In the first place, English Regions, will have, as in Scotland and Wales, only one lower tier - the unitary council, formed from joined up County and District councils. These councils will determine matters for those smaller areas within their sphere, which once had councils of their own.

The Region, with an Assembly of around thirty members, elected by proportional representation (to ensure a plurality of viewpoints) will take from Westminster large chunks of responsibility for its area including: economic development, planning, transport, regeneration, housing and culture. The councils will retain their present responsibilities.

The theory is that the Region and the councils will work in harmony, through joint committees and talking shops so that Regions are not seen to impose initiatives, as central government does now, but to consult and involve the councils in the decision-making process.

P-P-P Pick Up A Penguin (A talking one!)

Young litter louts are being encouraged to help keep Britain tidy with the help of a rather talkative Antarctic visitor.

Talking penguins are about to start popping up in the most unlikely of places around the UK in an effort to reward children for p p p picking up their litter.

The unique, talking-penguin bins offer a verbal congratulation to anyone who 'feeds' them with litter and are seen as the ideal innovation to promote the message to young people that caring for the environment can be fun and rewarding.

The litter bins, made by East Midlands-based manufacturer Amberol Ltd, are proving so popular the company has recently taken on their largest order for the product from Renfrewshire Council.

For a generation who count talking animals such as Barney the Dinosaur and Scooby Doo as their role models, the fact that the penguins are talking to them won't be as big a surprise as to how the famous flightless birds got over here in the first place!



Council Funds Football Club Shortfall

Harpenden Town Council is making a donation of £500 to Harpenden Colts Football Club to ensure that the club has access to good facilities.

At the Full Town Council meeting on Monday 11th October, Councillors agreed the Grant Aid Application which will enable Harpenden Colts Football Club to rent pitches from Harpenden Town Football Club until they are able to secure a permanent new base for the club.

Harpenden Colts Football Club are presently working in partnership with Harpenden Town Council to locate a permanent home, and are hopeful this will soon be found.

Harpenden based charities, organisations or residents can apply for grants of up to £500 to help fund projects or events that benefit the people of Harpenden.

For further information or to obtain a grant application form contact Rachael Palmer, on 01582 768278.

COUNCILS TO INVESTIGATE LESS SERIOUS MISCONDUCT ALLEGATIONS

Councils will be able to investigate allegations of less serious breaches of their code of conduct for members in some circumstances, under new regulations laid in October. Under the regulations, an ethical standards officer, appointed by the Standards Board for England will be able to hand the job of investigating less serious allegations of breaches of the code of conduct to a council's monitoring officer. The regulations also allow standards committees to consider reports made by monitoring officers following these investigations. The regulations complete the standards regime for council members, which has been implemented since the Local Government Act 2000. They follow a three-month consultation on the issue. Local Government Minister Nick Raynsford said: "We want to ensure the highest possible ethical standards

in local government. The regulations will make this process more workable and efficient.

"We have taken on board many of the suggestions raised during our consultation, including strengthening the powers available to authorities to ensure they can undertake their investigation and adjudication roles effectively."

Copies of the Regulations will be available on www.hmsa.gov.uk.

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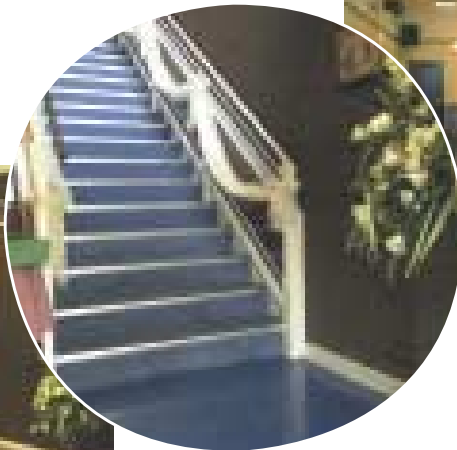
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HSE Updates costs to Britain of workplace accidents and work-related ill health

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has prepared interim updated estimates of the costs to Britain of workplace accidents and work-related ill health. These indicate that in 2001/02 health and safety failures cost

- employers between £3.9 - £7.8 billion,
- individuals between £10.1 - £14.7 billion,
- the economy between £13.1 - £22.2 billion, and
- society as a whole between £20 - £31.8 billion.

The new estimates also quantify the major cost categories that make up the totals. For employers, figures are given by industry sector, occupation and region. HSE has published two previous sets of cost estimates using data from 1990 and 1995/96. These have been used widely within HSE to inform strategic policy, new programme development, appraisals of policy proposals (e.g. Regulatory Impact Assessments) and, more recently, evaluations of HSE's impact. The information has also been used to answer enquiries from other government departments, the private sector, employer organisations, trade unions, academics and the public.

To carry out these detailed calculations, HSE needs to draw on a large amount of data from many different sources. The full set of data required will not be available until 2005, so HSE has produced an interim update using the best available occupational injury and illness data from 2001/02. Where there are gaps in the data, assumptions have been made and changes in prices and incomes have also been taken into account.

The updated figures carry some limitations. The estimates are only meant as broad indications of cost and a review of the previous update has led to HSE adopting proportionately wider ranges for many of them. This better reflects the uncertainty in the figures.

Finally, only broad comparisons can be made between the 1995/96 and 2001/02 estimates, and even these must be treated with caution as there are differences in the design of the 1995 and the 2001/02 Self-reported Work-related Illness surveys (part of the ONS Labour Force Survey) that provided the bulk of the data used in calculating the ill health cost estimates.

Interim update of 'The costs to Britain of workplace accidents and work-related ill health in 1995/96' can be found on HSE's website at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/dayslost.htm>

New contracts for the electronic monitoring of offenders were awarded by the Home Office

On the 15th October 2004 new contracts for the electronic monitoring of offenders were awarded by the Home Office.

The new contracts have been awarded to Securicor Justice Services Ltd, and Premier Monitoring Services Ltd. They become operational from 1 April 2005, and cover the whole of England and Wales in five contract areas. The length of contracts are for five years, with a possible extension of up to two further years.

The new contracts represent a saving for the Home Office of about 35% on current volumes and will help the government achieve the 2008 goal of doubling capacity for the electronic monitoring of offenders.

Home Office Minister, Paul Goggins said: "Since electronic monitoring was extended to the whole of England and Wales in 1999, more than 175,000 offenders have been electronically monitored either as a sentence or on release from prison. "We are committed to using new technology where it can provide greater protection to the public and help offenders resettlement to lead law-abiding lives. "The new contracts represent a success for the Home Office and the suppliers and we will continue to invest in this effective method of monitoring offenders."

Both suppliers already have significant experience in providing monitoring services and the new contracts represent good value for money for the Home Office.

Electronic monitoring was piloted in England and Wales for a short period in 1989 to 1990, and then again from 1995 until 1999 when it was extended to the whole of England and Wales. It can be imposed by a court as part of a community sentence, or as part of the licence conditions imposed on an offender when they are released from prison.

Electronic monitoring is the use of any technology to monitor offender compliance with a licence or court order. It is mostly used in the form of tagging, to monitor an offender's compliance with a curfew requirement. It is also used in the form of biometrics, on a small scale, to monitor attendance at programmes.

In September the government started to pilot satellite tracking to monitor offenders in three areas: Greater Manchester, West Midlands and Hampshire.

More information about electronic monitoring is available on the Home Office website at: <http://www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk/output/page137.asp>.

PENARTH TOWN COUNCIL CYNGOR TREF PENARTH



Councillor Jill Penn, Town Mayor and Members of Penarth Town Council are pleased to support the launch of **Government *WORLD*** and extend best wishes for a successful ALLC conference in Blackpool.

Rubbish - Getting it Sorted

Shepway District Council

A new and extended recycling service for homes across the district will be introduced next year - and help put the brake on the 33,000 tonnes of waste sent to landfill sites every year.

A special meeting of Shepway's Cabinet on Friday (8th October) gave the go-ahead for the new waste management service, which secured a £1.6 million grant from the government for capital costs involved in the scheme.

The new service will extend the current kerbside collection of paper and card to include glass, metal and plastics. Homes across the district will be given plastic boxes to store their recyclables ready for weekly collection. Landfill waste will be collected from wheelie bins or black sacks every fortnight.

Cllr George Bunting, Cabinet Member for the Environment, said: "Every year the average home in the Shepway district produces more than one tonne of waste - and 80 per cent of this ends up in landfill sites. That means we send 33,000 tonnes of waste to rot in a hole in the ground. The new waste management service will give people of the district the opportunity to do their bit to reduce this amount."

Eleven families gave the new scheme a 'test run' for six weeks during August and September. Fiona Jarrett, Shepway Council's Environmental Officer, said trial had been very successful and nearly 650 kilogrammes of recycling material had been collected.

"The volunteers enjoyed the convenience of the weekly collection. By making use of the boxes they reduced the amount they put in their wheelie bins and the fortnightly collection of landfill waste was not a problem."

The new scheme will be introduced by the beginning of April next year and should be district wide by September. Before the collection is introduced, the council will launch a public awareness campaign, so that everyone has the chance to learn more about the scheme and to discuss any potential issues.

Rob Beck, Project Manager, said the reaction from the volunteers had been very heartening but he understood that some people might still have some questions. "We will be talking to parish councils and community groups as well as organising our own events across the district so that people can come and find out more about the new scheme," he said.



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HSC looks to the future



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The Health and Safety Commission (HSC) held an open meeting at the Mermaid Conference Centre, Blackfriars, London to coincide with the 30th anniversary of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act (HSWA).

The HSWA resulted in the creation of the HSC. Working with others in the health and safety system in Great Britain, the HSC and Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have seen and contributed to major advances in reducing injuries and ill health including established occupational diseases. Throughout that time, consultation with industry, unions, local government and other stakeholders has been a core principle of the way the HSC/E works and the open meeting provides an opportunity for that relationship to develop further.

The HSC has held previous meetings in public, however, this was the first time that Commission business has been discussed in full view of the public.

The HSC, Chaired by Bill Callaghan, received presentations and discussed:

- The recently published HSC Strategy;
- Work at height regulations;
- The Hampton Review; and
- Science strategy.

Both Alan Johnson, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, and Jane Kennedy, Minister of State for Work, attended and addressed the audience focusing on the new HSC strategy during the day.

The HSC also launched a new booklet focusing on the future. The booklet will look at how HSC has evolved over the past 30 years as industry in Britain has changed, and also looks ahead at the new challenges that the Commission.

During the afternoon, breakout sessions allowed attendees to debate a number of issues with Commissioners and HSE officials on topics such as the implementation of EU directives, HSC's role in public protection and HSC's intervention strategy and working with other regulators.

Bill Callaghan, Chair of the Health and Safety Commission, said: "The meeting provides an opportunity to open our work to ordinary members of the public and those dealing with health and safety on a day to day basis. "It is a good occasion to get our vision across to a range of organisations. We want to see health and safety as a cornerstone of a civilised society and, with that, to achieve a record of workplace health and safety that leads the world.

"HSC/E is a modern and trusted regulator. If it is to maintain the trust of the public and our stakeholders, our work should be open to public scrutiny."

A Hard Copy of the Booklet is available by contacting Susan Daly at susan.daly@hse.gsi.gov.uk

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Energywatch and Postwatch: Helping and Protecting Consumers

Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General

Sir John Bourn, Head of the National Audit Office, told Parliament in October that Energywatch and Postwatch have achieved benefits for consumers but they need to do more to show the extent of these benefits. Over their first three years, Energywatch and Postwatch have successfully established their organisations, developed efficient systems to handle customer complaints and sought to address major consumer problems in the energy and postal sectors. But today's report highlights that there is scope to increase and demonstrate more clearly those benefits, and reduce costs.

Energywatch and Postwatch's biggest single task has been to investigate complaints referred by consumers who are not satisfied with their service provider's response. In 2003-04 Energywatch received 87,600 complaints, showing that consumers faced problems with the accuracy and timeliness of their bills, and the process of switching supplier. Postwatch received 27,500 complaints, showing particular problems with lost mail and mis-delivery. Both have developed efficient systems for handling complaints and have added value for consumers. However, neither body evaluates the consumer benefit from this work in a systematic manner, such as the level of compensation achieved.

Energywatch and Postwatch have no regulatory powers and have to rely on influence to affect the decisions of service providers, the sector regulators and government. Each has sought to address the major issues faced by consumers in the energy and postal markets; for example, Energywatch has campaigned to eradicate selling malpractices and Postwatch has reviewed the Government's programme to reduce the number of urban post offices. However, neither has undertaken a comprehensive analysis of consumer needs, or the factors which influence consumer behaviour.

As a result, there is a risk of failing to focus on all of the important areas for consumers and particular sub-groups such as the elderly or low income groups, or the needs of small businesses.

In their first three years, Energywatch has spent £57 million, including £12 million on closing down its predecessor bodies. Postwatch has spent £27 million. There is scope to reduce annual running costs; for example, by sharing the provision of administrative and support functions between consumer bodies. Energywatch and Postwatch have a network of regional offices and today's report encourages them to evaluate whether the benefits of consumer representation in the regions could be achieved at a lower cost.

Sir John Bourn said today:

"I applaud the efforts of Energywatch and Postwatch to protect and speak up for consumers. It is important now that these bodies seek to evaluate their impact more fully to learn lessons for their future. I am encouraged that they have adopted a positive response to the recommendations and are taking action to improve their performance."

Energywatch and Postwatch were established in 2000 as independent bodies to promote and protect the consumer interests in their respective markets. They were established to strengthen consumer representation in the energy and postal markets and to ensure that consumers have an effective and influential voice within the regulatory system. Their statutory duties are to: investigate complaints referred by consumers not satisfied with a company's response; to represent the views of consumers; and to provide advice and information for consumers.

London NHS Travel Plan Guide - the perfect decongestant

Transport for London (TfL) has launched the London NHS Travel Plan Good Practice Guide to promote the advantages for NHS staff of using sustainable transport for their journeys to and from hospitals in the capital.

The London NHS Travel Plan Good Practice Guide addresses the travel needs of staff, patients, visitors and contractors and offers a practical variety of travel options to help reduce congestion.

The London Health Strategy, developed by the London Health Commission, has identified transport as one of four priority areas for action. The strategy acknowledges that the health sector has a substantial effect on transport in London because of the concentration of NHS hospitals, primary care facilities and research institutions.

The Government introduced the concept of travel plans a few years ago to focus attention on the need for better travel arrangements to large workplaces, such as hospitals and universities. Without concerted action to ensure that people have the opportunity to use alternatives to the car, where appropriate, the problems of congestion and parking will get progressively worse.

By encouraging walking and cycling, car sharing where possible, and greater use of public transport, Travel Plans can help staff and visitors lessen the impact of traffic on the local community. TfL's Principal Travel Advisor Patrick Allcorn said of the Guide; 'This Guide will show NHS staff and visitors that there are viable alternative travel options they can take to reduce congestion and improve their health.'

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HFEA grants the first therapeutic cloning licence for research

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority has granted the first licence to create human embryonic stem cells using cell nuclear transfer - a technique also known as therapeutic cloning. The licence will be held by Newcastle Centre for Life. Stem cells created under this licence will be used for research purposes only.

Suzi Leather, HFEA Chair says:

"After careful consideration of all the scientific, ethical, legal and medical aspects of the project, the HFEA Licence Committee agreed to grant an initial one year research licence to the Newcastle Centre for Life. This is an important area of research and a responsible use of technology. The HFEA is there to make sure any research involving human embryos is scrutinised and properly regulated."

This licence allows scientists to create human embryos by inserting the nuclei from human skin or stem cells into human eggs. In the UK, research on human embryos is only permitted for certain purposes. The purpose of this research is to increase knowledge about the development of embryos and enable this knowledge to be applied in developing treatments for serious disease. This research is preliminary, it is not aimed at specific illnesses, but is the foundation for further development in the treatment of serious disease.

The cloning technique, cell nuclear replacement (CNR) involves removing the nucleus of a human egg cell and replacing it with the nucleus from a human body cell, such as a skin cell. The egg is then artificially stimulated. This causes the egg to divide and behave in a similar way to a standard embryo fertilised by sperm.

Research on human embryos is only allowed for certain purposes. Under the initial Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act (1990) the HFEA could only grant licences if it was satisfied the use of human embryos was for one of the following purposes:

- To promote advances in the treatment of infertility
- To increase knowledge about the causes of congenital disease
- To increase knowledge about the causes of miscarriages
- To develop more effective techniques of contraception
- To develop methods for detecting the presence of gene or chromosome abnormalities

In 2001 new regulations (The Human Fertilisation and Embryology (Research Purposes) Regulations 2001) were passed, adding three further purposes for research to the list above:

- Increasing knowledge about the development of embryos
- Increasing knowledge about serious disease
- Enabling any such knowledge to be applied in developing treatments for serious disease

Human reproductive cloning is illegal in the UK. As a result of the Human Reproductive Cloning Act (2001) nobody in the UK is allowed to use cell nuclear replacement, or any other technique, to create a child. The HFEA was set up in August 1991 as part of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990. The HFEA's principal tasks are to license and monitor clinics that carry out in vitro fertilisation (IVF), donor insemination (DI) and human embryo research. The HFEA also regulates the storage of gametes (eggs and sperm) and embryos.

FSA announces major progress towards streamlining anti-money-laundering customer identification

The Financial Services Authority (FSA) has issued a progress report on the work it has been leading to simplify the UK's customer identification verification (ID) regime for anti-money-laundering (AML) purposes. The report reflects the discussions of the FSA's ID working group, which has representation from all major stakeholders including law enforcement, consumers and the industry.

Philip Robinson, financial crime sector leader at the FSA, said:

"In April I issued a challenge to all stakeholders to join together to defuse the ID issue. This includes customers' apparent lack of support for the process and firms' concerns over cost.

"We believe that it is crucial to the effective fight against all crime, not just financial crime, that key anti-money laundering controls, such as verification of ID, have the support of industry and customers. To that end, the ID working group was established to involve all stakeholders in the ID process.

"Our discussions have shown a common commitment to achieve an ID regime that is effective and that all stakeholders can support. All agree that there are ways to streamline the regime without reducing its effectiveness." Key propositions in this report are being offered to the JMLSG, who are redrafting their guidance notes and will issue a consultation draft by the end of this year. They include:

1. Increased reliance on a single identification document Discussions in the group indicated that the provision of a second document gives limited additional corroborative value. For example utility bills can be easily forged and a large number of customers do not receive a utility bill in their own name. On this basis, either a passport or a photocard driving licence should meet the need in the case of a majority of customers. Those who cannot provide either document could produce a letter to satisfy ID, for example from a benefits agency or government agency.

2. Recognition of the benefits of electronic verification The group recognised that electronic verification - which involves confirming identity via a credit reference agency - can be used instead of, or in addition to, documentary evidence. The industry is now making increasing use of electronic verification, particularly for UK-based personal customers. Advantages include: it is a straightforward way of accessing multiple corroborative sources, it is particularly useful for non-face-to-face customers because they do not need to provide documents unless the firm considers it is necessary, it can be cheaper than the documentary approach.

3. Greater reliance on ID done by other firms The legal and regulatory obligations to conduct ID checks apply to all firms. There is scope for more extensive reliance in the industry on other firms' ID of a customer.

4. The need for a more tailored approach for non-personal customers and wholesale business ID is also required for non-personal customers such as corporates and trusts. There are concerns that the current ID checks for non-personal customers are disproportionate and insufficiently risk based. The JMLSG is working with a group of principal wholesale and institutional trade associations to develop a revised regime.

Other issues on which progress is being made include:

Customer Understanding Customers should see the identification process as a sensible contribution to the fight against crime and terrorism and not as a burdensome and deliberate barrier to the access to financial services. To promote this understanding, ID needs to be done in a customer-friendly way and firm procedures and staff training should be designed accordingly.

There also needs to be effective communication of the reasons for ID and what it normally involves. Progress has been made by the Treasury, the National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS) and the FSA on promoting customer awareness. The industry strongly believes that this activity needs to be reinforced by more visible government support. The government recognises the work done and will continue to work with stakeholders to ensure effective communications.

Tackling the 'fear factor' The group recognises that firms' behaviours could be distorted by their interpretation of the FSA's supervisory approach. To tackle this, the FSA will set out shortly its approach to the use of its supervisory and enforcement tools. The FSA will also revise the guidance and training provided to its supervisors in the light of the revision of the JMLSG guidance notes and the work to refine risk assessment (ARROW) methodology,

Government *WORLD* want to hear your comments regarding all aspects of this magazine - please sent your letters, articles, pictures etc to:

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Sustainable Development Fund for National Parks Gets Independent Seal of Approval

An innovative fund helping individuals, community groups, and businesses in England's National Parks has been judged a success after its first 18 months.

An independent report published in October, and completed by the Centre for European Protected Areas Research at the University of London, has monitored the English National Parks Sustainable Development Fund over its first year and a half of operation.

The Fund, which was the personal initiative of Rural Affairs Minister Alun Michael, has also won the strong endorsement of the National Park Authorities. It aims to foster the principles of sustainability within the National Parks and supports a huge variety of projects, from wildlife to recreation and activity centres; from green transport to educational facilities; from developing alternative energy sources to sourcing produce locally; and from training in traditional countryside skills to developing ecological and affordable housing. Over three hundred such projects have been helped to date.

Alun Michael, Minister for Rural Affairs, said today:

"This report shows the great commitment of the communities of the National Parks to building upon their environmental and cultural heritage with innovative ideas. It is reinforcing Defra's key principle of sustainable development by enabling people to come up with ideas that benefit the environment, the community and the economy.

"The recipients have been tremendously resourceful in using a relatively small amount of money to lever in funds from elsewhere and make some tangible changes on the ground. In just eighteen months the Fund has secured match funding of over £13million.

"But there is plenty of room for improvement. I hope to see more projects linking urban and rural communities and encouraging the involvement of young people, disabled people, and groups who are traditionally less likely to benefit from the Parks".

Pam Warhurst, Deputy Chair of the Countryside Agency, commented:

"For me the most interesting of the fringe benefits associated with the scheme is the way it has broken down barriers and brought an entirely new constituency of local people into contact with the National Parks".

On qualifying the success of the Fund, the report's authors at the Centre for European Protected Areas Research conclude that: "Sustainability is an idea, not a recipe, and raises questions to which there are no universal or immediate answers. [The Sustainable Development Fund] has amply proved its worth, not just for the immediate benefits that projects have brought to their participants and local communities, but in identifying possibilities for delivering on the fundamentals of sustainability which may subsequently be developed elsewhere."

Defra will now work with the National Parks' Sustainable Development Officers' and the Countryside Agency to consider how 20 detailed recommendations about the future of the Fund should be taken forward.

The report was commissioned by the Countryside Agency, on behalf of Defra, and produced by independent consultants at the Centre for European Protected Areas Research (CEPAR). A copy can be found on the Defra website National Parks pages at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/issues/landscap/natparks.htm#susdev>. The Sustainable

Development Fund Prospectus reflects Defra's objectives of sustainable development, partnership and social inclusion. The Fund aims to develop and test new ways of achieving a more sustainable way of living in these areas of great natural beauty and diversity, whilst enhancing and conserving local culture, wildlife, landscape, land use and communities. The Fund is open to individuals or organisations from the public, private or voluntary sectors, from within or outside the National Park. Details of the Fund, including funding criteria, are set out in the prospectus, which can be found on the Defra website at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/issues/landscap/natparks.htm#susdev>.

TIME FOR AN OVERHAUL

After 15 years the Town Clock outside C&A's, in the High Street, is in need of a major overhaul. The restoration work will include a new battery back up system, which will protect the clock from power failure and automatically adjust for daylight savings.

The Town Council agreed at the Full Council meeting in September to fund half of the capital repair for the restoration of the Town Clock. The Town Mayor, Councillor Bob Wicks, handed the Managing Director of C&A, Mr Crawford, the cheque for £625 outside C&A on Thursday 21st October.

In the late 1980's the then Town Mayor, Councillor Clifford Harrod, asked C&A if they would install a Town Clock on the corner of their building. The site of the previous Town Clock was above what is now WH Smiths, which still house a clock, although it no longer works. Installed in 1990 the C&A Town Clock has become a very useful and well-known landmark in the Town Centre and is often used in school 'treasure hunts', as well as by commuters catching the early morning train into London.

Councillor Bob Wicks said, "The Harpenden Town Council would like to take this opportunity to thank C&A for the many years of care and attention they have afforded the Town Clock and it is through the restoration works that we will be able to enjoy the Clock for many more".



The Town Mayor, Councillor Bob Wicks, and Managing Director of C&A, Mr Crawford .

Harpenden In Bloom 'planting' to win in 2005

Following on from its Silver Gilt award in the Anglia in Bloom 2004 campaign, the Harpenden In Bloom working party have launched its 2005 campaign with the determination to win!



The launch was marked by the holding of a planting day on Sunday 17th October 2004. Many volunteers turned up to help plant all the small flowerbeds in the Town Centre including the 1st Harpenden Brownies Pack.

A Bulb Planting day at Sherwood Rice/ Dark Lane was also held on the 24th October.

Volunteers turned up to join members and local residents representing Harpenden In Bloom to help plant a 1,000 bulbs, which will help make this year's floral displays even better than last year.



Moving Forward in Consultation

As a leading force in the design and installation of innovative burial and memorialisation systems, **welters organisation worldwide** prides itself on creating viable working partnerships with Government and Local Authorities to achieve long term solutions. "We have an extensive knowledge base that enables our organisation to be a real asset in advising on all aspects of issues facing modern management. Our design and consultation service represents total commitment to the industry" says Managing Director Keith Welters.

This service is an important aspect of the company and reflects the forward growth achieved over the past few years. With many years experience in land management and the farming industry, the company has advised and developed real alternative methods of interment, turning land that, using traditional methods, is unsuitable for normal burial into an aesthetic viable commodity generating real income and enhancing service provision. A growing number of Authorities are requesting assistance and this trend is expected to continue as Government and public expectation become more demanding.

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New structure found deep within West Antarctic Ice Sheet

Scientists have found a remarkable new structure deep within the West Antarctic Ice Sheet which suggests that the whole ice sheet is more susceptible to future change than previously thought. The discovery, by scientists from Bristol University and the British Antarctic Survey in collaboration with US colleagues, is reported this week (September 24) in the international journal *Science*.

The stability of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet has been hotly debated since the 1960s because of its potential to raise global sea level by around 5 m over several centuries. The potential impacts of a major change in the West Antarctic ice sheet are severe - sea level rise will be fantastically expensive for developed nations with coastal cities and dire for poor populations in low-lying coastal areas.

Lead author Prof Martin Siegert of Bristol University said, 'There is a great deal of speculation that global warming may cause sea levels to rise due to the melting of ice sheets. Until now, scientific observations suggested that change to the West Antarctic Ice Sheet would be restricted to the edges implying that large-scale instability of the ice sheet is unlikely. This new discovery deep within the ice means that we need to re-think our current assessment of the risk of collapse of this ice sheet.'

The structure - a distinctive fold in the ice, 800m deep by 50 km long - was detected using ice-penetrating radar. Ice sheets normally consist of flat layers of ice, so finding this huge fold was a complete surprise. Its presence suggests that a few thousand years ago surface ice at the centre of the ice sheet was moving rapidly and being 'drawn down' towards the bottom of the ice sheet.

More recently the rate of the ice flow has changed from fast to slow. The direction of flow has also changed. The most likely explanation for these changes is the 'switching-off' of a large ice stream at the margin of the ice sheet several centuries ago. These changes imply that the centre of the ice sheet is more mobile than scientists previously realised, requiring them to rethink existing models.

Ice sheet

The Antarctic ice sheet is the layer of ice up to 5000 m thick covering the Antarctic continent. It is formed from snow falling in the interior of the Antarctic which compacts into ice. The ice sheet slowly moves towards the coast, eventually breaking away as icebergs which gradually melt into the sea. The ice sheet covering East Antarctica is very stable, because it lies on rock that is above sea level and is thought unlikely to collapse. The West Antarctic is less stable, because it sits on rock below sea level. If the ice sheet does collapse, it is more likely to be part of a natural collapse cycle, or as a response to climatic change that occurred many thousands of years ago, rather than a response to current climatic change.

British Antarctic Survey is responsible for most of the UK's research in Antarctica. It is a component of the Natural Environment Research Council. More information about the work of the Survey can be found on www.antarctica.ac.uk

Salford says 'I do' to freedom of choice

As an inclusive city that promotes diversity, Salford offers its residents more freedom in the way they mark rites of passage thanks to positive changes to be introduced by the city council's registration service.

The introduction of new legislation will mean that in the future couples will no longer be asked to give notice of their intention to marry to the Superintendent Registrar where they live.

In fact, further steps have been taken to ensure that wedded bliss can be achieved with the introduction of additional services such as marriage re-affirmation. This will be possible in the registration office's refurbished premises which include a new marriage room furnished in contemporary style. Consideration is also being given to the idea of providing a wedding co-ordinator service to relieve the burden that comes with planning the big day. Partnership ceremonies have also been introduced as a positive move for same sex couples wishing to celebrate their special day.

The delivery of a new and improved service responds to customer demand and reflects one of the city council's core pledges, to enhance life in Salford. Additional services are also set to be introduced with the aim of reflecting the diverse and cosmopolitan nature of the city, including baby naming ceremonies and secular funerals. Commenting on the new plans, lead member for customer service and finance at Salford City Council, Councillor Hinds said: "Partnership working and consultation with communities continues to be essential to driving this service forward.

"The rationale is to reflect customer demand and enable people to make key decisions about rites of passage by offering more choice and a more comprehensive service." For further information on the registration service in Salford call 0161-909 6501 or visit the website at www.salford.gov.uk/bmd.

Safety First at Harpenden Council

Harpenden Town Council has developed a Major Incident Emergency plan to help local residents in the event of a major incident in the area.

The plan was adopted at a Full Town Council meeting in October and aims to reduce loss of life, protect property and restore normality as quickly as possible in the event of a disaster, such as freak weather conditions, a plane crash or terrorist activity.

The plan has brought together services provided by the District, County and Town Council as well as the Emergency Services and other Agencies. It also outlines key responsibilities, providing detailed information about local resources that would be called upon in the event of a disaster.

Hertfordshire Emergency Services Major Incident Committee (HESMIC) has advised that Harpenden Town Council's Plan is "First Class" and exactly what they had hoped to see from Town and Parish Councils across the county.

The Plan will now form the framework for other Town Councils throughout Hertfordshire to develop their own local strategies.

THE LOCAL COMMUNITY DESERVES RESPECT

Many thousands of years ago, villages and their surrounding woods and meadows must have formed the primary environment for human society, where families united into communities, and communities into larger villages in what might be seen as a clan area.

From the earliest times, village elders would choose a chieftain to rule over the clan villages in a region. He (or she) would be the guardian of tradition, the arbiter in disputes, the leader in local wars. If he wasn't good at it, he'd be retired and another one would be chosen. This was power from the ground up.

Alternatively, a warlord with his armed riders would turn up in the area, offering protection in exchange for tribute and services. Deals would be made and soon villagers found themselves with a king. This was power from the top down.

An evil king, an ideologue or a religious maniac, might enslave the local community or force them to follow his every whim, in which case they'd cheat him, plot against him and do deals with other rulers. A decent king, on the other hand, who left them alone to get on with their lives unmolested, as long as the fair tribute was forthcoming, would be quite appreciated.

The villagers would reserve their special affections for their local area, their own traditions and culture. But they would also recognise the value of paying homage and respect to the king for his protection and for the higher justice he dispensed between the areas.

In Britain, for some four hundred years after the Norman Conquest, local areas were dominated by the local lord, to whom the king had granted title to land. The kings were often weak and ineffectual against the combined lords, and local communities had to knuckle under. But as years passed villages grew into towns and began to trade and produce wealth.

In alliance the towns and the monarch were able to break the power of the lords and together form a mutually beneficial relationship. Wealthy towns could grant the king money, and in exchange the king would grant them freedom to trade, create wealth and run their own affairs. The ruler says to local: that which you do in your own way and can do well, we leave to you. The rest, we will take care of, and you pay. Big issues were for the ruler: foreign policy, state affairs, defence of the realm, and certain prerogatives of the realm like royal forests, palaces, expenses of office for his minions. Local issues were for the towns people

By sharing a king they shared another, higher identity with other distant towns and villages, yet kept affection for their place of birth and nurture. By living in denser concentrations in large towns they learned to live with and even thrive on the variety and stress, yet retained the fondness for village and translated this into a fondness for neighbourhood and community.

We are now a country that is 80% urban. And we know that cities can be a hell to people living alone. Yes, they can provide us with anonymity, individuality and choice. But most of us need something like the village. We want a place where we can see familiar faces, exchange

stories about people we know, feel part of, where we can help and be helped. Without this, in the huge, bleak, depersonalised, conurbations people find themselves living in, there is a serious danger of alienation and disorientation, when we see only faces we do not know, and receive cold looks. That is why people are still driven almost by instinct to find a local centre, where they can relate to somebody or something at ground level. The local pub, the local leisure centre, any kind of club, a job.

Local government in England has a pedigree. Many towns - not cities - towns, of just a few thousand people, were making England prosperous even before we had a proper parliament. Of course there was no universal suffrage, but the principle of local dignity and competence was re-affirmed.

The villages, towns and cities of England and much of Europe made the state possible, not the other way round. In democracies like America and Switzerland there is a healthy acknowledgement of this. It is an accepted principle of democracy to devolve to local communities as much local power as is compatible with national security and welfare. Not here, in Britain.

It is a curious irony about the towns. First they allied with the Monarch against the barons, then with Parliament against the Monarch.

Who knows, if their government persist in trying to do away with their rights to self-government, their history and their nation, they might appeal to the history books, and beg the Monarch to protect them against a rapacious, overbearing, unpatriotic robber-baron governments. ■

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Child abuse deaths must stop. FULL STOP ● NSPCC

If you think a child is at risk, call the NSPCC Helpline 0800 800 5000. For information & donations visit www.nspcc.org.uk

GREENER, SAFER, HEALTHIER ROUTES TO SCHOOLS

Local education authorities will be able to bring school transport into the 21st century as Education & Skills Secretary Charles Clarke and Transport Secretary Alistair Darling unveiled plans for greener, safer and healthier ways to travel to school.

Mr Darling announced £10 million of Department for Transport funding to develop hundreds of safe walking and cycling routes to schools. The Links to Schools programme will extend the National Cycle Network, bringing it closer to schools and making it easier and safer for pupils to walk or cycle.

More than 230 schools will directly benefit via the funding to 100 local authorities. The grant is to be made to Sustrans, the sustainable transport charity, which has built the 8,000-mile National Cycle Network, and which will oversee the building of new links from the Network to schools around England.

Mr Clarke confirmed that a School Transport Bill will be introduced to Parliament today to enable up to 20 local education authorities to introduce new schemes to tackle the congestion caused by the traditional 'school run,' developing innovative ways for pupils to travel to school tailored to their local circumstances, with up to £200,000 Government funding to kick start each scheme.

The School Transport Bill would bring the first changes to school transport legislation in over 60 years, allowing local education authorities to develop innovative solutions to school transport problems, reducing traffic congestion and cutting pollution, through the use of, for example:

- safe cycle routes to schools, plugged into the national cycle network, with secure storage for bicycles at schools;
- 'walking buses' where pupils are collected from an agreed location, and then walk together to school escorted in safe groups by volunteers, with other pupils joining them en route;
- 'park & stride' schemes where parents drop children off at an agreed location to be escorted into school;
- more high quality school buses catering for more pupils, with features such as CCTV and well-trained drivers; as well as extra buses catering for pupils attending after school activities;
- staggered starting times with different schools in the same area staggering their starting times to reduce the number of cars on the road at any one time.

Mr Darling said:

"As well as being fun, cycling improves health, reduces school-gate congestion and pollution and provides our children with a sense of independence. But we need to persuade more children, and their parents, that they can

cycle to school safely. Today's announcement is a real step in the right direction to persuade more children to cycle more safely, more often.

"School children across the country are set to benefit from the Links to Schools programme, made possible by a £10 million grant from my department, the largest ever cash injection for a project of this kind. The funding will help to develop hundreds of safe walking and cycling routes to schools around the country.

"We are determined to ensure that cycling and walking to school become a safe and healthy option for children and reassure parents that their children are safe when travelling to and from school. This investment builds upon the annual investment of more than £20 million a year which the Departments for Transport and Education are making in the Travelling to School initiative and will provide further help to children and parents who want to come to school without their cars."

Mr Clarke said:

"Twice as many children are driven to school now in comparison with 20 years ago - around 40% of primary pupils and 20% of secondary pupils. Most of these journeys are less than 2 miles, meaning decreasing numbers of children walking or cycling with serious health implications in terms of lack of daily exercise and the growing proportion of children who are overweight. "Our proposals would encourage local education authorities to come up with 21st century solutions to make walking, cycling and bus travel safe, green, healthy options for more schools and their pupils, while allowing authorities who are content with their current arrangements to retain them."

The announcements build on innovative work to modernise school transport schemes across England which have been established under Travelling to School: An Action Plan. Launched in September 2003, the Action Plan has already spent £14 million in local education authorities and 2,400 schools to develop:

- dedicated school travel plans which offer safer routes to school, road crossings, local speed restrictions, dedicated cycle ways, secure cycle storage, sufficient locker space and improved public transport provision;
- road safety skills for pupils, particularly at primary schools, and cycle training;
- positive behaviour by pupils on public transport on their journeys to and from school;
- lessons through geography, PSHE, and citizenship to explain the benefits of sustainable travel;
- a network of over 250 school travel advisers in local authorities in England to provide expert advice to schools engaged in travel planning.

LLANELLY HOUSE

(otherwise 'I'm Sure This Wasn't In My Job Description')

Lynn Davies Town Clerk Llanelli Town Council

Viewers of last year's first BBC2 'Restoration' series will no doubt recall that, from the ten entries which got to the final at the Tower of London, the winner was the Victoria Baths, Manchester. But just outside the top three came the sole Welsh finalist, Llanelly House. All of us involved with the project to restore this fine building, though naturally disappointed not to have won, were delighted with the series and the attendant publicity, and with the tremendous level of support which the house had received from far and near.

I don't suppose for a moment that there are any, but - just in case - for the benefit of any readers not familiar with the geography of Wales, Llanelly (the English spelling as used when the house was built) House can be found in the town of Llanelli (the original - and now official - Welsh spelling). A coastal town situated in Carmarthenshire in south-west Wales some twelve miles west of Swansea, Llanelli is historically more synonymous with tinplate, steel and coal (each now all but gone) and - last but by no means least - rugby.

But close to the town centre opposite the Parish Church, largely forgotten until recent years, stands the architectural gem that is Llanelly House. Now a Grade 1 listed building, this Georgian town house - very unusual for this part of the country - was built in the early 1700's by Thomas Stepney, M.P. for Carmarthenshire and has had a very chequered history, matching that of the Stepney family. One of its claims to fame - apart, that is, from Laurence Llewelyn Bowen's visit earlier this year (of which more later) - is that John Wesley, the Apostle of Wesleyan Methodism, stayed there on several occasions during his visits to the town.

By the mid-1990's the house lay vacant and its condition was rapidly deteriorating, with no prospect of the private owner being in a position to do anything about it. So it was that, in September 1998, Llanelli Town Council took the bold step of purchasing Llanelly House with a view to securing the future of this very important part of the town's heritage, restoring it to its former glory and bringing it into public use as a cultural and heritage centre.

It is fair to say that the project has made very slow progress, which is perhaps not that surprising given the labyrinthine processes and detailed requirements of grant funding bodies. Before application forms can



be submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund and other funders, a great deal of preparatory work is needed and a range of studies and reports put in place. A small team of consultants headed by William Wilkins, CBE was appointed to take the project forward. After the excitement and euphoria of the 'Restoration' series had died down, a two-phase investigative contract was undertaken during the latter part of 2003 and early 2004.

This involved the stripping-off and removal of boarding, partitioning, false ceilings, etc. which had been added to the interior over many years. At the same time an extensive programme of historic paint sampling was completed. This essential work was necessary to reveal and facilitate the study of the historic fabric and finishes of the house interior.

Dr. Warwick Rodwell, Project Archaeologist, supervised the work, and he has confirmed that the exercise turned out to be very much more complex and interesting than was initially believed. But now the architectural and social history of Llanelly House is broadly understood, and the physical evidence has been assembled for an authentic restoration of this fine building. It will greatly assist in the preparation of the Conservation Plan, an essential element of any grant application.

In the course of this work two rather mysterious over-mantel paintings, which are believed to date back to the completion of this Georgian house in 1714 and which had miraculously survived intact, were removed and sent to the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff. Viewers may recall that Ptolemy Dean and Marianne Suhr uncovered one of them when they were filming the programme about the house.

The artist and the scenes depicted have not yet been identified, and the paintings are not considered valuable, but they are an intrinsic part of the house and will be restored as part of the project.

There is evidence of other such paintings having at one time been displayed in the house, and enquiries have been commenced to try to locate their present whereabouts and eventually to return them to the house, if possible.

The house interior is, therefore, effectively gutted which has meant that, for health and safety reasons, members of the public cannot yet be allowed inside. However, this did not prevent a visit to the house in March by our 'Restoration' celebrity advocate Laurence Llewelyn Bowen. He had already shown that he was a passionate supporter of the house and its restoration, and was keeping the promise he made at the final held at the Tower of London. It was a wonderful fillip for everyone involved, and the extensive local media coverage undoubtedly gave the profile of the project a timely boost.

On the fund-raising side, it has been encouraging to see the widespread level of support for the project. The Town Council has opened a special project account, and modest - though much appreciated - donations have been received to date.

No charity has been formed to take the project forward, but the Town Council is currently in negotiation with a local building preservation trust which, as a registered charity, would be able to access a much wider range of potential funders than the Council. If agreement is reached, the intention is to transfer the house to the trust [hopefully by way of a sale/return or lease/return arrangement] so that it can undertake the restoration works instead of the Council, with the restored building returned to the Council some time after completion of the works.

A further boost was received with Carmarthenshire County Council agreeing to give the project its full support. This will manifest itself in a number of ways, not least in the recent submission of a Physical Regeneration Fund application to the National Assembly for Wales for funding to carry out much-needed highway improvements adjacent to the house and to meet the cost of restoring its exterior. The outcome of the application is keenly awaited.

So, while progress has been slow, a lot has been achieved. But a great deal still remains to be done. The project completion date is currently estimated to be 2009 but slippage can easily occur, as has been seen already. Nonetheless, however long it does take, of one thing the people of Llanelli and beyond can be sure - the Town Council's great leap of faith will be vindicated and the project will be successfully completed, for the benefit of Llanelli, Carmarthenshire and preservation and heritage supporters everywhere.

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FULL CIRCLE

Journalistic Freedom Troubles a Government

The PEGASUS Article



More than half a century ago, in a backwater of the known world, lived a man called John Meinert who had a number of business interests, among which were two small newspapers: the *Algemeine Zeitung*, a German language newspaper, and the *Windhoek Advertiser*, an independent English-language daily. Both in the same town and in the same state.

Guessed the place? Time's up.

Windhoek is the clue. Once the capital of a territory known as South West Africa, now the capital of modern Namibia. And who is the president of that land? Sam Nujoma, that's who.

If you're beginning to think this is a kind of Trivial Pursuit, hang on. We are pursuing a point, though far from trivial. It's coming. Just bear in mind for the moment that history, and the lessons it teaches us about human nature, is everywhere - in backwaters, too.

It's 1966, a significant year in English history - almost ranking with 1066. This is the year that England won the world cup. (I warned you this was a historical theme).

This momentous event was duly recorded in the *Windhoek Advertiser*. I know because I was there. At the time I was the proof reader for the paper.

Being proof reader meant conducting a daily battle with print room boys. They were a mix of English, Afrikaans or German. But most of them were Germans. I can't deny that they were competent workers and had a very competent command of English. A philosophical race, they had accepted that the country was now a mandate of South Africa and, as such, broadly, a part of the British Empire. But they had their own ideas of proper English and were reasonably happy with it.

Well, part of my job was to descend into this world of Nibelungs and try to persuade them that my version of English was to be preferred over theirs. They could have been very difficult but they weren't. A few grumbles at my radical tendency to introduce modern English eventually gave way to pleasant banter, but acceptance.

However, they did challenge me on one thing. Not being a football enthusiast, I barely realised that at the time a world-shattering contest was taking place; England were to play Germany for the World Cup final.

Being the only real English guy on the paper at the time, I was obliged to place bets on England winning. I had little choice. I placed the bets. To me it was an investment in bonding. I needed these guys to take me as one of their own, so I cravenly invested a major portion of my tiny salary in support of my home team and hoped it would impress them.

The idea was that England would beat Germany and win the World Cup. England did win. And I won - both money and prestige. I had invested and won out. That's how life should be.

But it was not quite the same for the *Windhoek Advertiser*.

While I was there the paper seemed to work tirelessly to applaud local endeavour and to laud grand visitors that dropped in on us from time to time, like heavenly angels who had lost their way. It all helped to give us a sense of meaning and purpose. It was a wonderful little paper in this, almost an epitome of what a local paper should be.

These were the days of apartheid, for the territory was run by South Africa at the time.

Some stories were almost fantastic. One naïve farm labourer complained that his wife had had sex with his Afrikaans boss. This was during the race law era when sex between races was forbidden. The woman confessed, the boss denied it and the husband couldn't prove it. The woman went to jail on her own evidence but the boss went free because the husband couldn't provide sufficient evidence.

The *Windhoek Advertiser* campaigned against this and the judgement was later overthrown by a higher court.

As a campaigning newspaper, the *Advertiser* attracted the attentions of the powerful SWAPO (South West African People's Organisation) which was a party, led by Sam Nujoma, the future Namibian president which was bent on winning independence for the indigenous peoples of South West Africa. It happened that the *Windhoek Advertiser* was willing to give them a voice in their homeland. Because of this, the *Advertiser* was read at

FULL CIRCLE

the headquarters of the United Nations in New York. This must have made the paper a little unpopular with the then government, but things went on without serious difficulty. Perhaps they thought the Windhoek Advertiser, as a voice of freedom read in United Nations, was better left alone. It was only small, after all.

I left eventually and moved on. But I remember the newspaper and the people on it with me. Bill, the big, bluff editor, who nearly beat the hell out of me when he came back from holiday and found I left out the comic strips to make place for some big 'stop press' news; Dirkie, not unlike Dirk Bogard, the charming sub-editor whom I replaced when he went to work for the Cape Times. There was Joyce of the Woman's Page.

Once asked what she would do in a revolutionary situation, she giggled 'Lie down and think of England' I don't think it came to that, but I'm sure she'd have stuck to her word. And there was the half mad Smittie, with his homosexual dog that behaved grossly in the beer gardens. An Afrikaner with attitude, Smittie took me for a ride in his plane, suddenly let go of the controls and yelled, 'Take over! It's an emergency'. I didn't freeze but merely assumed the controls calmly. But the sight of the ground rushing up to meet us soon got his attention. He later went on to become the editor of the paper.

It's because I still remember the Windhoek Advertiser as a brave little voice in a precarious world that I was recently moved to look it up on the net.

This is what I saw: **Tuesday Jan 20 1998**
- Namibia's oldest English paper closes:
WINDHOEK -- Namibia's oldest English-language newspaper, the 79-year-old Windhoek Advertiser, closed down yesterday. The Advertiser ceased publication on the recommendation of Democratic Media Holdings management, because of financial losses suffered, according to a statement by DMH chairman Dirk Mudge issued on Sunday. DMH executive editor Chris Jacobie changed the morning paper into an afternoon daily but the paper was unable to financially break even, Mr Mudge said. The newspaper appeared for the first time on July 4, 1919 and was originally a news sheet for members of the United Club -- a social club for Union of South Africa servicemen stationed in Namibia after the Germans surrendered in 1915. It was bought by Windhoek businessman John Meinert. In the 1970s the paper was run by well-known Namibian newsman, Hannes Smit, now editor-in-chief of the Observer. -- Sapa

A little further investigation into its sad demise brought up this: I've shortened it but I think the message will be clear enough. As I say, the point pursued is far from trivial.

Namibia - Annual report 2002: The authorities made numerous statements against the independent press throughout the year and the state president severely criticised local media. The country's main daily was the victim of an advertising boycott by the government.

During Unesco ceremonies to celebrate the 10th International Press Freedom Day on 3 May 2001, a note in the press file reminded journalists present that their work was to be limited to coverage of the conference. That day, President Sam Nujoma said he & quote; had had no positive experiences with the media & quote; of his country. The next day the managing editor of the independent daily The Namibian expressed her concern: & quote; It's a bad sign and it's an attempt to discredit the independent media that criticise government corruption in Namibia & quote; In late May the president ordered the government and state institutions to cancel their subscription to The Namibian. ...

During the week of 15 October a member of parliament from the ruling SWAPO (South West African People's Organisation) attacked the press: & quote; Some media have become liars [...] We have to strengthen the powers restricting journalist's rights & quote;:

On 10 January 2001 Mocks Shivute, challenged freelance journalist David Kashweka, saying that he did not understand why someone & quote; who, for six years, was a member of the government newspaper New Era, has chosen to write such a malicious article on Namibia. It's as if he bit the hand that fed him & quote; The journalist had published an article in the independent daily The Namibian, stating that border areas with Angola were being plundered by Unita rebels (armed movement at war against the Angolan government) and were economically and socially paralysed.

Mocks Shivute the permanent secretary to the information ministry, reminded official services on 22 March that they had to apply the government's decision to no longer advertise in The Namibian, with & quote; immediate effect & quote; The authorities explained that this decision was related to the tone of the daily, judged too critical. This measure had been decided by the government, the country's main advertiser, in December 2000 but had not been applied. A few years earlier another newspaper, The Windhoek Advertiser, was forced to close due to a lack of income after being struck by the same sanction.

The leader of a coalition of opposition parties said in parliament that this measure may be & quote; the first sign of a collapse of democracy & quote; in Namibia. ■

PEGASUS

THE LADY OF TAVISTOCK

Rex Oswin talks to a special lady, who at the age of 86 still holds her own in the world of local government

86-year-old Betty Batchelor has become so well-known over the years in her attendance at Local Government Conferences that one wonders whether a Conference would be quite the same without her. And when she's there it isn't as an old trouser watching how the younger ones get on but as an active Councillor. There she was, at the last ALLC Conference at Blackpool, in the thick of it, asking her questions in that light, crisp voice of hers, and ready to question the answers if they weren't up to scratch.

There's more to a Conference than just the business at hand, key though that is. There is also a spirit to such conferences, a spirit that reflects the conviction of so many people around the country willing to work hard and commit themselves to local democracy, willing to make each Conference count.

Few could be more representative of that spirit than Betty Batchelor, who has, for some seven decades, devoted herself to a principle, and stuck to it, and continues to do so for her local government in Tavistock.

I wanted to find out more about that principle, but also more about the lady that so many people respected and whom I had seen at the Conference only at a distance. I knew that she had been a dedicated Labour stalwart for most of her life and I looked forward to savouring the times she had lived through. Every year, every decade of a long, active life like that is better than money in the bank. It was hers.

So it was arranged that I should call her and chat.

From the start, her bright, friendly manner and her genuine interest in my questions and observations put me at ease. It was soon apparent, too, that Betty was much more a voice of the present than an echo from the past. She was willing to indulge me in a little wander down memory lane, but she is a very contemporary woman, with a sharp eye on the events of today.

Nevertheless, I was told a lot of people didn't know much about Betty, I considered such a long life would be full of incident. I was not wrong. Here's the backdrop.

Betty Batchelor was born in Plymouth in June 1918. Both her father and mother were radical, by which Betty means that they were firmly attached to the Labour cause. Ed Reeby, her father, worked as an iron-caulker in Plymouth's Devonport Docks and was a long term Trade Union member; her mother, a cook by trade, and an active member of the Co-operative Movement, was also a lifelong Methodist. These were the early influences on Betty as she grew up.

She was born into what might be regarded as an auspicious time. The War was in its last stages and



people were looking forward not only to peace but also to more initiatives for social change from Lloyd-George's Coalition. The Methodists, a campaigning religion, championing the causes of the poor, happened to be sympathetic towards the reformist approach of the now-declining Liberal Party. That Party had itself been in some way a mother hen to the emerging Labour Party, and now the Labour Party was flexing its own muscles and getting ready to stand on its own feet as a Parliamentary contender.

Betty started school at Plymouth Central School when she was 5 and came out at the other end a mature 16-year-old.

'They were happy times, mostly,' she recalls. 'I say "mostly" because there were unpleasant aspects about it at times.'

'What aspects were those? Caning, slapping?'

'Oh, no. There wasn't much of that at my school. Some children got their knuckles rapped by a ruler sometimes. One teacher used to say I was intelligent but talked too much. A bit like now...'

She laughed, and continued. 'What I meant to say was that, you know, circumstances change but people aren't much different in themselves. The sort of things I mean are what people talk a lot about now but didn't make much of an issue of then - things like bullying, prejudice and so on. It isn't new'

Like most of us, she can recall teachers that had an effect on her. She fondly remembers the French teacher, 'a kindly young woman from Normandy. I still remember

bits of French I learned with her.'

We agreed that teachers could make or break a child. 'I know some teachers are not very nice at all,' she said. 'But I was lucky, I think.'

She remembers two other young teachers of History and of Geography. 'They set up 'circles' of further education, which children could attend voluntarily. I learned so much about my local region from my Geography teacher that even now driving in my car, I can recognise places she described and explained to us children.'

The school is now part of Plymouth University but 'it was a fine school and much respected'. One of its more famous pupils (apart from Betty) was a certain Angela Rippon.'

But if Betty's memories of her school were pleasant enough, even more so were those of her family and social life. 'We were a good solid Devon family,' she says.

Her dad was the encouraging, jolly sort. Her mother, a Tavistock woman, was the guiding light of the family. They were churchgoing people - her mother more so than her father, who inclined to be eclectic. Gentle people, but both were quietly indignant at the plight of the lower classes. There was injustice in the land and they and their friends in the Movements wanted to right it.

'And we children in those families had our own organisations. I was in the Co-operative Comrade Circle and attended all the meetings. That's what we called going to "night-school". It was very interesting and we learned about Robert Owen and the Rochdale Pioneers, that sort of thing.'

Both parents were ever supportive, Betty remembers. 'My parents were not restrictive. None of this telling me where or where not I should go, or telling me I have to be back at a certain time. Of course I would have obeyed them had they done so because I loved them and respected them. But they respected me, and that meant they trusted me.'

Just as well. Betty was an outdoor girl.

'I was a bit of a tomboy as they called adventurous girls in those days. I was a keen cyclist from the age of 13 right up to my 40's and over the years I cycled the length and breadth of Britain more or less. I had legs, I can tell you, though I'm not sure if cycling doesn't tell on the legs in later life.'

Betty, at 16, was drawn into the milieu that was to shape her political career over the following decades. She became a member of the Labour League of Youth and also of the Co-operative Comrade Circle, which was for people from 15 to 25.

I asked her if she had ever had any qualms about going along with her parents. Didn't she rebel against their view of life, as we're told children ought to do?

She saw though this. 'My parents were firm where it mattered. They used to say they didn't want to spoil me - me being the only child. But they gave me as much freedom as they could. You might think this is a contradiction, but I think that in those days kids were a little more independent than they seem to be today, perhaps because it was such a different society with different norms of behaviour from today. I don't know. But, anyway, in spite of that, there was a kind of link between parents and kids that we don't seem to get today with the

post-war generation gap.

I know my parents used to take me with them to their meetings from a very early age. It was very sociable affair, adults and kids together, I remember. We kids played while the adults debated things beyond us. But as I grew older, I began to understand more of what was going on. What was that?

'When I got older I began to see things more clearly. My father and my mother were quite passionate in a subdued way - I mean they didn't rant and rave; passionate

I was as womanly as you can get, believe me, but I found I hankered after the jobs that were usually set aside for men

about wanting to improve conditions of the working class at that time. They wanted votes for everybody, proper education for children, and end to poverty, clean and new houses - that kind of thing.' That is where Christianity and Labour came together. I'm not one for philosophy, but that seemed a more credible cause than any other I could think of, and that's why I went for it.'

My parents were an inspiration and always looked out for me. One day I was feeling a bit down and went upstairs to mope in my bedroom. Soon, in came Dad to tell me that my bike was ready - tyres pumped up and brakes adjusted, and that I should get out and get on with seeing the world. Words to that effect. I remember he was smiling and hearty and so well-meaning. I did as he advised and ended up having a jolly good day. It's a small thing but I remember it.

When Betty was 16 she passed her entrance exam to work for the Plymouth Co-op Society and chose to go into sales in the trade of ironmongery rather than do a desk job.

'It was a challenge in those days,' she says. 'I was as womanly as you can get, believe me, but I found I hankered after the jobs that were usually set aside for men - I suppose because they offered a bit of scope. It was the same when later I got involved in local government; there was always the assumption that women councillors would be involved in work to do with children. But I made a play for highways and roads and got away with it.'

On the day World War 2 broke out Betty was on a cycling trip with friends. Somebody broke the news to her group when they were relaxing on Slapton Sands, near Tor Cross, coincidentally the very place where American troops would later be training for the D-Day landings. Was she shocked at the news?

She says, 'We'd all been making our protests against fascism, both in Spain and later in Germany. It was obvious to most of us that there wasn't going to be



In spite of the spirit bonding that we thought most people showed, there were the nasty types. There were the spivs, the pillagers, the opportunistic criminals. I tell you. People are basically the same.'

So, how do you rate the British in wartime? Was the Blitz spirit just a myth?

People don't seem to change. The circumstances change. And I think that affects behaviour.

'Well, I have to say that, in spite of the nasty types, I believe the majority of ordinary people did their best and mucked in. That was my impression!'

So you have faith in people?

'People, as I've said, don't seem to change. The circumstances change. And I think that affects behaviour. But you still have bad people as well as good people. That's all I can say.'

In all this time, from 16 to her early twenties, Betty Batchelor had continued to attend the many conferences of the time. The war was on but the people of the Labour movement had hopes and expectations, as they'd had at the end of the Great War, before the Depression and the rise of Fascism dashed them. When the Second World War ended finally, the time had come for change. And those changes were sweeping.

What do you feel about this period, the war and its aftermath?

'Well. My hero was Attlee. He ran the country while Churchill attended to the war. And he oversaw the others: Ernest Bevin, Aneurin Bevan, Herbert Morrison. They had all been working and planning for the future. When the end of the war came and Mr Attlee won the election we were over the moon.'

And it all happened. William Beveridge, a Liberal, produced his idealistic report and the whole Labour programme began to fall into place.

These were great times for Labour and for the rest of Britain. The magnificent Welfare State, covering Health, Pensions, Unemployment, and so on.

Not all running smoothly for Betty though. She'd been bombed out in the war and she and her husband had been living with her mother until the chance came to rebuild their bombed out home. Betty had faced up to this, as had many others who had suffered the loss of their homes and possessions. She continued to serve on voluntary committees and do her bit.

But misfortunes had come one upon the other. In 1946 Betty lost her first and only baby. In 1947 her husband and she did manage to build their house. But three years later her husband fell victim to an illness which became

peace in spite of Chamberlain's bit of paper. Of course we all wanted peace. But, you know, you can see what's coming.'

During the war, Betty worked with the Defence Telegraph Network. Essentially this was facilitating communications in the United Kingdom. It was during the war, in 1943, when she was 25, that Betty married the man she loved for the rest of her life, a Royal Navy stoker called Len Batchelor. After demob he worked in the Dockyard. Happy life?

'Oh, yes. If my parents had tried not to spoil me, Len was the opposite. He spoiled me rotten, and I loved it.'

A moment passes.

'Not that he was the only one I went out with before I was married,' she adds with a small chuckle.

I try to imagine how it must have been in Portsmouth in the war years.

What about the bombing? Did you get any of that?

'Bombing! Portsmouth received constant bombing. It was a port full of ships. But there were some particularly intensive raids. Our family suffered damage from three huge bombing raids. The last raid, we were completely bombed out. The house was demolished.'

How did people behave in such circumstances? Did human nature shine at its best?

'Well, I'm not sure if shine is the right word. What I think is that, in retrospect, you could see how class distinction broke down. Everyone suffered from the bombing whatever class. Everybody mucked in to alleviate the damage. I don't mean only those middle class people with socialist convictions, but all middle classes.'

So the war brought out the best in people?

'Well, not always.. I know people like to look back on things with rose-coloured glasses but I don't, necessarily.'

more serious as time passed.

Eventually, Betty had no choice but to take a job to support herself and her husband. She was able to land one finally as a lady superintendent at the Farley rusk company in her area.

This gave her a degree of security and she was able to take care of herself and husband. She was also able to enter public life once again, and soon became active in local government, throwing herself into committee work where she distinguished herself to the extent that she was even short-listed for selection as Labour MP.

Did you try for it?

'No, I'm afraid. In those days you could only risk it if you could afford it or if your job was safeguarded. Neither applied in my case.'

I think when I entered my forties I finally arrived at my right age group. And I haven't moved from it since.

And the better times?

'I came into my prime in the late Fifties and most of the Sixties,' she says. I was always rather mature for my age and, this may sound strange, I think when I entered my forties I finally arrived at my right age group.

And I haven't moved from it since. I haven't changed in confidence at least.'

She recounts an incident which she thinks of as a turning point. In 1966 the English football team visited Plymouth to put on a token match with Plymouth Argyle. At the mayor's reception later the World Cup was on display. In a social encounter around the cup it happened that Betty's mother was introduced as Mrs Batchelor's mother. Hitherto it had always been the case that Betty had been introduced as Mrs Reeby's daughter.

'That was a turning point for me,' says Betty. 'I knew I'd arrived. My mother was just as pleased.'

Ten years later, after Betty had been representing council for many years in many capacities, misfortune came once again. By 1977 her mother had become very ill. On top of this Betty had to report to her mother, her greatest champion over the years, that she had lost her seat on the County and on the City councils.

A year later, at the age of 60, Betty moved to Tavistock with her husband. 'It was a bit like coming home', Betty said. Naturally I knew Tavistock well, being so close to Plymouth, but it was where my grandparents had lived and where my mother came from'.

When did you get active in local government there. Was it hard to get started?

'Not, really. People were kind and I think they saw me as a Tavistock person, really. I did voluntary work for the council, but it was only in 1983 that I became a councillor proper. And I've been one ever since, and very proud I

am to be so.'

Betty had another knock in what she calls her 'up and down' existence. Her husband died in 1986.

But life brightened for once again, a few years later, when in 1995, at the age of 77, Betty became the Mayor of Tavistock.

This was a wonderful achievement, you must have been very proud.

'Oh, I was. of course. This didn't mean that I wasn't still a councillor. That's what I've been and still am. But I can't deny it was a real honour for me because it meant there were people who liked and respected me. And it was a kind of pinnacle to a long career I think.'

Over her many years as a Labour Party activist, Betty has come into contact with a good many well-known political figures. She had mentioned the wartime heroes already but I wondered if she'd care to talk a little about some of the post-war figures she admired.



On this, she was comfortable but made it clear that, although she met many larger than life figures and was often able to chat with them in the familiar way people adopted at Party meets, she was not on intimate terms with them.

Nevertheless, she remembers the impression some of them have made on her, and is proud, too, that she has been remembered by some of them for her services to the Labour Movement. She has received the Labour Party's award for Meritorious Service, the Co-op Movement's Long Service award, and Tony Blair's

personal message on her 80th birthday is especially cherished.

What qualities did she admire in politicians - courage, integrity, vision, intellect? What makes a good leader? 'Thinkers and administrators are admirable', she says. 'But doers are most important. You must get power or you can do nothing. Herbert Morrison was an advocate of this; so were people like John Smith and Tony Blair.' Another 'doer' she has high praise for is Barbara Castle (who brought in seat-belts and breathalysers. 'We've had a good number of strong Labour women - Edith Summerskill, Betty Boothroyd, and Margaret Beckett among them. But I think I'd rate Barbara first. She was a 'go-getter'. She could take on anything and get it done'. What about the other qualities?

'Well, we all admire integrity in people, but in politics you've got to be practical; you can't be naïve. But I do admire people in the Party who stand up for their Labour principles as they see them - people like Clare Short, for example, or Mo Mowlem'

Betty became a close friend of one such politician, Michael Foot, whom she's known since 1937. 'He is a man who has always put integrity and principle first. But he is a realist, too. When he saw it was in the interests of the Party to do so, he was quite ready to resign its leadership in 1983.

Possibly from her own experience in her own marriage and that of her parents, she has a particular regard for married teams in politics, exemplified by Nye Bevin and Jenny Lee, Niel and Glynis Kinnock. And Tony and Cherie Blair.

'It's better, I think, when spouses share the same interests.'

What about the world today and the way the Government's running things? What kind of things bother you?

'I do get the feeling sometimes that we rush into things. But I suppose that's the speed of the world; it's a harder world to manage. It's also harder to believe in things. It was easier in earlier days when you didn't know all the horrors that were coming.'

Have you found it hard to adapt to the many changes over the years?

'We adapt. We have to adapt. We have to manage change, that's what my party is all about. Obviously, many things are different now. People didn't have what they have today in material things or in technology. They had different attitudes to many things. But we can't just stand still.'

You've talked about your childhood. What about modern youth?

'They're much the same as they used to be. They have their challenges just like the rest of us. Sometimes I think we aren't as tolerant towards them as we might be.' You don't think we should bring back the stocks, then? 'Not really! I'd be in them more often than not.' (another chuckle)

Oh, yes. You did say that you were a bit of a rebel.

'A rebel against the Establishment, not against the principles I was brought up with.'

You said you could be quite a difficult person.

'I don't mind if people think I'm difficult. In some things you have to be.'

Throughout the conversations we had, Betty surprised me in this ability to look back over the many years and make comparisons, but always from the viewpoint of today. Yes, she has her favourite things from the past. She likes the big swing bands, she remembers a favourite actor, James Stewart - (He had such a gentle manner to him). She loves Hollywood musicals. But she's perfectly at home with the entertainment values of today.

'I'm a populist, not a highbrow,' she says. 'I like soap operas. I think they help get social messages across. But I also like to keep up with events through the news and similar kinds of programmes. And I read the print off the newspaper most days.'

Socialism is a way of life, they say. And I believe that Socialism and the Christian values that run through it will bring people together, wherever they come from.

So, in all this, how does Betty Batchelor see herself in the big picture? She had intimated that she was a world citizen as well as a local patriot - and not too keen on the 'N' word - (Nationalist).

Are you Devonshire woman before an Englishwoman? 'I see myself as Celtic.'

Hmmm!

What do you like about being a councillor and what do you hate about it?

'Well, I don't actually hate anything about it, although I definitely do not like writing... in fact, yes I can say I hate writing.'

And what is it you like about it.

A pause. 'It makes me feel that I am part of the wider scene.'

And what is special about being a Tavistock councillor?

'I think we're all proud of being custodians of the beautiful Abbey and of the fact that Tavistock is the home town of Francis Drake. That's quite romantic, I think.'

And is it all a bed of roses? All the ambitious people float upwards towards bigger government while the decent people stay and take care of the garden?

'Oh, don't you kid yourself. Some people like to be a big fish in a small pond. We have our work cut out keeping things running fairly. But we have a good team at the moment.'

Well, we're getting to the end now. A couple more questions. You told me that you favoured Britain's wholehearted commitment to the European Union. And yet you are dedicated to your own small patch in Devon, trying to win as many concessions as possible for it from

big government. Isn't there some kind of contradiction here?

'Not at all. Just because I love my part of the world and I love what I am able to do for it, it doesn't mean that I regard the rest of the world as alien. It is the values that connect people more than artificial borders. Local governments are everywhere and Europe today seems very similar to us. In some respects I feel as close to Brittany as I do to Northern Ireland, or Yorkshire, for example.'

Socialism is a way of life, they say. And I believe that Socialism and the Christian values that run through it will bring people together, wherever they come from.

OK. Last question. The Blackpool Conference. Was it good?

'One of the best, I think. A bit of debating instead of just listening. Pity we missed out the singsong at the end of it, though.'



I HEARD THE NEWS TODAY, OH BOY!

By Rex Oswin

Now that the main parties have declared themselves through speeches and manifestos we can get some idea of what they want us to believe, and even, perhaps, of what they really intend, though we'll have to dig that one out of them by stages.

Until further notice it looks like it's still a choice between Labour and the Conservatives. What's on offer? What can they give a sceptical electorate?

It seems they both want to make amends to the electorate. Both are contrite, and claim they have learned from their past errors. Both are keen to show how intent they are now on restoring the public's trust in government. And both, coincidentally, offer their ten key utterances to encapsulate their new ideas.

Exploring the Labour Manifesto is an experience. To anybody of a Utopian turn of mind, it is like opening a treasure chest. The whole thing glitters and sparkles and you can barely read it without blinking as in bright sunlight. There are pictures of Tony, and pictures of children, and more of Tony. Everywhere there are words of wisdom, words of kindness and understanding, words of deep conviction and determination, words of promise, and on every page, we sense the urgency of joining the march onwards towards that wonderful future just around the corner. Not got there yet - a lot to do, two terms not enough. But not to worry! Tony's young and gutsy. He's willing to

fight on indefinitely, regardless of the heavy international responsibilities he has to bear for the sake of World Freedom!

Gosh! How lucky we feel! How enchanted we are as we watch the words dance across our vision like little butterflies in a meadow.

Tony, true to form, is expansive and optimistic, and boyishly cheeky, bless him!

He promises a lot; in fact he promises everything. Imagine anything you might want for Christmas. Imagine Paradise. He'll deliver. It seems a little daring but, after all, our Tony is designing a British state that will last a thousand years, not as a backwater of the Franco-German Empire (Just a joke, we mean Europe, of course), but as a 'key player'.

One can't help but wonder how he will achieve this amazing project of total happiness for the British

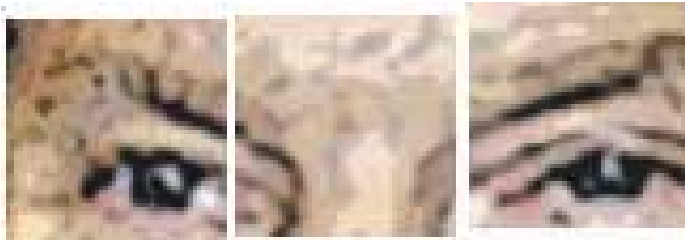
within his lifetime. We have to admit that he has got quite a lot of it up and running. He isn't idle in pursuing his vision. It's all there in the Manifesto, the targets, the methods of achieving them and the myriad agencies he has to set up to persuade a stubborn minority that he is right and never wrong; and all so imaginatively described. Amazingly, we're told that he only needs another term to achieve them. (Or was it another two terms?)

Never mind. The message is plain to all his followers. He wants to move Britain into the modern age. No Progressive in the world could fault such a noble aspiration. He needs our support. So what if we do have to keep electing him; if that's the only way we'll ever get a properly functioning society where things like the NHS and public transport work efficiently, well, so be it. Give the man time! The Conservatives, on the other hand, soberly fight shy of committing themselves too strongly to any of the more obvious targets, arguing very reasonably that it would be wrong to promise something they cannot guarantee to deliver. It doesn't occur to them that whatever they offer, or don't offer hardly matters to those who have become victims of Tony's enthusiasm - those thousands of exhausted weaklings who have collapsed on the job from an excess of paperwork.



These people will vote Tory, Lib Dem, - anything just to get a good night's sleep and a chance to dream of better days, when England was a gentle and coherent place. They'll know that the Tories are the only valid way out of the hell that is the future - electronic tagging of everybody in an Orwellian Europe.

English? Law abiding? Prove it! Lose your ID card and get flung into jail. Yes, we really need to think very slowly and carefully whether we want to belong to a federal republic of republics, the break up of everything familiar. The bleak future of living our lives in the mind of one megalomaniac, whose rational and clear thinking tells him that Britain is best served by decomposing and being re-absorbed in a monolithic structure of bureaucracy and remoteness.



Remember Charlie Chaplin giving his speech in 'The Great Dictator'. How difficult it seems for authoritarian minds to understand that people find their freedom in just being left alone to do things in their own way.

Rationality! Let's imagine our current democratic dictator. He has the largest and most undemocratic majority in memory. He has enormous power. One day, he wakes up. His eyes sparkle. Yes. All bicycles should be painted bright yellow! Who can argue with that? Yellow is easy to see in foggy weather or any other time. Who can argue? Nobody! His mind is clear. The law is thrust brutally past the Upper House.

So, what does everybody do? Well, they don't want problems. They paint their bikes yellow. But when Cromwell moves on, and Charles II takes over, there is universal rejoicing. Everybody repaints their bikes black or red or green or blue, because they like different colours. No utilitarian arguments here; just people being themselves.

Was he right? Well, do we always have to be right? Give a bit of leeway.

But, is he right about joining Europe? This is a tough world. Never mind England, the Queen, history, the United Kingdom. We must be realistic. Huge economic nations are mushrooming up as we stand here. India, China, Brazil, Indonesia. How are we to survive if we do not join Europe?

Coward! No faith in the people of Britain. It is a pluralistic world, more so by the very plurality of the new mushrooms. We have prestige and intelligence. We will always survive. We do not need to sell ourselves into a state of nonentity.

People who do not love us, for historical reasons, will not be our true friends, and will try to do us down. Therefore, in Churchillian tones, let us brace ourselves and do what we know we can do, as only we, the British, can do it. (Gulp! We've just remembered the transport and

communications system. Never mind. We'll work on it!)

Yes. The Conservatives, if they have the courage, might have a chance to catch some votes, even though they waver about policy.

Remember! We just want to escape. Help us!

Has it occurred to anyone that Left and Right are silly misnomers? All the people of this country want is to be left alone to be themselves, to make a few changes here and there, yes - but gradually, not to rock the boat and all drown. A bit of comfort and prosperity, a bit of high-spiritedness, even naughtiness, is fine. But true and tested human values should also be allowed - sobriety, firmness, duty - all entirely voluntary, of course, do tend to lend colour in a universally vulgar world.



Well. The Conservatives need do nothing but be sensible. They know the British people inherently recoil from messianic leaders when they get above themselves, whatever party they represent. The British people have this odd notion that a leader exists to serve their aims and not his, or her, own.

So, hang in there, Mr Howard.

Why do we have to be so adversarial? Why do we have to listen to that cacophony of schoolboy bickering in the Commons, when we can hear gentle and considered debate from far more mature people in the Upper House? Why does Blair blare on so? Why is Howard a coward? Just reach out to the people and find what they want. Don't manipulate them. No spin. No lies. Just do, as you're required to, and represent the interests of the people, as they require. It is so simple.

Oh! Sorry. We seem to be displaying our credentials. What are they? Neither Left nor Right. Not Lib-Dem either; just a desire for something in harmony with our tradition, our hopes, our past and our future.

We do need a rest from this frenzied Fuhrerprinzip approach.

Thank God for the Opposition, whoever they may be! ■

Winter Sunset

Platisse © 2005





Fitting the Spear-head to the Shaft

by Steve Reed, UKIP-PPC for Wells



How often has it been remarked that the inaction of good men is the only requirement for the triumph of evil; and yet how easily we assume, nowadays, that seeking a quiet life, and pursuing immediate gratification, are just as legitimate as - if not more

legitimate than - tackling the problems, which politics and religion inevitably pose?

Peace and prosperity always provoke this short-sighted assumption, which amounts to a denial of individual responsibility and leads inevitably to political and religious conflict and economic collapse; but the lessons of history need not go quite unheeded: we can observe the signs of increasing tension, raise the alarm and take action before atrocious, social breakdown commences; and the sooner we act, the less atrocious and complete that social breakdown will be.

Many are now conscious of increasing tension, are raising the alarm and are taking action, but they are still a minority, and unless such people form the majority before the main-beams of society give way, their efforts will be largely wasted. Indeed, in the wider world, the peace has already been broken, and prosperity is becoming precarious. "Now is the time, for all good men, to come to the aid of the Party!"

Where war and penury are not openly stalking the world, the signs of their approach are visible as the discrepancies between public policies and their designated effects: most significantly, policies, supposedly for the enhancement of democracy, are producing unaccountable, supranational elites, which control, at national and local levels, impotent, naïve or hypocritical, functionaries. This discrepancy arises, because all of the incumbent, establishment-supported, political parties are colluding in a scheme to perpetuate their dominance by relegating democracy to a merely consultative role. In other words, a scheme in which there are free and fair elections to posts, which confer no real power.

The other discrepancies follow inevitably from this: anti-narcotics policies, which increase the use of narcotics; health policies, which undermine medical services; transport policies, which are throttling communications; economic policies, which are destroying productive activity; environmental policies, which hamper conservation, and anti-discrimination policies, which

elevate the discrimination of arbitrarily chosen groups to the level of a faith - to name but a few. The general effect is one by which regulation supplants, and destroys, courtesy, morality and common sense.

What, then, is this minority doing - and what must we do - to head off impending disaster? I suggest that counter-measures consist of four steps, none of which is effective on its own and, therefore, that we must beware, in particular, of those who advocate some of these steps, but not all; for such people are more obstructive to a solution than those who dismiss the need for action completely.

The first step is to establish the reality of the situation - to recognise the signs of tension in the discrepancy between the stated purpose of policies and their actual effect. Secondly, we must identify necessary change; thirdly, we must agree a strategy for bringing about this change and, fourthly, we must proceed with the implementation of this strategy.

I have indicated where, in my view, the heart of the problem lies - in the avoidance, by those in power, of direct, democratic accountability. The way in which this is being done is as follows. With the collusion of national, political cartels, law is now proposed, approved and enforced by bodies of appointees - especially the Brussels-Commission - and these bodies, in turn, support and defend the cartels (i.e. the groups of pro-EU parties) which are colluding with them. The necessary change, which I advocate, and the UK Independence Party proposes, therefore, is the restoration of sovereign powers to Members of Parliament.

Many observers recognise this need, but some attempt to stop the remedial process, at this point, by claiming that "subsidiarity", within the Brussels-system, is sufficient - as though this collusion between appointees and cartels, which have freed themselves from the need to comply with the wishes of the electorate, were capable of self-regulation and better results! "Subsidiarity", I believe, has been shown to be a hollow deception. We must reject it and proceed to agree a genuinely effective strategy.

Indeed, having seen the dangers of our situation and identified the need for representative government, agreeing an effective strategy is easy. It is clear that we must elect Members of Parliament, who are prepared to abolish the Brussels-system in Britain.

At this point, the remedial process I am describing, is still supported by a majority of the electorate - at least 52% - but the spear-shaft, as it were, consisting of the three stages I have mentioned, still lacks a head.

The question, which now divides the electorate and halts the remedial process, is how the election of such Members of Parliament is to be achieved. A majority (about 40%) still cling desperately to the belief that MP's, belonging to one of the parties in the colluding cartel, are secretly ready to restore sovereignty to Westminster.

Naturally, the electorate is being encouraged, in this view,

by promises of "re-negotiation" - albeit from a position of utter weakness - of the terms of Brussels' dominance, and by assurances of "resistance to further loss of sovereignty", even though such promises and assurances have been made for more than thirty years and have always proved empty; but what really keeps 40% of the electorate from fitting the spearhead to the spear, I believe, is a lack of faith that MP's, other than those of the cartel, can be elected.

This is where the mass-media and politically-interested opinion-pollsters make an enormous contribution to supporting the supranational appointees, preserving the collusive cartel and halting the restoration of sovereignty and democracy. They refuse to recognise the abolition of Brussels-control as a legitimate, political aim, and they avoid reference to the Party, which proposes it. Many strike a "Euro-sceptic" pose and moan endlessly about the faults of the Brussels-system, but they are careful never to admit that voting for the non-collusive Party is the solution to the problem.

Nevertheless, the electorate's self-confidence is growing. Against the united powers of the EU, the Lib/Lab/Con-cartel and the mass-media, it cast more votes for the UKIP, last June, than for the LibDems. In September, it put the Tories in 4th place, behind UKIP, in the Hartlepool by-election; and, in October, it rejected Prescott's elected

regional assembly, in Northumberland and Durham, by 78%. Just compare that with the BBC's prediction of 72% in favour!

For this reason, in my view, we now see feverish activity by the cartel and a renewed media black-out regarding UKIP - except where the party-splitting activities of Robert Kilroy-Silk are concerned; but the electorate is getting wise to such tricks: UKIP-membership is still rising steeply. More and more people are fitting the head to the spear. If enough of them do so before the next election, they will send MP's to Westminster with the necessary weapons and the will to use them. We must make every effort to ensure that they do. No other option is of any value.

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The 1 January deadline to get ready for the Freedom of Information Act has come and gone, but still many organisations have very little in place, if anything, to prepare staff properly for handling requests for information.

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For a free evaluation or further details contact Rochelle Holliday on 01249 730044 or e-mail rochelleholliday@computa-friendly.co.uk

SEAHAM - LOOKING FORWARD TO THE FUTURE

In May, 1983 Seaham Town Council came into existence. Initially, the Town Council met in a community centre but soon acquired Civic Offices in the main shopping area. The Council has progressed rapidly and now provides a range of services including:-

The Council's Services

- parks and recreation facilities and environmental improvement projects;
- sports facilities for football, cricket, bowls and whippet racing;
- floral displays and hanging baskets;
- cycle tracks and public walkways;
- community woodlands;
- four parks;
- children's playgrounds;
- allotments and garage sites;
- burial and cemetery facilities;
- arts and information services including running the Pop-In Centre for the elderly;
- fax and photocopying services
- civic events;
- tourism and visitor information;
- artefacts and memorabilia displays;
- A successful partnership/twinning with Gerlingen near Stuttgart, Germany
- Staging a range of events including the annual Fireworks Display, Seaham Carnival, Christmas Lights, Seaham in Bloom Competition, May Day event and Sea Angling Championships.
- Operating manned toilet facilities in Church Street
- Supporting a range of anti-crime initiatives
- Providing roadside seats and grit bins.

The Council's budget for the current year is just under £1m. The precept is £758,692 and the amount to be paid by the average Band D dwelling Council taxpayer is £158.98 per year or £3.05 per week for Seaham Town Council services. In October 2004 the Council was awarded Quality Council Status.



New Esplanade

In its heyday the town had three working pits employing several thousand miners. The last pit closed in 1993 and the economic and social consequences arising from the loss of so many jobs were enormous. This led to the establishment of the Seaham Regeneration Strategic Partnership involving Durham County Council, Easington District Council, Seaham Town Council and other agencies to develop a range of measures aimed at tackling the problems throughout the town.

Partnership Working

The past few years have shown how the Partnership has risen to the challenge. The Seaham Harbour Dock Company's warehouses and headquarters have been re-located to the south of the town. New industrial estates have been built at Dawdon and Fox Cover. A new town centre link road has been built joining the promenade to a



May Pole Dancing



Public Toilets

new esplanade creating wonderful vistas of the coast and beaches. New houses and apartments are being built on various sites totalling in excess of 1,000 dwellings. One new development on the former Vane Tempest Colliery close to the seafront involves constructing 640 units including a care home, public house, shops and other amenities. Other major regeneration measures are planned over the next few years including an extension to the town centre shopping area, a new commercial development on dock company land which will incorporate a range of public facilities. The construction of new prestige offices is also planned on St. John's Square. The programme of change shows why people in Seaham are optimistic. This is because they are actually witnessing significant progress and recognise that Seaham can look forward to a good future. The town also boasts Seaham Hall Hotel which incorporates one of the best spas in the country. Just out of the town is a new factory outlet shopping centre called Dalton Park. Investment in the town of around £200m over a 10 year period demonstrates how bright Seaham's future is for the years ahead.

Seaham Town Council is a Band 3 Council for the purposes of the accounts and audit regulations. It also has to comply with the statutory duty of Best Value. The Council's current Best Value Performance Plan incorporates a summary of results of residents' surveys on some key services. The Council had 100% satisfaction for its burial services. For allotments the satisfaction level is 92.65%. There was 100% satisfaction levels recorded for recreation grounds; the staging of town events, standard of floral displays and hanging baskets. The overall satisfaction rate for all services included in the survey was 99%. This ranks Seaham in the top quartile of

the 41 Best Value Town and Parish Councils.

Community Leadership

Taking a key leadership role in community issues is an important strategy of Seaham Town Council. This includes speaking up for residents, to defend and preserve their interests and lobbying, supporting and negotiating where necessary to retain existing services and striving for better facilities. Current issues where the Town Council are fighting on behalf of residents include campaigning for improvements to sewage pollution being discharged into the sea; mine water pollution east of the River Wear; preventing a reduction of coastline rail services; opposing the closure of branch post offices to mention just a few. The Council recognises that it cannot afford to be complacent. They have a reputation for being forward thinking and having a progressive outlook and pledge to stay focused in striving to improve and achieve more.



Seaham Town Council

Floral Display on Terrace Green



CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Chesham, for all its modern vibrancy, has successfully managed to retain the charm of its 1000 year history. Whilst it successfully strives to meet the needs of its businesses and its residents the town has survived the developers and mixes admirably the old and the new, combining country town, industrial centre, commuter dormitory into one bustling community.

The third largest town in the county with a population of 20,000, Chesham is located in south-eastern Buckinghamshire, 28 miles northwest of London, only 7 miles from J18 on the M25 and 9 miles from J8 on the M1. Local towns comprise neighbouring Amersham, Rickmansworth, Watford, Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted, High Wycombe and Slough. The Chess Valley Walk, which begins at Chesham Metropolitan Line Underground station, encapsulates some of the inherent charms of this historic town and its surroundings.

Chesham has a twice-weekly market; a monthly producers' market; a twice-yearly French market; a visiting fair three times a year; a wealth of organisations and societies; churches of most denominations; a comprehensive selection of shops; a diversity of large and small scale industry; local restaurants and public houses both in town and in the surrounding villages. It is graced by Lowndes Park, which is close to The Elgiva Theatre, Chesham's main entertainment and cultural venue. Other facilities available in the town include the Chesham Leisure Centre, located in the grounds of Chesham High School in White Hill and a modern, open-air heated swimming pool and adjoining multi-purpose recreational facilities on The Moor.

Annual attractions in the town include colourful Schools' Carnival in June, which culminates in Lowndes Park, a Fireworks Display at Chesham United's ground and, during Advent, the nightly visits around the town by Father Christmas. Late night Christmas shopping on 26 November, when the Christmas lights are switched on, completes an eventful programme for residents and visitors alike.

Who would have foreseen the changes that were to follow when the Metropolitan Line arrived in Chesham in 1889? With easy access to London increasing numbers of people saw the advantages of living in this outpost of 'Metroland'. To accommodate new residents - and visitors - a great deal of development took place and thus Chesham spread itself wider along the valley. Inevitably pedestrianisation and new road systems left their mark on the town, leaving behind them a trail of demolished older properties. However, modern buildings have sprung up in their stead, bequeathing us the Town Hall, the Elgiva theatre, supermarkets and town centre parking. And yet in the face of modernisation and revitalisation, the town has maintained its identity. As drawn to Chesham, as they were when the Metropolitan Line first opened, people continue to be attracted to the town, asserting now as then that to retreat here from a City office remains a most appealing way of life indeed.

The Town Council plays a central role in developing and



Chesham Community Vision launch day - listening to ALL our residents

shaping much of the recreational infrastructure within the town. We own and manage the 300 seater Elgiva Theatre; 203 Allotment Plots on 3 sites; Chesham Cemetery and Garden of Remembrance and maintain St Mary's

Closed Churchyard; Lowndes Park, a central park in town; Meades Water Gardens and 11 Recreation Grounds (including 61 items of children's play equipment) with the associated sports pitches and pavilions. The Open Air Swimming Pool, gymnasium and solarium, tennis courts and football on the Moor are managed on our behalf by Chess Valley Sports and Leisure Association, a not-for-profit organisation. The Little Theatre by the Park, a far smaller theatre/community hall is managed on our behalf by Trustees. We are also a Best Value Council.

The coming year 2004/05 should be an exciting one for the Council with many flagship projects being proposed. Foremost among these will be the completion of the 'Chesham Community Vision' that should set a blueprint for the town's future direction over the next 10 years. Based on the Countryside Agency's 'Market Town Health Check' initiative, the Town Council is a key and willing partner among several town organisations attempting to elicit the views of all the people in the town as to how they would like to see the town develop in the future.

Our launch day in February was hugely successful with over 400 people expressing their thoughts on the strengths and weaknesses of all aspects of community life in Chesham. Once the review is completed, it is hoped that a realistic action plan can be developed that will result in making a real difference to the town.

We are also committed to the rebuilding of Lowndes Park public conveniences; the installation of a multi-sports play-area at Marston Field; undertaking a major safety review of the cemetery; being a major partner in the 'One Town, One World' Chesham Festival; the introduction of Police Community Support Officers to the town and developing a project plan for Lowndes Park. We have now received Quality Status.

In an ever-changing world for first tier authorities, Chesham Town Council is pleased to be an active member of ALLC. Indeed it is honoured to have one of our Councillors, Mrs Patricia Lindsley, serving as Chair of the organisation in 2004. It is essential for larger Councils to have an effective voice among the numerous parish and town councils that exist across the country.

There is often an assumption that all first tier authorities are the same and they are marginal to local government and the fabric of their local community. In Chesham's case this is patently not true and we run a multitude of services much needed and appreciated by our residents. With regional government becoming close to reality and the future of all tiers of local government uncertain, Chesham Town Council will be fighting hard to ensure Whitehall is aware of the important job we do and we are confident that ALLC will continue to play its part in selling that message. ■

Because the next near miss might not miss.

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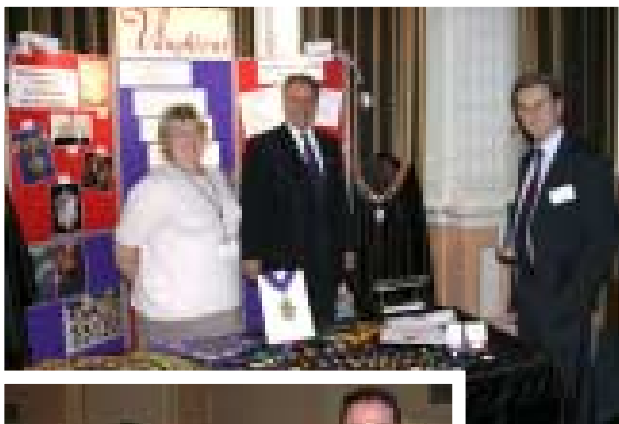
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ALLC Blackpool Conference Photo Gallery (draft pending text layouts)



ALLC Blackpool Conference Photo Gallery (draft pending text layouts)





Thursday, November 4th. Scene: Blackpool.
Outside the Imperial Hotel. It is Masefield weather.

*I'll take a look at the sea again, at the leaden sea
and the sky,
And hear the keening wind again, and the plaintive
seagull's cry.
Then it's back to the big Imperial, where the
atmosphere is dense
With the buzz of talk and a warming toast for the
Blackpool Conference*

Indeed a very rich atmosphere at Blackpool's Imperial Hotel; People arrive, some early, most late, sorting out their name tags and finding out their room numbers, picking up their programmes and going into a huddle about the contents. Everything perfectly organised - though not to the point of exaggeration.

A perfect opening for a Conference: anticipation, with a dash of confusion and just a hint of illusion.

The afternoon workshops are lively. Derek Kemp opens proceedings with a rabble-rousing talk on Local Government Finance, where there is a growing discontentment with the current system. For some of us this is the flagship debate of the Conference, and Derek homes in on this at once, with searching questions to his participating audience, drawing out our thoughts on the subject and highlighting the areas of concern. Muscle-building for tomorrow's opening debate.

The same is true for the workshop on Anti-social Behaviour. The ASBO procedure is seen as a little daunting by some, as if it were a cake on display but not to be eaten. Martin Lee, Head of Operations for the Nuisance Strategy Group of Manchester City Council gets straight into showing us how to eat that cake. Through the presentation of hypothetical cases, he breaks down the steps to making ASBO's work for us. It's a pretty fast moving delivery, though, and we have to stay nimble



Martin Lee and Lesley Pulman talk about ASBO's

THE ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION

if we want to follow everything. He is ably assisted by a remarkably brave young woman, Lesley Pulman, whose almost single-handed battle against the local jobs around her Manchester home, won her the accolade of recognition from the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary, has a harrowing tale to tell. She has been on the receiving end of some serious 'anti-social behaviour' (a euphemism for what in her experience was unbelievably malicious and terrifying behaviour), but fought back through police apathy (their hands were tied), through incessant intimidation, until she finally got on top of the situation. Judging from the audience, this is another area of deep concern for local governments: how to get these damned ASBO's to work for us, not against us.

So far so good for the organisers and helpers, The Keith Welters team, and Barbara Rothwell and friends.

In the evening, reception, social-grooming, dinner, bed - in that order

Friday, November the 5th. Scene: The Conference Hall in the hotel

All fireworks left at the door? This is the day of the debates. It's a new idea to have a debating panel, where the panellists each present their case, then as they field questions from the floor, we get to watch them have a go at each other. Will it be like Any Questions? Depends on how clearly the issues are presented and how bold the members of the audience are feeling.

After the charming Maxine Callow, the Mayor of Blackpool, formally opens the Conference, we start proceedings, with a flagship topic.

The Subject

1. Review of Local Government Finance

In which three eminent proponents, all politicians, debate the merits and de-merits of party policy on local government funding. This is in the backdrop of the Lyons Review, and the recent news of the North East region referendum fiasco.

As this debate, for many, will be the key local-government issue of the Conference, we give it quite extensive coverage, and even include transcripts of the introductory speeches - a must for aficionados of political debate - not to mention keen language analysts.

The protagonists:

Mr David Hansen: MP LAB

Mr Eric Pickles, MP CON

Mr Matthew Green MP LIB DEM

Steve Reed UKIP



David Hansen, in ebullient mood, kicks off with an extended eulogy to the present Council Tax system, which, for him, represents the best value for money he could ever get, thanks to the extra devolution of power and the extra provision of cash provided by the Labour Government.

With the considerable dexterity of an experienced Parliamentarian he manages to reiterate this theme several times, in cosy, tinsel-wrapped language, while at the same time reminding everybody of the Conservatives' Poll Tax fiasco. That, he pointed out, was what could happen if you did something without having the people behind you. This was to illustrate the last of, what seemed to be his three main points: a) The Council Tax got better with Labour, but is not perfect, and b) changes need to be made. Therefore, c) we must 'look to the future' - which means, presumably, waiting to see how the recommendations of the Lyons Review can be implemented.

(The Lyons Review, has made recommendations to the government on how to relocate Government organisations, and their personnel, out of London, with the dual purpose of relieving a congested South East, and making a start to developing the regions as prosperous centres in their own right, wrapped around 'core cities'. In the light of the bad news from the North East, the Government may be feeling the need to reconsider some of the recommendations.)



Eric Pickles, for the Conservatives, wastes no time in picking up on this. Amiably pugnacious, his low, avuncular voice picking confidently through what he sees as holes in David's claims about the Council Tax, he ambles on at a leisurely pace. Then, like a

bear that has just caught its dinner, he moves in on the devastating referendum result of the day before, where John Prescott's dream of regional assemblies turned into a political nightmare. (What was it David had said a few minutes before about making sure you have the people with you?)

'Regionalism is dead!' Eric acclaims gleefully. He argues further that the still-intact RDA's, as un-elected Government quangos, could not be considered as players in the reform of local government funding and that therefore alternatives must be considered. He feels that governments, since the war, have been so obsessed with change that they might have thrown the baby out with the bathwater. There was once a perfectly good system in place. Small is beautiful, County level and lower tier local government finance is close to the Conservatives'

heart.

His message, let's get as close to real local democracy as we can.

Sounds good, but as Mathew Green, the only speaker



there today with goods on the shelf, points out, Eric is happy to pick other ideas to pieces, but offers none of his own; that is, in the specifics of local government fund-raising. As with David's Party, so too with Eric's: too much thinking and waiting but no clear policy. In contrast, Mathew, earnest

and fast-talking, dashes through a sometimes fumbled description of how the Lib-Dem policy of local income tax could be the Sleeping Beauty of tax systems, that is, the fairest of all. Though not, so far, as witty as David, perhaps, and not as sage as the wise Eric, Mathew does at least have something to offer us, which he seems to believe in. And that's what we are here for.

One or two questions from the floor warm them up, and bring out some finer detail. Councillor Martin Bax of Frome, asks David why the Government is so opposed to local income tax. 'It isn't,' says David. But David, speaking for himself, does have some reservations:

1) a hard-working family of four in one house will find themselves paying four taxes; somebody retired, however, in a large house, will pay nothing because they have no earnings. 2) people working in a city but who live in a dormitory town, will find themselves paying above the average. 3) not sure if the system would be as simple as it is claimed to be, collecting it, up to Central Government, then fed down again.

But again he points out that the government is not ruling it out as part of a hybrid system.



Steve Reed of UKIP asks the panel what they think of a local purchase tax as an idea for raising money. Both Eric and Mathew think it would be too complicated in our general system as it is. Eric thinks that it can only be considered in the light of Balance of Funding and

Resource Equalisation, which are complicated matters under consideration. Mathew seems of the view that, like all money raised from taxpayers, it would need to be re-distributed. But David feels it would stay 'where the shops are instead of in the communities'. And in any case, he is against taxing people on what they spend. He gives the example that somebody on £15 000, buying a fridge, say, would have to pay the same tax as an MP on £57 000. David makes it clear that he frowns on VAT for this reason and blames the Tories for increasing VAT when they were in power.

From the floor, Steve's voice is heard: 'Scrap VAT!' (We wonder, is that a UKIP policy?)

If you'd like to go through the transcripts of the speakers, you'll find them at www.allc.gov.uk

The final phase of the Conference summarises the activities, discusses the merits of each discussion, and summons everybody to respond to the new opportunities.

ASSOCIATION WHAT DO WE EXPECT.

Sadie Mason, on taking her seat formally as the new Chairman of the Association, was quick to identify the main theme of the forum; the Association had tried to move forward over the last year, and with some success, 'But, at the end of the day, this is your Association and to go forward with confidence, we need to hear your voice'. It was clear, even from the first day of the Conference, and in this session, too, that the members were in absolute accord with the sentiment - they wanted to have their voice heard. But she, they, and the other officers of the Association all agreed that for this to come about, everyone was going to have to pull together and pool ideas. There was a lot to be done; the thing was to identify what.



Cllr. Patricia Lindsley, former Chairman of the ALLC handing over to Sadie Mason

Sadie, in her light, cheerful voice, spoke optimistically of the steps that had been taken to make things happen. The Association was getting itself better organised, with a new Chief Executive, a management team and a business plan. Now it was for members to say what they felt they needed, what they expected, in terms of services, information and advice. It was important that the members and their officers should 'share the same hopes and aspirations', but they had to be identified.. She mentioned an initiative of her own local authority, Seaham, which had lobbied district for devolved responsibilities, and was actually getting somewhere. As always the problem would be whether the money would cover the service. Still it was a step in the right direction. Larger local councils have been angling for greater autonomy for years, and there are signs that the Government, as well as the other parties, are beginning to hear those distant voices. This Association wants to be behind every one of them. The need now is to find both how the Association can best empower the members and how the members can best empower the Association, for the Association needs the input, the ideas and the energy of the members. And within this, how can members work together and help each other.

Bill Jeffries believed that it was not

just a pressure group we're looking for; what is needed most is access to Government. He commended David Hansen's efforts over the last two years (as many people had done in the social intervals - according to Barbara Rothwell, 'David put ALLC on the map'). Nevertheless, he felt the members still needed access to government. 'We need answers to questions. It seems we hit brick walls most of the time.' Bill sees it quite clearly: members should be able to leave Conference, discuss with their councils, get back to meetings where they can give CE and Chair items to take to government, so they can get back to the people in the street and let them know what's happening. If we push in the right direction, he says, we might be more successful that we were with NALC, who didn't seem to help us much. This what ALLC is for. Kevin Keighley mentioned that a meeting between ALLC and NALC with the possibilities of a joint forum - not a merger - which should prove a power for lobbying central government. From the floor, fighting talk from Karen Davies of Holywell.

'So far government has totally ignored us. Hopefully, now we've got David with us, some proposals will be carried through. When we're seen as having the ear of government other councils will join us. We're an Association to be reckoned with. Let's get our act together.'

For Tony Robertson, from the floor, the need is to be innovative and to work together to be capable of becoming 'more than the sum of our parts'

The tone is one of optimism and determination. The insistent demands return again and again; working more closely together and getting the ear of government. Somebody mentions Nick Raynsford. Why can't we get access to him? Yes, they did have him with them a couple of years or so ago. But what about now?

Practical Betty Batchelor wanted to know how isolated councils can make contact with others. Jane Smith thought that the formation of clusters of councils might help achieve this.

All told there was an upbeat feel to the meeting. People seemed to feel they were getting somewhere with the idea of communicating with each other, maintaining close and constant contact with and through the Association, and having a united voice.

Thanks and appreciation were offered to James Sheerin for his legal service, which he thought many more people would take advantage of if they knew they existed. Again a question of communication.

Government World was mentioned as a primary element in the Association's drive to express itself. It was there to stimulate ideas and comment, to disseminate information, and to act as a united voice for the Association.

'Communication is the key,' said Sadie, as she asked the panel and the floor to extend appreciation to Keith Welter for his provision of the magazine and the well-organised Conference.



PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

It only remained for David, as President, to give his final address to the Conference. Jolly and upbeat as ever, he started it off with the story of PC Percival. Apparently he has used the anecdote on other occasions but it seemed new to Conference. It's how you tell'em, and David knows how.



'It has been a good Conference,' he said, 'for which we must extend our sincere thanks to Barbara Rothwell and Keith Welter.' Thanks were also due to Patricia, who, as chairman, managed to carry out her functions over the last year under very challenging conditions, and to James Sheerin for his legal services.

David re-iterated the main ideas of the meeting. He felt we'd heard some challenging debates, on Government Finance, on Europe, on Anti-social behaviour - all real issues. It was for us now to think about these things.

On local government funding he felt we should keep an open mind to see what ideas might be proffered over the coming months. Europe, he thought, may seem distant, but it's there on the agenda. ASB is a pressing issue, and we should now be prepared to use them as a tool the government has given us.

NALC and ALLC will look for a common agenda, with the possibility of a joint forum. There are many issues to consider. Regional government, is it living or dead? It still has potential, but it is for us to decide. We await the deliberations of the Lyons report on this. We need to look around at each other, exchange ideas on the big issues. Communication is crucial.

Brandishing a copy of Government World, he extends a guarded welcome to a magazine that will offer the Association a voice. Perhaps naturally, as a politician, he feels unhappy with some of the political content - some unkind remarks about the Prime Minister, to whom he Parliamentary Private Secretary. But especially about some badly-phrased nonsense about the BNP being opportunistic. Fortunately, to the great relief of the editorial staff, he goes on later to say that we should all form views on issues, and have a right to present those views of any political party.

Referring to a previous appearance at Conference of Nick Raynsford, Minister for Local Government, David asks what, if we met him again, we would ask him. This is what we should be looking at - a co-ordinated view of Association interest.

And there are other things we must face. Why did Oswestry leave the Association. What is it that makes a council dissociate itself from us? Why do we have fewer people here this year than on previous occasions? We've got to raise standards, deliver on services, think strategically. We need your input. We need answers to these questions. And to these questions.

We CAN represent you to central government, but tell s what you want from us. Give this association a role.

'I can't know what you want to say. You have to tell me, as your president, so that I can represent you.'

END OF CONFERENCE REPORT

The European Debate

Rex Oswin comments on the ALLC Conference debate on Europe

In his introduction, David Hansen makes the point that Europe is more relevant to local government than we might realise. How right he is!

The backdrop against which we discuss our role in Europe is huge. What drives our reasoning in the European issue - short-term advantage where our locality stands to gain some small grant or other for a year or two, or a considered long-term view of what we see as desirable several decades hence? Who or what would European integration benefit - our children and grandchildren, our businessmen and ideologists, our own sense of completion?

One World

Somewhere in our social mindset we may have come to feel that greater social integration and homogeneity is somehow predetermined in the way of things; that the 'progress' of civilisation necessarily means that the larger, centralising units naturally subsume the smaller units as it becomes possible to do so. From individual, family groups to small tribes, and townships, we move on to become absorbed into cities, then nations, then super-states, then One World.

By the nature of the process, with the growth of complexity, the smaller must become less differentiated at each transition to enable better central control.

To some cynics it is not a big issue whether we are full members of Europe or not. It has been said the gods only exist as long as someone believes in them. Perhaps that is true of Britain. Are there any believers still? The lead should come from politicians. But they seem to be the same everywhere. If ours were of higher moral character, more patriotic, more courageous, more open, more visionary than the ones we've had in recent times, perhaps then, it would be worth keeping Britain independent. Truman is reported to have said in 1945, "It will be just as easy for nations to get along in a republic of the world as it is for us to get along in a republic of the United States." Americans haven't got round to that idea yet. But perhaps it applies in our case. Couldn't we have just as fair local government in a country of half a billion, as we can get here in our own country of nearly 60 million? If all we get from our own government and Opposition is hollow promises and increased bureaucracy, and if we're already running mostly on Brussels law, with nobody about to do anything about it, would it not be better to jump out of the pond and into the lake? Except, that would be doing exactly what Tony Blair wants us to do. Could it be, he's right!?

Others favourable to European integration are so, not from cynicism, but from conviction. They embrace the idea of being citizens of Europe and feel the trend reflects Christian/ humanist ideals of the 'brotherhood of man', and is an inevitable consequence of human culture. They reason that national or racial groupings invite hatred, rivalry and war, where union of peoples brings solidarity, harmony and prosperity. These views support our signing up, just as the negative reasons do - by not belonging

to this huge European state, we risk being strife-ridden, shunned, and impoverished.

In contrast, those who oppose Britain being absorbed into Europe are not convinced that mega-states guarantee universal brotherhood - except through coercion - in which case it is a different thing entirely from the real feeling. They are not convinced that mega-states promote harmony or eliminate war - the USA, Russia, China, have experienced some of the largest and bloodiest civil wars in history, not to mention participating in a few international ones. A mega-state, to control so many diverse millions, may feel it needs very strong centralised government, coercion and social engineering to bring about social harmony through homogeneity. Once we do sign up, our laws, our history, our independence and control over our affairs, our whole identity will be sacrificed for ever.



So, in Ann Robinson style, we pose the question; Do we cling like limpets to the rock of independence or take a chance with the tide? Do we remain captain of our own sturdy tugboat, or climb aboard the Cruise ship to Paradise

The speakers addressing this issue are Bill Cash, Conservative MP for Stone, Gordon Marsden, Labour MP for Blackpool South, and Steve Reed, UKIP county chairman in Somerset.

Bill's first point is that the issue is essentially about who governs Britain; the British Parliament or Europe? He naturally favours the former. We know Bill Cash to be a rebel; he has shown this only too well in his earlier and notorious defiance over the Maastricht Treaty, as well as more recently when he protested Michael Howard's acceptance of Identity Cards. His view is that we should never sign away our sovereignty. We should rather educate the Europeans into understanding that Britain is quite happy to be a good neighbour and club member, but will remain independent and sovereign at whatever the cost. It becomes apparent as he continues that Bill is speaking for himself and his own battle to reform our European agreements, not for the Conservative Party as such.

Gordon Marsden wonders if sovereignty is as important anymore. He suggests that Britain hasn't enjoyed true sovereignty since the Suez crisis, when the Americans, by forcing a run on the pound, forced Eden into a humiliating withdrawal of troops from Egypt. (Gordon was merely making a point, of course But sovereignty is a real thing and it is where we are all coming from. Although the hostile action of a false friend inconvenienced us at that time, and showed us who was boss, we are still in business, flying the flag, less than we ought to, and doing quite well. And it's unlikely the Americans will kick us out of Iraq - until pay-day comes, at least).

Gordon, using much the same arguments he used in his September article for the Parliamentary Monitor, purported to offer his views 'from many perspectives', as a historian and as a Blackpool man and as a person with a special interest in the states on the periphery of Europe, some of which he has visited: the ex-communist states, Turkey, the North African rim states. His case is that if Britain remains a small state on the edge of Europe, we'll have no say in, and no control over, the greater issues. As fully participating members we will be in a position to influence wide-scale issues, like environment,

...as one out of 25 and more states, what kind of influence are we really likely to have?

immigration. For Gordon, we need Europe and should be an integral part of it. Outside Europe we'll have no influence, we'll lose jobs, and we'll lose business. Bill Cash, however, paints Europe as corrupt and inefficient. He is dismissive of the arguments, which he had already touched on earlier, contending that we put more money into Europe than we ever get back, that Europe needs us as a major trading partner at least as much as we need them. That there'll be the added bonus that we'll be free of straitjacket laws and corrupt practices. As for influence, as one out of 25 and more states, what kind of influence are we really likely to have?

Steve Reed, of UKIP, is the only speaker with a prepared speech, which he delivers in fine Roman style from the podium. He is adamant. Britain should quit the European Union once and for all. In withering tones he manages to accuse the Conservatives of treachery, Labour of Utopianism, Europe of totalitarianism - and even gets close to presenting himself an extremist - though only in comparison with the other two, because he advocates full withdrawal.

Bill Cash, he believes, is fooling himself if the Conservatives will get anyone in Europe to listen to them. And that's because nobody else in Europe wants to contemplate withdrawal. At least, he thinks, Mr Marsden is honest in that he makes no bones about his commitment to Europe. For Steve, the European Community Act should simply be repealed, and all political connection with Europe severed (political, not trade or cultural). We then revert to a full sovereign British state, and this, he

declares, is the first thing UKIP will do once they achieve power.

A few asides from Bill Cash indicated that he thought Steve shouldn't hold his breath on that one.

There were no great revelations, in fact. Each man argued his position in his own style. Questions from the floor were fielded predictably. Why no referendum on Maastricht? I tried, says Bill. I had half a million signatures. But all to no avail. Major wouldn't budge. Hitler, says Gordon, had lots of referendums and plebiscites, but what good did they do? You need to understand the questions. Questions! echoes Steve, in a voice that would shame Lady Bracknell. The Wilson referendum was fiddled and interfered with worse than the Danish and Irish ones. We have to watch ourselves on this upcoming one.

All good stuff. Bill Cash with his gravitas gave us what we expected, and left us with the feel that someone was fighting against accepted opinion. Gordon's historical references to Hitler's referenda might have scared us all away from even thinking about them. Hitler had them?! Oh, dear. But Gordon was pretty sound on his platform. What is best for us and Europe is pooled sovereignty. He sees nothing sinister in banding together for the greater good of all. He is not suspicious, even as a historian, of long, unforgiving memories, and is on quite firm ground when it comes to the idea of a united Europe that has power to make a difference on the world stage. Steve, proudly stands his ground in scorning anyone who wishes to do his country down. Who is the weakest link?

Quote of the day: *"A nice guy whose belt snaps"*

A little sermon. It must be obvious by now that we like to have a go at incumbent governments and politicians when we can. After all, we are mostly on the receiving end. It's nice for us to get back at them when the opportunity comes. When we listen to politicians speak, it is with some admiration. We listen out for indicators of all kinds that can help us see what they really intend with their words, what sustenance we can hope to draw from them. We are not surprised that they present their party perspective on issues but at the same time, we like to see a bit of independent thinking. We like to know if the protagonist of a party view is of that persuasion himself, and if he isn't, why not. We know politicians are professional wordsmiths, modern sophists, and it is an accepted part of their role to use words to serve their particular purpose, to sound sincere, to press home the right messages through repetition of selected collocations, to mock opponents at every opportunity, to hide meaning and even to use words to say nothing. We enjoy observing their skills in this, as they and we know. But every so often a politician opens his mouth and puts his foot in it. If he's lucky it will not be noticed. As it happened Gordon's was noticed

I'd like to highlight it, not to embarrass him, (as if...) but to illustrate what kind of nuggets of insight we can glean on a good day.

During what seemed to be a sincere attempt to get his point across, an unfortunate slip of the tongue betrayed something that seemed awfully close to pre-digested dogma, rather than considered, independent thinking. Gordon, probably aware that many of us consciously or subconsciously link the idea of greater pooling of

sovereignty with the noble ideal of 'brotherhood of man.' decided to use John Donne's telling line, 'No man is an island.'

What came out was:

"John Donne said, 'No man is an island' - or, as he would have to say today and quite rightly so, 'No woman is an island'. ..."

He isn't joking; no irony, no little grin. The voice is serious and measured, merely reminding us of what we are already presumed to accept. That such a classic example of political correctness, a cherished shibboleth of Brussels, should force itself out his mouth like that is very significant. Of course we know Gordon doesn't really mean that we should abolish men, it just came out like that. But the sheer fact that he feels embarrassed at the use of the word, 'man', even when quoting famous lines of 400 years ago, does not say much for his cause. Donne's words have survived unchanged and admired 400 years after his death precisely for the wondrous truth they carry to this day. Gordon's modification of them to accommodate some quaint, late-20th-century fad about the politicisation of ordinary language, makes us wonder if his deliberations on Europe and the future of this country are equally bound by the same restrictive, and intellectually provincial thinking. After all, we are discussing the fate of millions of British people. He began by saying he was bringing several perspectives to the debate, but he didn't mention this one.

Well, end of sermon. It is all in the interests of investigation, I'm sure Gordon will forgive what might just be a petty bit of envy, of all those visits he gets to make to exotic places.

Susan Handley, International Partnerships & Programmes Officer, Local Government International Bureau on International Partnerships: Susan just got down to it. She has an organisation and it's there to serve local governments. She makes the point that she



is not, as advertised. 'serving the purpose of the European Workshop'. Her expertise is in Partnerships and programmes, not EU policies or procedures. 'The LGA or LGIB respects a wide range of views. We have no view as to whether the EU is good or bad and whether we should sign up for the Constitution.' That

was fair comment to start with and must have relaxed a few people in the audience who might, nowadays, feel the secret hand of government behind every initiative. In fact, it does emerge that Susan's organisation is funded by the Prime Minister's Office, and Susan does in fact have praise for what the EU offers in the way of opportunities for her organisation's aims.

Did you know that 70% of all EU legislation is actually implemented by local government? That's you! 'Why is Europe important to us?' she asks. 'Peace and stability, travelling, living working and studying abroad, improved rights and improved standards, from employment to environmental.

'Single market of 450 million consumers. Export & Investment opportunities, abolition of customs duties, common manufacturing safety standards and consumer benefits.

We have a larger work force and, hey, we didn't have the whole population of Poland here on the first of May as predicted. The profile of the Poles interested in coming over here was of young intelligent women with education and skills.'



It becomes clear that Susan is merely trying to look at Europe positively, since it's there. And a lot of it sounds good. We have all travelled, after all. Europeans are lovely people. It's just that politics complicates - politics, officials, police, rules, conventions - all that is ugly. But Susan manages to overcome our repugnance to those aspects by chirping away at all the positive things to be had. Her enthusiasm bubbles.

She has a mass of handouts for anyone even slightly interested. One feels, at the end of it, that she's really brightened up the image of Europe.

Anything you need to know is likely to be on the LGIB website, or e-mail Susan at susan.handley@lgib.gov.uk

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welters Manufacturing



The company has been developing and manufacturing cold cast products for a wide variety of purposes for many years, from large industrial projects to high volume productions of single design components for building and domestic markets. It is a family based business with a legacy of artistic, architectural and creative manufacturing experience. **welters** are also productive in design and facilities consultancy and land management areas. **welters** experience and success within the industry is a result of the commitment they have invested in research and development.

Using a marriage of 'old and new' the company can create modern alternatives to historically high cost processes, delivering low cost products of creative design and high quality build.

Today the company provides cold cast products for industry and local government. The company prides itself on its reputation as being adaptable, providing specialist services for clients who require unusual products for specific purposes.

Continued Development

www.welters-worldwide.com

welters continue to develop their on-line presence and have recently completed a major restructure of their website. With easy to follow menus for fast navigation, the newly designed website provides details of Direct Sales Products, Facilities Management Products and Services available to the industry.

In 2003 there was yet more pressure on the industry to regulate itself and formulate solutions to its "big issues" such as health and safety and the general lack of burial space, all of which are being brought more sharply into public focus.

Our land management consultancy and manufacturing experience has helped us over the years to develop cost effective space saving safe systems specifically designed for the industry. This has enabled re-use of inaccessible, water logged or contaminated land to create low maintenance premier burial facilities for future generations of all religious denominations.

Last year we continued to invest heavily in developing our manufacturing premises and plant based on a desire for improvement in both a creative and productive capacity.

We also continue to invest heavily in research involving naturally reoccurring aggregates and polymer synthetics, refining and creating new compound technologies for high volume mould and cast production providing cost effective quality systems for the market place.

Problem solving and the pioneering of innovative and lateral thought continue to be the life blood of our business. This demonstrates our commitment to the industry.



LEF, he was also writing copy for advertisements for everything from cars to bars.



REFRESHES THE PARTS

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Big companies like Procter and Gamble, Volkswagen, British Airways, Mars, Johnson and Johnson are among the biggest spenders. This has led to writers and artists working for the advertising agencies who service them. As they are only ever credited in the industry trade press you won't remember them. But you may remember their work. What refreshes the parts other beers cannot reach? Gone for a What? Happiness is a cigar called what? What is good for you? What is as good for you today as it's always been? What does exactly what it says on the tin? Some of these slogans are decades old and part of the vernacular. Sometimes the advertising outlasts the product it is made for.

Political advertising has a controversial history and the line between the two has often become blurred. Accusations of spin doctoring go back way before the current Labour Government. Once again it is the groups with the money to pay, for media and talent who often reap the dividends. A self-promotional ad for a design company had a picture of a Swastika and the headline 'Never underestimate the value of a good corporate identity.' Former artist Adolf Hitler made good use of art to further his political ambitions. Saatchi and Saatchi's

We are surrounded by design. CD covers, magazines, books, direct marketing, club fliers, road signs, your mobile phone display, this page, have all been designed by someone.

powerful advertising for the Conservative party was a major force in Mrs Thatcher's first General Election victory.

Seen as the party of big business, the Tories¹ received generous funding from it. 'Labour isn't working' with a picture of people in a dole queue is a classic piece of communication. The headline 'Foot Pump' with 'Inflation' written across over-expanded balloon didn't do the reputation of the man in the donkey jacket any favours.

But it's not all one-way traffic. Throughout the twentieth century there have been notable examples of the ostensibly financially powerless putting their beliefs across. The Conservatives didn't get it all their own way

in the battle for hearts and minds when they abolished the G.L.C. Ken Livingstone mounted a spirited PR campaign in its defence with the remainder of it's funding. A picture of the man himself with the headline 'If you want me out you should have the right to vote me out,' is a double-edged sword of implacable logic which attacks the Government while speaking of Livingstone's own sense of fair play.

The cash strapped with a point to make have other precedents they can look to. In the Paris rising of May 1968 the primarily student radicals formed the 'Atelier Populaire.' They had their own workshop with facilities for a dark room, silkscreen printing, lithography and stencilling from which they produced powerful posters putting forward reasons for their rejection of materialistic consumer society. They made such an impact the government resorted to the police to gag them.

The attitude of the mainstream Art world was interesting. Gallery officials barricaded themselves into their museums. If such general dissatisfaction were expressed today, I can't imagine any East or West End gallery owners, or their artists showing anti-establishment support. The white walls would not be besmirched. Yet on a recent visit to Waterstones the number of shelves devoted to monographs on gallery artists struck me. In any bookshop for every book on design you will find ten about gallery art. Yet we are surrounded by design. CD covers, magazines, books, direct marketing, club fliers, road signs, your mobile phone display, this page have all been designed by someone. When the quantity of gallery art is comparatively small, why is there continuing demand for information about it?

Perhaps its survival depends on it being a minority interest. In England we like art for the few. John Berger says 'The bogus religiosity which now surrounds original works of art, and which is ultimately dependent on their market value, has become the substitute for what paintings lost when the camera made them reproducible. Its function is nostalgic. It is the final empty claim for the continuing values of an oligarchic, undemocratic culture.'

Yet many of the Young British Artists use the techniques of advertising and PR to promote themselves in the same way soap powder is sold. Damien Hirst (shark in formaldehyde) Tracey Emin (unmade bed) Rachael Whiteread (cast of East end house). I give their descriptors because that is how they register in the public mind. Chris Ofili came to prominence not because of his undoubted, but rather traditional talent, but from the short lived use of elephant dung in the creation of his paintings. The search for fame, money and beautiful lovers, which is, according to Freud the aim of the artist, continues.

Continued over page...

Design

...Continued from previous page.

The explanations of their work doesn't always sit easily with the simplicity with which the artists themselves are regarded. Quotes explaining their *raison d'être* could fill 'Psueds Corner' a million times over. The Lyrical Abstractionist Georges Mathieu explains 'The poetic, being irrepressible, had to take refuge in a sort of atonal superpoetic in order to find, in our western mentality, a few traces of justification. It allowed the signifier to invade almost every area (even its own) at the expense of any secondary gratuitousness. This signifier, for its part, can no longer merely signify: It attempts to transcend meaning in order to attain effectiveness.' Is it any wonder that to the majority modern art is merely tried and tested material to raise a titter at the end of the depressing section of the news.

In 'The Art of the Sixties' exhibition currently running at Tate Britain, the work that stood up best to the test of time is ironically the transient medium of photography. Don McCullen's pictures of Vietnam are about something more than the ego of the artist. They make much of the surrounding work seem like navel gazing. What is ironic is that many of these artists tried to embrace popular culture. Much as I admire Peter Blake's painting, his cover for the Beatles Sgt Pepper Album said more when it needed to be said than any number of subsequent viewings of his work to an affluent educated minority in an art gallery.

So what happened to Mayakovsky's dream of art for the majority? Well in the short term Lenin found the ideas of the Constructivists a bit too advanced. He sent many of them into exile or to the labour camps. It seems suffering for your art isn't confined to the 'fine artists' whose work stocks our galleries. In the long term I think he would be amazed by one change in particular. In the 1920's it was impossible to imagine people with little or no training could make art or publicity. The artist was at the centre of proceedings not just because of superior talent but because of the technical know how involved in production. Today, almost a century later, an invention that Mayakovsky could never have envisaged has made this possible.

The computer.

By 1990 the proliferation of desktop technology,



particularly the Apple Macintosh liberated designers from the need to work for large organisations in order to see their work produced. Where only a couple of years before entire studios had been devoted to letter spacing by hand, suddenly it

Mistakes were incredibly expensive to correct. Now they could be tried out and abandoned if they weren't working. The effect was immediate. Designers began to stray into areas formerly the preserve of specialists. Digital filmmaking, sound design, text editing and type design were all up for grabs. A multidisciplinary studio like Tomato founded in London in 1991 gave music concerts with flashing type shows superimposed. Neville Brody, former art director of 'The Face' a very influential magazine in the 1980's said 'The distinction between amateur and professional design is becoming blurred because of the computer, which is great. I'm all for that; I'm really in support of everyone having access to the technology and everyone becoming visually educated.'

As Western governments are discovering to their cost, a two-way channel of communication is very difficult to control.

New advances in software mean the situation is continually changing. It has allowed broadcast quality programmes to be shot and edited by home enthusiasts very quickly. With a digital stills or video camera and design or editing software you have far more effective communication tools in your hands for less money than anyone has ever had before.

Not only has the computer provided the means with which to communicate it has also provided a channel of communication. The World Wide Web has enabled anyone to place virtually anything on it to be seen by anyone. Web pages are bright, colourful pages of text, images, sound and animation. Just as in the more traditional media, businesses sell their wares. But on the web the range of what can be sold it is much greater. Groceries, pornography, ideology. As Western governments are discovering to their cost a two-way channel of communication is very difficult to control.

This is a unique situation. Suddenly more money doesn't necessarily mean you have a louder voice. Technology has levelled the playing field more than ever before. So the Constructivist dream, that art would 'spread everywhere-on the streets in the trams, factories, workshops and in the workers homes' is already happening without anyone noticing. Not only are they consumers of this art they can now be protagonists.

So if you've got a point of view, let someone know about it. Get a website. Make a video. Show your work. Write a Newsletter. Design it. Make a flyer. Go create. ■

The Agony and the Ecstasy Renaissance

by Keith Welters

Managing Principal of welters organisation worldwide



The year was 1990; we had been looking at the cemetery service for some time. In many ways, the decision to enter the industry was a logical one, for the cemetery encompasses

many aspects of craftsmanship inherent within my family for over four generations. With a background in land management, architectural and product design, construction and manufacturing, it is not hard to understand why I was drawn to examine the role of the cemetery and how my company might contribute to its continuance.



From the start, our main goal has been to provide products that inspire, both spiritually and visually.

In the 1800's cemeteries and the bereaved alike, were proud to exhibit ways of life, trade skills, and make statements about who we are, or were. An ideal sadly lacking in most post-war additions.

You may say that, "Those nice big fancy memorials were for the rich people, not for Joe Public. They made do with unpurchased graves, but after the war that was all sorted, it may be a bit boring and monotonous but at least now most people can afford a grave or cremation."

This is true, BUT these issues can now be resolved. Aided by modern technology - yes **TECHNOLOGY** - all the flare and creativity of the



past is available today plus much, much more. We could make it affordable and available to everyone. We could introduce excitement and imagination into our post-war cemeteries with their monotonous lawn sections and wobbling headstones that are as uninspired as a 1960's council estate. We could

reintroduce the concept that nothing was impossible, and that all materials beautifully engineered should be permissible, that stone and granite and marble should not be dominant and that once again, bronze, Ferro-work, glass, ceramic & mosaics, sculpture and casting would be available in varying materials - including synthetics.

We started out determined to reintroduce artistry and inspirational systems for the bereaved. But, somewhere along the way, we took our eye off the ball.

Well, where are we after twelve years of dedication, and what's changed? There's been a lot of talk about change. I read about it in the *Journal*. About 'new

ideas' - the Government talks about change, about increasing variety, about partnerships. People talk about 'forward planning' and 'innovations' but in broad terms there really isn't a lot happening. A common request from cemetery

authorities is for our concrete burial chamber. True, it resolves a lot of ground issues and is a very important product to us, but future generations will not be inspired by its style or design. Our frustration extends to what goes on above the ground, on top of our chambers, in the places where we lay our cremated remains, our mausolea, and in the chapels where we mourn.

This 'change' needs a kick-start.

A Team with a Vision

So we went back and looked at the industry and



asked a couple of basic questions: What is the most concerning issue for cemeteries at this point in time? **The answer has to be memorial safety**, purely because of the scale of the problem and the potential for injury or loss of life. What was the cause? Well, our first assumption was *age*, and although this is a factor, a surprisingly high amount of 'modern' post-war lawn type headstones had become hazardous mainly due to poor workmanship and design, poor fixing and ground instability. So, this gave us the opportunity not only to resolve the future issue of unsafe memorials but also to design, create and introduce a completely new range of memorials. We also avoided the need to prove that it is possible to stand tall thin pieces of stone on end without them falling over! Two highly acclaimed sculptors have joined our team to focus on design and aesthetics, whilst the **HERITAGE LIST** system creates engineering solutions to transform safety and provide excitement and vigour into our cemeteries.



Pensions Reform Must Tackle The Income Gap Between Older Men And Women In Retirement, Warns Alliance

An alliance of more than twelve charities, unions and pressure groups led by the Equal Opportunities Commission has called for a radical approach to tackle the low income faced by millions of women in their retirement ahead of the government-appointed Pensions Commission report to be published in October.

In an open letter to the leaders of the three main political parties, the alliance of campaigning organisations which includes Age Concern, the TUC and the National Association of Pension Funds, says that the current pensions system excludes women and “does not take into account the huge changes that have occurred in family life over the last fifty years”.

Any reform of the pension system will fail, it says, if it does not fully reward women for the caring role they carry out and increase the eligibility of women for the basic state pension in their own right.

Julie Mellor, Chair of the Equal Opportunities Commission said,

“The income of older women is just over half that of older men. They often lose out on their contributions when they take on a caring role and also earn less on average than men throughout their working lives. As a result their savings for their retirement are woefully small. We hope the strength of support shown by this letter will make political parties realise that if they want to woo women voters for the next election, they need to take action.”

The letter goes on to state:

“Britain benefits greatly from this caring. In sheer financial terms, the unpaid care provided by parents and carers is worth £277 billion, a fifth of GDP if it were counted. Yet, more importantly, this caring is the very glue that binds our society together. And instead of rewarding it, we punish it.”

The letter also warns that politicians should ignore this issue at their peril.

78% of adults support improving pensions for parents and carers and their 8.8 million women voters over the age of 55. The alliance also urges the parties to build a new consensus on the pensions crisis.

The letter, sent to the party leaders today, says:

“The face of pensioner poverty is mostly female. Women are penalised for looking after their families. Add to this the fact that women are excluded from a pension system because they earn too little and you have the explanation for why so many women live out their old age in poverty.”

London's Leaders Support Principle Of Smoking Ban In Enclosed Public Places

London's leaders have given

their support to the principle of a smoking ban in enclosed public places at a meeting of the Association of London Government (ALG) held 12/10/2004.

The ALG's Leaders' Committee has unanimously agreed the idea should be further developed for a private bill to submitted to Parliament.

It could take some time for any possible ban on smoking in places like pubs, bars and restaurants to come into effect.

ALG Chair, Sir Robin Wales, said:

“We feel we can't ignore the growing evidence of the effect smoking has not only on the people that smoke but also on others through passive smoking.

“Smokers make the choice to smoke, but equally there are others who decide they don't want to. We want to ensure that non-smokers are able to enjoy visiting public places without the risk of inhaling other people's smoke, which leads to death.

“We must also think about the health of the people who work in these places. It is estimated that in London one million non-smoking workers are exposed to tobacco smoke.

“A possible smoking ban was just one of a number of the ideas the boroughs, mainly following concerns of their local residents, put forward for inclusion in the 9th London Local Authorities Bill.

“However because of the strength of feeling around this issue, we feel it is best that this forms a separate Bill. It will take some time for the Bill to go through the normal legislative process, and this process will also shape how any possible ban could be enforced.”

The Bill will be promoted in Parliament by the ALG along with the 9th London Local Authorities Bill, which will seek to give boroughs more stringent powers to tackle arrange of issues that affect the quality of life of Londoners.

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A PLACE IN THE SUN

Who is Britain's greatest Prime Minister?

In a recent poll by Mori and Leeds University, 139 academics, mostly political experts and historians, responded to the survey questions asking them to rate the 20 prime ministers of the 20th Century in terms of success in office. This was one of the largest surveys of its kind so far attempted in Britain, and the first list to include an incumbent prime minister.

* A more detailed analysis paper of the results is being prepared and will be presented at the PSA Conference at the University of Leeds in April 2005.

The main criteria were success in domestic and in foreign policy

For those who have not seen the results, we show the scoring, with our added comments on the first and the last five.



1. Clement Attlee (1945-51):

A clear contender with his unmatched domestic policy. As post WW2 PM, he ushered in the Welfare State. He was generous hearted, too - describing Churchill as 'the greatest Englishman of our time'

6. Tony Blair (lab 1997 - present)

7. Herbert Asquith (lib 1908-16))

8. Stanley Baldwin (con 1923-24, 24-29, 35-37)

9. Harold Wilson (lab) 1964- 0)

10. Lord Salisbury (con 1895-1902)

11. Henry Campbell-Bannerman (lib 1906-08)

12. James Callaghan (lab 1976-79)

13. Edward Heath (con 1970-74)

14. Ramsey MacDonald (lab 1924, 29-31, 31-35)

15. John Major (con 1990-97)

2. Winston S Churchill (40-45 & 51-55):

The inspirational war-leader non-pareil, who did wonders for British morale. He was accepting of reform in domestic and imperial policy, though far from enthusiastic.



16. Andrew Bonar Law (con 1922-23):

A great might-have been, Law was a much-respected Parliamentarian in his time. But he was only Prime Minister for a matter of months before dying in office.



3. David Lloyd George (1916-22): A great war leader, too, but also hot in domestic policy, introducing reform and proving a powerful force in the Liberal drive to reduce misery and improve working class conditions. His mishandling of the Chanak crisis in 1922, where he nearly got into a war with a revitalised Turkey under Atatürk,

brought his downfall.

17. Neville Chamberlain (con 1937-40):

Too attached to appeasement. Relied too much on Hitler's good word. Rotten war leader



4. Margaret Thatcher (1979-90):

A powerful leader, famed throughout her long sojourn at Number 10, as an uncompromising counter-reformer. (She was the one who stopped school milk). A strict monetarist, regardless of what it cost, a friend of American presidents, the poll tax queen, and a victorious war leader against Argentina in the Falklands.



18. Arthur Balfour (con 1902-05):

Transferred Education to local authorities. Ineffectual in holding his party together. His 'Balfour Plan' for Jewish re-settlement in Palestine was before his PM days.

19. Douglas Home:

(con 1963-64): A rather wooden Caretaker PM. Taking over from Macmillan in '63, he lost the election in 1964 (though narrowly) to Harold Wilson.



5. Harold Macmillan (1957-63):

Presided over a comfortable period of stability and prosperity. (You've never had it so good). Tory paternalist, wrote The Middle Way expressing progressive interventionist ideas.



20. Anthony Eden (con 1955-57):

Took a hard line against Nasser and precipitated an unpopular war against Egypt, which the Americans scuppered, forcing a humiliating withdrawal of British troops.

Besides being asked their opinions on the most successful domestic and foreign policy, the contributors were also asked to select three out of a list of 20 factors - personal or situational - that they considered contributed most to success in office. Astonishingly, but perhaps, realistically, these are the ones they came up with:

Most important contributing factors

- leadership skills (picked by 64 %)
- sound judgement (42 %)
- good in a crisis (24 %)
- luck (23 %)
- decisiveness (23 %)
- stable parliamentary majority (20 %)
- good quality colleagues (18 %)
- understands the problems facing Britain (16 %)
- integrity (11 %)
- practices Cabinet government (10 %)

Least important contributing factors

- charisma (picked by 9 %)
- in touch with ordinary people (8 %)
- ruthlessness (6 %)
- poor state of the opposition (5 %)
- strong convictions / ideology (4 %)
- high-level ministerial experience (3 %)
- understands world problems (2 %)
- understands economics (1 %)
- down-to-earth (1 %)
- honesty (1%)
- patriotism (0%)

These Machiavellian priorities tell us as more about the academics, and perhaps ourselves, if they can be said to be representative, than about the politicians themselves. Do we really regard the qualities of patriotism and honesty as valueless in politics? So why do we expect politicians to do the best for their country, instead of just taking care of themselves? All those politicians out there, in Britain and in Europe - are they out for us or for themselves? Why do we complain so much about lying politicians when it is clear that we expect honesty to be the last thing a successful politician would want in his kit bag? And how can we possibly think that ministerial experience, an understanding of economics and of world affairs can be of such little consequence?

Tony Blair is ranked sixth on their list. With a general election coming up sometime soon, we'll more than likely be invited to vote him in for another term. But we have had him with us for quite a while already. How do we think he matches up to the criteria?

Let's just make sure he hasn't made the mistake of adopting the two least important. Patriotism? One would have thought Churchill and Thatcher had lots of it, but that isn't how they got their points, presumably. Tony Blair's patriotism is paradoxical, as we have mentioned before in our magazine. For him, Britain is better off dissolving into Europe. So he's all right on that.

Honesty? Does he let that stand in his way - or the related characteristic further up the line, Integrity? Of course it may be important to seem honest, to seem to have integrity, so that people will believe your promises and your explanations, but does one have to actually be honest? Or is honesty just a thing for the private life of a good, god-fearing family man, not something that can survive long in the public life of a politician? But it must play some part, or why did Blunkett have to go?

And what was it Tony Blair had to say about that affair. On Blunkett's adulterous affair: 'I have actually always said that politicians are entitled to their private lives.' (which means it's OK to be dishonest and cheat on people, in private life)

On Blunkett's role as Home Secretary: 'He has been, is, and will continue to be, a first class home secretary.' (which means Tony believed, even knowing the facts of Blunkett's private behaviour, that such cheating will not spill over into public life). He got that wrong, too. But even so, the Right Honorable Tony Blair has hinted strongly that Blunkett will be invited back into the Tony's fold after his successful re-election - as if Parliament's decision on Blunkett was somehow misguided.

Tony behaves like this with discredited cronies and presumably thinks he'll win Brownie points for loyalty. What kind of honour is this? Is it the same as honour among thieves? Are we, as citizens, allowed to imitate our leaders and cheat on our spouses, cheat on our friends, cheat on our children, cheat on our society, cheat on our government?

Shall we all be cheats, Tony?

What about the top characteristics - leadership, sound judgement, good in a crisis, luck? We know Blair has survival skills, but what about his leadership skills? The



first is to make every individual, every crisis, every decision he takes secure his craving for power, and a place in some pantheon somewhere - perhaps topple Attlee on this list, and possibly reach even further. As to this, we can all continue to watch him through the media. As to the second, leadership, the task is to carry his team, his party, and the nation with him on policy. He still has a team, though not the original one. To date he may still have the loyalty of Jack Straw (Faithful Heinrich), John Prescott (Give me back my regions!), Clarke, Beckett, and a few patient careerists awaiting their cue. However, there's no getting away from the fact that he's lost some high-profile names in the seven years, not only those he couldn't keep on, like Blunkett and Mandelson, but also such worthies as Robin Cooke, Mo Mowlam, Clare Short - and, it seems, the smouldering Gordon Brown.

Not many would argue that Blair still enjoys core Labour support. There is a feeling that sometime soon, Brown will snatch away the leadership from him. But if he waits until after an election, there may be the chance that, despite Blair's arrogant assumption that a Labour victory is a foregone conclusion, it is not beyond possibility that the electors, including even traditional Labour voters, may have become so heartily sick of him that they would find the stomach to plump for radical change - even though the options are not exciting. Was it sound judgement that brought this about? For his first few years he could do no wrong. But golden promises of a better society have not materialised, only spin, jargon and the bureaucracy. Then, with his powerful playmate, Bush, he saw his chance for Thatcherian glory, a war that could not be lost against a hated tyrant.

Sound judgement?

All he did was to embroil Britain in a dubious, unpopular, expensive and apparently endless war in Iraq, committing the armed forces to more and more tasks while simultaneously reducing military budgets, and demoralising the armed forces by breaking up their esprit-de-corps. He reached the cry-wolf stage with his long string of broken promises long ago. (Last-minute panic measures to retrieve his position do not count.). With the help of his 'minister of the interior' he has managed to bundle us all up into bureaucratic parcel ready for delivery to Europe. People mutter and mumble, wondering vaguely how this has all come about.

Perhaps the British are a little slow to wake up. It was like this in the years running up to the Second World War, when the British were stubbornly pacifist. Churchill blasted away at us to watch out for Hitler, but Chamberlain went along with pacifism and signed away Czechoslovakia to nice Mr Hitler.

Could it be that Tony Blair has totally misread the deeper mood of the British and will suffer the fate of Chamberlain?

If so, who will be our new Churchill?

More Tony quotes

'Mine is the first generation able to contemplate the possibility that we may live our entire lives without going to war or sending our children to war.'

Could you repeat that, please?

'This party will be judged, ultimately, on its ability to deliver on its promise.'

Well. Let's hope it is.



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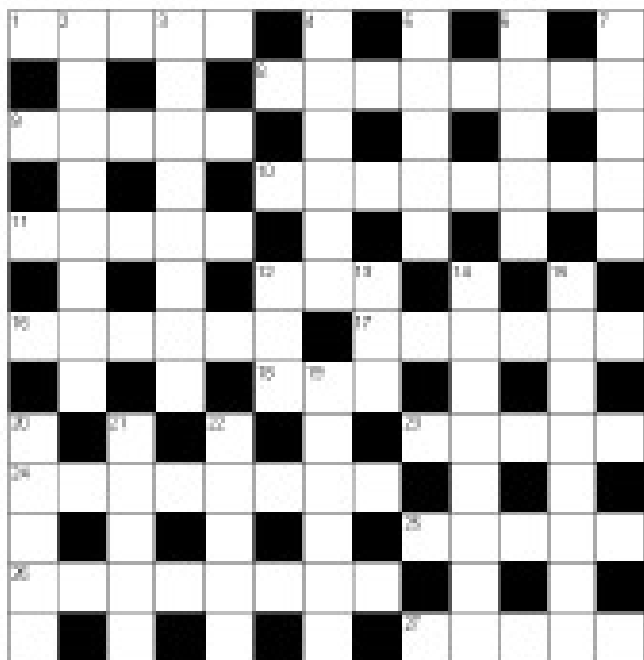
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The Crossword



Answers in next issue
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Across

1. Tony - his project has nothing to do with witches! (5)
8. They ensure things are kept running. (8)
9. They are not alkaline. (5)
10. They are surrounded by water. (8)
11. A bite. (5)
12. An electric guitar needs this (colloq.) (3)
16. Twice as much as a fiver (colloq.) (6)
17. Enrol. (6)
18. Opposite of woman. (3)
23. Professional at pretence. (5)
24. A proletarian? (8)
25. Orifice. (5)
26. Makes gifts out of delivering? (8)
27. Exclusive utterance. (5)

Down

2. Pub Landlord? (8)
3. Offensive. (8)
4. Amount demanded to return something stolen. (6)
5. Heathen - follower of an Ancient religion. (5)
6. Pliable. (5)
7. Those operating computer software. (5)
12. Appendage. (3)
13. Aren't you using one now? (3)
14. They decide if they're in and decide if they're out! (8)
15. Various. (8)
19. Wards off. (6)
20. Range. (5)
21. Urge. (5)
22. You can be one on polling day. (5)

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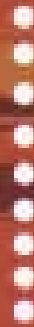


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