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PRESS REPORTS OF THE BOROUGH ELECTIONS

Extracts from the *Harrow Observer*, Thursday 14 May 1964

The New Council: Conservatives 36, Labour 20

LIBERALS WIPED OUT: LOSE ALL THEIR NINE SEATS

When the Greater London Borough of Harrow meets officially for the first time on Wednesday the benches will be occupied exclusively by Conservatives and Socialists. At Thursday's election the Liberals, who in the previous three years won nine seats on the present Council, were completely eliminated. With nine Aldermen to be elected at the first meeting the relative strengths are: Conservative 36, Labour 20. The next election is not until 1967 so that, unless they can make a spectacular revival at the by-elections following the Aldermanic appointments, the Liberals face another long spell in the wilderness.

Lost Liberal votes were by no means all cast in favour of the two main parties, and as a result the percentage of the electorate voting was only 43.0 as against 48.0 last year

But if the Liberals came away empty-handed their influence was still felt, most notably at Roxbourne where Labour, who won two seats out of three following two recounts which caused the count to last until 3.15 am, gained a footing for the first time.*

In the neighbouring highly marginal ward of Roxeth too, Labour had cause for gratitude to the Liberals, for they at last gained complete control there by taking all four seats.

Most interest was focused on the Kenton ward, where Cllr. D.F. Joyner first raised the Liberal flag in 1961, this being followed by further successes in each of the following years. Polling here was the heaviest of the day, and the result was acclaimed by the most enthusiastic Conservative cheers of the night.....

Apart from seven Liberals, only two members of the present Council, Ald. H. Grainger and Cllr. F.S. Davies, failed in their bid to serve on the new one. Neither had been selected this year by the wards they originally represented.....

In spite of the complex ballot papers, (16 candidates for 5 seats at Stanmore North, for example,) there were few spoiled papers and few of the eccentricities that characterised the Greater London election

At the close Cllr. Ellement moved the customary vote of thanks to the returning officer, the Town Clerk, Mr. D.H. Pritchard and his staff, and Ald. H.G. Gange, who had the biggest Labour majority at Wealdstone North, seconded.

The first result, Stanmore South, had been declared over four hours earlier, at 11 pm, and had seen the safe return of Ald. W.O. Allen, he and Ald. Gange being the only two members to have served on the Council without a break since before the Second World War.

Extracts from the *Harrow Observer*, Tuesday 14 May 1968

THE TORIES' FOUR GREAT HOURS IN A "SLAUGHTERHOUSE"

Labour Smiles Became Frozen

Never has a slaughterhouse been such a seemly place. The count at Kodak Hall, Wealdstone, on Thursday, at which Labour was massacred, went through smoothly, quickly, without a recount and was all over by 1 am, four hours after it began.

* *Factually incorrect. The Labour Party candidate won Roxbourne ward at the 1952 Municipal Election.*

As the first of the ballot boxes was unsealed and its contents spilled across the table before the rows of seated tellers, candidates and their supporters moved in to scrutinise the process.

The mood of the Conservatives was already a glad one, reports coming in from "the field" forecasting a big swing in their direction, and some celebration parties had obviously been initiated.

Labour supporters managed smiles and confident quips, but there was a touch of Punchinello about their performance, and as announcements of Conservative gains and increased majorities came, the smiles became frozen.

Crowds at one time gravitated to the table where the Roxbourne votes were being counted. Before the election there was one Conservative member for the ward with a majority of 6, and two Labour members with majorities of 58 and 31. When the count was complete there were three Conservative members with majorities of 1,343, 1,290 and 1,279. The reversal was symptomatic of other wards gained by the Conservatives

As the results came through the Conservatives occasionally raised cheers, the Labour supporters a few boos, and from the minority parties of Communists, National Front and Union Movement cheers and boos in larger measure.

Finally, as the foregone conclusions of massive majorities in Pinner North and Hatch End and Pinner South were announced by the Mayor, Ald. O.G. Collins, on behalf of the returning officer, Mr. S. Lancaster, Town Clerk, the tired candidates, supporters and tellers filed out into the Harrow streets to the prospect of a three year period of Conservative local government without more than a token opposition.

Extracts from the *Harrow Observer*, Tuesday 18 May 1971

LABOUR WINS 27: CONSERVATIVES 26

'Cliff-hanger' Final To Tense Count

The almost complete Conservative domination of Harrow Council crumbled on Thursday night when Labour captured 27 of the 56 Council seats. In a massive anti-Conservative vote, the Conservatives lost 30 seats, including two to Liberals and one to a Ratepayer candidate.

The end of a nail-biting count came at 3.06 am in the Kodak Hall, Wealdstone, when, after a recount, Labour won three of the four seats in the hotly contested West Harrow ward, which put the seal on the Labour victory.

Slightly red-eyed, and more than a little tired, the Labour candidates and supporters who had stayed until the end burst into a chorus of *The Red Flag* following the final result, while the equally few Conservatives could only look at each other sad faced, despite a few brave smiles.

The Conservatives' disappointment was obvious. They had expected losses, but none could have visualised such a thrashing which had been forecast by Greater London Councillor Horace Cutler a few weeks ago.

But even a quick comparison with the 1968 majorities in Harrow-on-the-Hill and Greenhill, and Belmont, the first wards to be declared, had indicated the trend. Then when the straight Labour/Conservative fight in Stanmore South gave a thumping majority to Labour the trend was confirmed.

The Mayor of Harrow, Ald. Frank Rees, left the count when his wife, Cllr. Mrs. Nan Rees, the Mayoress, was returned in Stanmore North, but with a reduced majority.

Supporters of candidates and other spectators crowded the public gallery early in the count, but when the final result came there were only two left. The count itself, on the floor of the Kodak Hall, was crowded and the air became oppressive and stifling as the count wore on.

The recount in West Harrow had been asked for by the Conservatives. The first count showed three Labour and one Conservative returned, and the recount ultimately confirmed this.

The time was after 1.30 am when Mr. Stanley Lancaster, the returning officer, abandoned the first recount. A second recount was begun using fresh voting sheets to mark the totals on when it was decided that the

method of checking first votes was unsatisfactory and causing confusion to already tired counters. It was significant that Mr. Lancaster and several Council officers joined in the recount, providing relatively fresh minds to the job at hand.

Earlier Mr. Lancaster had asked police to eject Mr. Stanley Bishop, a Harrow Youth Movement candidate, from the hall when, standing on a chair, he began to shout over Mr. Lancaster as he was giving the results of Wealdstone North, in which Mr. Bishop was a candidate.

Compared to the earlier crush, there were few people left on the count floor as the second result from West Harrow was double checked on adding machines. As the figures were handed to Mr. Lancaster there was a visible confidence from the Labour group, and despite being tired, a long, loud victory cheer greeted the results.

The cry went up: "Where is the Mayor? Where is the Mayor?" but Ald. Rees was not there. Only the Deputy Mayor, Ald. Mrs. Marie Haslam was left on the rostrum.

It was fitting that Mr. George Gange, who as an Alderman had been the only opposition during three years of Conservative control should give the victory address. "I am only too sorry the Mayor couldn't be with us this early in the morning," he began. "But we all thank Mrs. Haslam for staying on. It is too late for a political speech, but our thanks go, of course, to the officers and counters for an efficient count. Three years ago my photograph was taken with a sad expression on my face, but I am smiling now. Analysing the figures I can only say that the majority of ratepayers are advocating a policy of Comprehensive Education."

The Conservative response came from Mrs. Joan Debell, who topped the poll in Pinner North and Hatch End, who seconded the vote of thanks to the count officials. "My congratulations go to the successful candidates and my condolences to the others," she said.

12 Arrested On Youth Movement March

With an hour left for voting, a group of over 100 young supporters of the Harrow Youth Movement candidates left Lowlands Road, central Harrow, chanting and singing, and marched to the count at the Kodak Hall.

Later, 12 people were arrested on various charges of obstructing police constables, using insulting behaviour likely to cause a breach of the peace, assaulting police constables and obstructing a free passage.

The procession moved out from the road behind Harrow-on-the-Hill Station just after 8 pm and followed the one-way traffic system round into College Road, then Headstone Road and Harrow View to Headstone Drive and the Kodak Hall.

With a police panda car in front of them and a police van at the rear, the marchers were escorted by a small number of uniformed policemen until they reached the hall. There, a number of marchers sat in the road, and were forcibly removed back onto the pavement by the police.

Then a group of about 50 walked back up Headstone Drive towards Headstone Manor recreation ground. They were followed by the police

Extracts from the *Harrow Observer*, Tuesday 7 May 1974

CONSERVATIVES NOW HAVE 21 SEAT MAJORITY

Tories Sweep Back And Liberals Fade

Conservatives regained control of Harrow Council with an overwhelming majority at the borough elections on Thursday, leaving the Labour Party with only 14 of the 27 seats it had held on the previous Council..... The results were also shattering for the Liberals, for not one of their candidates was successful

Cllr. Cyril Harrison, Leader of the Labour Group who held his own seat in Wealdstone North with a much reduced majority, was cheerfully admitting defeat as soon as it was unofficially known that Wealdstone South had been lost to the Conservatives. He told his Conservative opponents that they had it "in the bag."

“One took the opportunity when it came and one has no regrets,” he said. “We enjoyed it — and we did what we said we would on education. The result came just in time.” He was referring to the announcement by the Minister just before the election that Harrow’s two remaining grammar schools would be incorporated in the comprehensive scheme for education.

Mr. Anthony Grant, Vice-Chairman of the Conservative Party and MP for Harrow Central, who was at the count with Mr. Hugh Dykes, MP for Harrow East, commented: “This is a magnificent result for Harrow. We expected the Conservatives would regain control but we have done it more decisively than some people imagined.

“In Harrow, and from what I can gather elsewhere, one of the most interesting features of the election has been the extremely ineffective progress of the Liberals. They have had little impact anywhere in Harrow. I believe that the Liberal bandwagon is now slipping into reverse.”

When the count closed at 5 am on Friday — with the results still awaited for the Harrow Weald ward — Cllr. Harold Mote, Leader of the Conservative Group and former Alderman in the previous Council, thanked the returning officer and his staff on behalf of his colleagues. He commented on the late count: “In tradition with the length of time that Council meetings have gone on in the last three years,” and promised that things would change in the near future.

He thanked their opponents for a “relatively clean campaign” and congratulated the Harrow electorate on its clearly expressed desire “I look forward immediately starting to get the Council affairs on to saner and less doctrinaire lines,” Cllr. Mote added.

Cllr. A.J. Lovell, on behalf of the Labour Party, seconded the vote of thanks to the Chief Executive and his staff and the counters

Balance Of Power Crashes Down To The Tories

The delicate balance of power held by the Liberals and Ratepayer for the last three years has now ended

Two members of the old Council — Glyn Davies and Peter Underwood — were unsuccessful in their stand at Roxbourne as Independent Labour candidates after a row with the official Labour Party.

One surprise result was that of Mr. Edward Hixon, the Independent Conservative candidate in Pinner North and Hatch End. He polled 690 votes — much better than the 22 votes he collected in the Belmont by-election in 1972

The count — the longest ever in Harrow — was abandoned at 5 am with one result still to come. A second recount for the Harrow Weald ward was held on Friday afternoon. Labour held all four seats in the ward with a smallest majority of 77.

One of the main reasons for the marathon count was the ban on volunteering for election duties by NALGO — the local government officers’ union — in support of a London weighting allowance claim.

Instead of the usual experienced counters, volunteer members of the public did the job. Many obviously did not expect an all-night session — they put on their coats ready to leave after the first of the three counting sessions. They had agreed to do the job for £4, but in the early hours it was agreed that they would be paid an extra £2.

Counts for all 15 wards are normally held simultaneously, but on Thursday it was split into three shifts — the six smallest first, then another six, leaving the three biggest wards until last.

The Kodak Hall, Wealdstone, was packed at the beginning of the count at 9 pm, but by 5 am most people had left — including many of the volunteer counters