

PREFACE

This volume continues the series of reprints of books recording the electoral history of Harrow. Although elections covering only nine years (1954 to 1963) are detailed here, a considerable quantity of data is featured due to the practice of those years to hold annual elections. In addition, the numerous elections of Councillors to the Aldermanic bench resulted in a sometimes confusing array of casual vacancies. Additional election results are featured in an Appendix, so that there is a record in one volume of contemporaneous Parliamentary and Middlesex County Council contests.

Until 1961, an air of municipal tranquillity appeared to exist in Harrow: a number of Conservative candidates in their safest seats were returned unopposed, and of the 15 wards only Roxeth was really marginal, alternating between electing Conservative and Labour Councillors. The moments of greatest Conservative support in the Borough coincided with the years of their General Election victories in 1955 and 1959; higher Labour votes tended to be the case for the mid-term years of 1956-1958. Then, in 1961 something unusual happened. Dennis Joyner won Kenton ward for the Liberals after being given a clear run against the Conservative incumbent, Mrs. Ethel Morgan. Throughout Britain, the 1961 municipal elections had seen important gains for the Liberals, and they increased the number of their Councillors and Aldermen from 641 to 1,065, a figure that included a number of important gains in the County Councils.

In March 1962 a Parliamentary by-election in Orpington saw Eric Lubbock gaining the seat for the Liberal Party by a margin of 7,855 votes. At the time it was seen as a sensational result, for the previous Tory majority had been 14,760. Two months later Harrow went to the polls for the annual Council election, and Liberal nominees won Headstone, Kenton, Roxbourne, Wealdstone South and West Harrow wards. Harrow now had a total of eight Liberal Councillors, and throughout Britain there were 1,603 Liberal Councillors and Aldermen after the 1962 municipal elections.

Ken Young describes* how publicly expressed support for the Liberal Party declined within two months of Orpington. In subsequent Parliamentary by-elections at Middlesbrough West, West Derbyshire, Chippenham and Colne Valley, victories failed to materialise in seats which they could reasonably have expected to capture. From March 1963 electoral decline set in, and the deteriorating by-election results were matched by inexorable losses in Liberal support as indicated by the opinion polls.

Back in Harrow, the May 1963 municipal election saw the capture of only one new seat for the Liberals, at Kenton, where the excitement had all begun two years previously. Another year later the first elections to the new Council of the London Borough of Harrow took place, and resulted, as the *Harrow Observer* put it, in the Liberals being "wiped out".

It is my hope that this book will prove to be invaluable to local historians and those interested in politics in Harrow. I will be delighted to receive any criticisms, suggestions or corrections that readers may have.

COLIN J. GRAY

Abbots Langley
Hertfordshire

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* K. Young, *Orpington and the 'Liberal Revival'*, chapter 8 in C. Cook and J. Ramsden (eds.), *By-elections in British Politics*, Macmillan, London, 1973.