

‘Culture, Character or Campaigns?’ Assessing the electoral performance of the Liberals and Liberal Democrats in Cornwall 1945-2010

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Doctor of Philosophy in Cornish Studies

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‘Culture, Character or Campaigns?’ Assessing the electoral performance of the Liberals and Liberal Democrats in Cornwall 1945-2010

Submitted by John Anthony Ault to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Cornish Studies July 2014.

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Abstract

Politics in Cornwall in the twentieth century was dominated by the rivalry of two major parties: the Conservatives and the Liberals. Unlike much of the rest of Britain Cornwall retained a different political paradigm in which Labour did not replace the old left, with socialism, and until the modern day this localised duopoly has persisted. This thesis looks at the potentially different reasons why this divergence persists and identifies three possible explanations for this phenomenon: culture, character and campaigns.

In Part I of the thesis, there is a comparison of politicians from the past and the attributes that these politicians possessed which are compared with modern day politicians to evaluate their relative strengths. The thesis also assesses historic campaigning as a cause of Liberal success as well as the different nature of Cornwall, with its distance from Westminster and its Celtic and Methodist background, which set it apart from much of the rest of England. Then in Part II, using modern day voter surveys conducted by telephone, this thesis identifies particular peculiarities in Cornwall which would seem to suggest that although there have been traditional cultural ties to Liberalism, mainly through the pre-dominant faith, Methodism, this cleavage towards the modern day Liberal Democrats has changed in nature as cultural reasons have become less significant. It also identifies the importance of so-called personality politics, in the Cornish context, as a key aspect of maintaining and then augmenting support for the party. As such major personalities from historic Cornish politics, such as Isaac Foot and David Penhaligon, are compared to modern day politicians to assess their relative significance.

However, the significant majority of the original research conducted across Cornwall, and other parts of the country, attempts to identify whether the resurgence of the Liberal Democrats in the 1997 election, and subsequently, is linked to the campaigning the party conducts rather than these traditional assumptions for their electoral success.

Conducting telephone surveys across thirteen parliamentary constituencies, before and after the 2010 general election, from the Highlands of Scotland to West Cornwall, this research identifies that grassroots campaigning, commonly referred to as *Rennardism* in the most recent past, but more accurately described as Community Politics, is the primary reason for the success of the Liberal Democrats in Cornwall between 1997 and 2010. By assessing not just seats in which the Liberal Democrats have been successful in recent years in Cornwall but also in similar, and different, regions of Britain a better assessment of the value of the party's successes and failures can be evaluated both in Cornwall and comparatively.

The research compares different potential reasons for voters supporting the party but the evidence would seem to suggest that in the period under discussion the party had built substantial levels of campaigning capacity in the target areas for the party and this helped to win all the seats in Cornwall for the Liberal Democrats in 2005. Surveys were conducted before and after the 2010 election and there is also evidence that as the party became a less effective campaigning machine it began to lose support in Cornwall and this helps to explain why the party lost seats in Cornwall in 2010.

This thesis adds to the increasing awareness, amongst political scientists, of the significance of local constituency campaigning, in British politics, which has been the subject of debate in this field in recent years. Historically scholars have debated the significance of national swing, with early political scientists, like David Butler and Robert Mackenzie, favouring this explanation to electoral success assessing the general election campaign as being essentially a national one. However, as three and now arguably four or even five party politics is the norm academics such as David Denver, Dennis Kavanagh and Philip Cowley have identified that constituency campaigning matters much more to those parties breaking into the post-war duopoly, than early political scientists have suggested. This thesis evaluates, not just whether there is a local campaign factor in the Liberal Democrats' success, but whether the volume and penetration of this local campaign matters and, as such, this research is original and forms a unique contribution to academic debate in this field.

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PART ONE

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

The Liberal Party in the 1950s had slumped to its nadir of support since the zenith of its success at the turn of the twentieth century. Despite the first of many alleged revivals in the 1960s, and especially under Jeremy Thorpe's leadership in February 1974, by 1979 the Liberal Party in Cornwall was still in an electorally poor state. Although David Penhaligon had turned the electoral tide in Truro from third place being elected in October 1974, by 1979 the Liberals in North Cornwall had been defeated, following the return of a Conservative Government and the scandal surrounding Jeremy Thorpe. With the loss of Bodmin in 1970 and subsequent involvement of the former MP, Peter Bessell, in the Thorpe scandal,¹ the opportunity of a Liberal victory in this seat also seemed unlikely.² Cornwall, a comparative stronghold for the Liberals, with the exception of Truro, had essentially been lost to the Conservatives, apparently permanently.

The party did achieve some success in the so-called Liberal revivals of the 1960s and 1970s which saw politicians such as Peter Bessell, John Pardoe and David Penhaligon elected. With new campaigning techniques, community politics, inspirational leadership and the hard work of campaign activists across Cornwall, this nadir was to be replaced by the sight of the entire county being represented in Parliament by Liberal Democrats at the 2005 General Election. To understand the success of the Liberal Democrats in Cornwall it is important to research the possible causes of this apparent difference and identify those personalities that led their fight-back and to place this in the context of other factors that affected their resurgence.

After 1979, the electoral and campaigning picture was unspectacular in Cornwall for the Liberals. Despite the superficial optimism of the Liberal/SDP Alliance,³ they never progressed beyond a single seat, held in Truro. The personality of David

¹ Jeremy Thorpe's leadership of the Liberal Party came to an abrupt end following his public involvement in the case surrounding the alleged conspiracy to murder Norman Scott, Thorpe's alleged lover. Peter Bessell was the Crown's chief witness in the case, despite having been a former colleague of Thorpe's.

² Freeman S. & Penrose B., *Rinkagate: The Rise and Fall of Jeremy Thorpe* (London, 1997)

³ The Alliance was formed of the long-standing Liberal Party and the newly created Social Democratic Party (SDP) which was created in 1981 by the so-called Gang of Four – Roy Jenkins, Shirley Williams, David Owen and Bill Rodgers.

Penhaligon apparently single-handedly sustained the party in Cornwall, which might, logically have led to the consequent loss of Truro. The by-election of 1987, in which Matthew Taylor retained the seat, was an important milestone for the Liberals as the support for the party in Truro, and the campaigning techniques used in the constituency, began to be disseminated around the rest of the county, rekindling and updating campaigning attitudes in the other four seats.

Although 1987 saw no increased electoral success for the party in Cornwall, apart from the retention Truro, the foundations were beginning to be laid. The 1989 European election saw the party do relatively well in the Cornwall and Plymouth seat, despite being the worst result nationally for the party across the UK since the 1950s, polling just 6%, even worse than the recent European elections in 2014.⁴ But the real turning point for the party in Cornwall was the victory in North Cornwall in 1992. With the Conservatives relatively weak for the first time since 1979 nationally, and with Sir Gerry Neale representing a relatively easy target locally, North Cornwall fell to the Liberal Democrats with a 6.5% swing. The personalities, techniques and messages used in this election are key to understanding how Cornwall went on to deliver four Liberal Democrat MPs in 1997 and eventually fell entirely to the party in 2005.

After the 1992 General Election the North Cornwall campaign was held up as a model for the party, across the UK, of 'how to do it'. With North Devon, Bath and Cheltenham, this constituted only one of four gains in that year, but the swing achieved would resonate throughout the Liberal Democrats for the next five years. The 6.5% swing achieved in North Cornwall would be the benchmark at which future targeting would be set.⁵ The national Liberal Democrats would target all seats within that range in 1997. All three remaining Conservative seats in Cornwall [Falmouth and Camborne (2.85% swing required), St. Ives (1.4% swing required), and South East Cornwall (6.45% swing required)] fell within that range, and, as a consequence, would be targeted with national and regional resources, as well as those produced locally. This strategy, devised by the new Campaigns Director, Chris Rennard, was

⁴ Wood D. & Wood A., *Times Guide to the European Parliament 1989* (London, 1989)

⁵ Rennard C., *The Campaign Manual – 2nd Edition* (Hebden Bridge, 1995)

a revolutionary step for the party, as, although there had been targeting in 1992, it was on such a small scale it had only delivered modest results. In 1997 they would prove to be anything but modest for the party. This strategy would later become known as Rennardism, named after the party's Campaign Director, then Chief Executive and peer, Chris Rennard.⁶

The 1997 General Election, and the run up to it, will form another key milestone in charting the success of the party in Cornwall. Finally, although 2001 was a better year for the party in the UK, the party did not see success in Falmouth and Camborne. However, in 2005 this seat also fell to the Liberal Democrats, leaving them with all five seats in Parliament, the first time this had happened since 1929.

Campaigning, on the ground, has made a difference to the electoral prospects of the party in Cornwall. But the success the party has had, has also been built on a strong tradition of support in the West Country in general, and Cornwall in particular.

To understand the success the party has seen in Cornwall, it will be important to measure the apparent 'core support' for the Liberals in the county – the percentage of support the party receives, regardless of campaign activity. Some of this support will be based on Labour never really having had strength in Cornwall, on a permanent basis⁷ (although there was some evidence of Labour strength in St. Ives and Camborne in 1918).⁸ The Liberals have remained the only real alternative to the Conservatives in Cornwall, outside the industrial areas of Camborne and Redruth, and assessing whether this continued support is cultural, based around Methodism or anti-metropolitanism is an important aspect of this research. Cornish voters have apparently perceived the Liberal Party, and subsequently the Liberal Democrats, as the only possible electoral challenger to the Conservatives, when, only yards across the Tamar, in Plymouth, Labour has had strong support. Assessing why this was,

⁶ Russell A. and Fieldhouse E., *Neither left nor right? – The Liberal Democrats and the electorate* (Manchester, 2005) pp.74-75

⁷ In 1945 the party gained its first seat in Penryn and Falmouth which it held until 1966. Apart from that success and the one in Falmouth and Camborne from 1997-2005 the party has never won another seat in Cornwall, though did benefit from the defection of Tom Horabin, Liberal MP for North Cornwall, from 1948-50.

⁸ Labour achieved over 40% of the vote in these seats in 1918, assisted by the absence of a Conservative candidate in Camborne.

and is, the case will be an important factor in understanding whether the Liberal Democrat success of the late 1990s was built on a solid foundation of traditional support, which it lacks in other parts of the United Kingdom.

The campaign techniques to be researched, known as 'community politics'⁹ to the Liberals and subsequently the Liberal Democrats, are superficially simple, but are apparently effective. These techniques have led the Cornish Liberal Democrats to be a very broad political church, moving away from ideology and instead tailoring their message to, rather than leading, public opinion.¹⁰ This has led to conflict between Liberal Democrats in local government and the party's local MPs. The acquisition of the rhetoric of Cornish nationalism by Liberal Democrat politicians, has also led them to oppose their own government's policy, whilst in the present Coalition government, on issues specific to Cornwall.¹¹

The campaign techniques the party uses will prove to be the most difficult to evaluate. The impact of a single piece of literature on an individual elector may be almost impossible to quantify, but assessing the impact of the Liberal Democrat campaign, both historically and currently, is an important element of this research. This has been done through the use of tracking surveys of voters in Cornwall and across the rest of the country before, during and after the 2010 General Election period. Because most voters do not read a majority of the literature that arrives on their doorsteps, the parties use different methods of communication, and so, to assess the effectiveness of election literature, it has been important to track party activity and question voters on their responses to party communications with them.

Given the perceived imbalance in funding of the three main political parties, it is interesting to assess the impact on voters when the party delivers a leaflet, or conducts canvassing or even telephone canvassing and which has the most effect, or is the best test, on voting behaviour locally, if at all. With the increasing use of direct mail it is vital to assess the impact this form of literature, especially as this can

⁹ Hain P., *Community Politics* (London, 1976) Greaves B. & Lishman G., *The Theory and Practice of Community Politics* (Hebden Bridge, 1980)

¹⁰ Tregidga G., *The Liberal Party in South West Britain since 1918* (Exeter, 2000) pp.220-222

¹¹ *The West Briton*, 13th June 2012

be increasingly targeted to individual voters, roads, socio-demographic or politically affiliated groups.

The use of polling, door-to-door surveys and telephone voter identification has made the party much more aware of the demands of public opinion. The impact this awareness has had on party policy locally has been extreme.¹² With the party basing entire campaigns on localised polling and focus groups, it is important to see whether this dependence on 'community politics' has detached the party from its core values and beliefs, and led it to be effectively a populist party.

This thesis includes discussions with key figures, including former MP Paul Tyler, current MP Dan Rogerson and former agents, Willie Rennie and Annette Penhaligon, as well as accessing the public papers of numerous other agents, politicians and political parties. It also seeks to ask the public what their views of the Liberal Democrats are, through opinion research already completed, and undertaken, as part of this project.

National swing, rather than the impact of local campaigning, is often identified as being one of the main reasons that the Liberal Democrats have been successful in Cornwall, and indeed, between the 1992 General Election and that in 2005, the party has been the beneficiary of the collapse of the Conservative vote in the county.¹³ One of the most important facts relating to the party's success in 1997 was that, although the Liberal Democrats doubled their parliamentary representation, their share of the national poll actually declined.

Targeting by the national party evidently had an effect, but if national swing were enough to deliver success for the party in Cornwall, why would there be bigger than average swings in Cornwall, compared to the rest of the UK? (e.g. South East Cornwall would have been won in 1997 on the national swing of 6.5%, with only 6.45% required. The swing achieved was in fact 12.1%.) It is important to evaluate

¹² Interview with Willie Rennie MSP, October 2012

¹³ Butler D. & Kavanagh D., *The British General Election of 1997* (Basingstoke, 1997)

and assess the basis on which Cornish seats, like this, out-performed the national average, if this is possible.

New Political history has become a less elitist way of evaluating the politics of the past, and in some ways, this thesis can arguably be said to fall under this description, described by Steven Fielding which, 'has started to reconcile the long established concerns of traditional political historians – leadership and institutions – with a more innovative interest in the culture of representative politics and how this related to the people at large.'¹⁴

This survey research which underpins this thesis, which predominantly appears in Part II, was conducted across thirteen 2010 UK Parliamentary constituencies. These seats are detailed later. The objective of these surveys was to try to illicit whether an inter-disciplinary approach, which is located both in historical and political science discourse, can generate greater insight into a debate which has tended to focus on one or the other. Historians like Garry Tregidga and Bernard Deacon have both identified cultural reasons for this persistence of Liberalism in Cornwall, whereas this empirical evidence might indicate that the political landscape is much more nuanced and affected by a number of forces, one of which could well be localised campaigning.

Consequently, this thesis attempts to answer a series of questions concerning this subject as to which factor is most significant, if any, in evaluating the success of the Liberal Democrats in Cornwall in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Firstly *culture*: is the political culture of Cornwall different from the other parts of Britain, or the Celtic fringe, which makes it more likely to support the Liberal Democrats? Does the remote nature of Cornwall from Westminster lead to a greater anti-metropolitanism? Is the Celtic past of Cornwall in any way responsible for this difference?

Secondly *character*: do the political figures in Cornwall have greater significance than in other areas? Figures like Isaac Foot and David Penhaligon have been

¹⁴ Fielding S., 'New Political History,' *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 42, No.3 pp.515-524 (2007)

described as having specific appeal to the Cornish voters which has helped keep the party alive in Cornwall¹⁵ – is this the reason the party continued and then flourished at the turn of the twenty-first century?

Finally, *campaigns*: has the use of community campaigning techniques in Cornwall been the factor that elected the Liberals and then Liberal Democrats between 1997-2010 been the deciding factor in explaining the resurgence and then domination of Cornish politics?

¹⁵ Foot M. and Highet A., *Isaac Foot A Westcountry Boy – Apostle of England* (London, 2006), Penhaligon A., *Penhaligon* (London, 1989)

Chapter 2 - Placing Cornwall's politics in context

There is a clear division in the literature that surrounds post-war electoral history and psephology. This seems to result in two differing conclusions which start with the apparent certainties of the post-war two party system in Britain compared to the emergence of three and then multi-party politics. Some, perhaps more traditional observers, see little importance in local constituency activity but some modern political scientists have begun to look at the nature of political campaigning and the electoral impacts it has nationally, regionally, on a constituency basis and even down to ward level.¹⁶ However, the bulk of historical academic thought concentrates on the impact of national issues on local campaign activity, rather than local factors.¹⁷ The work done assessing the impact of Liberal Democrat campaigning in Cornwall - indeed campaigning by any of the political parties - takes several different forms - but falls into three relatively discrete areas, which will be reviewed separately. These are; firstly Liberal and Liberal Democrat studies, some of which could be categorised as histories, biographies and diaries, secondly international and national literature on political and election campaigning and finally Cornish Studies, and these three areas will be discussed separately.

The concept of culture is a varied and much debated area and in the context of an historical and political study of Cornwall it is fraught with complications. It could arguably be based on the landscape, the remote nature of Cornwall or even the established church being less important than the Methodist faith. However, it can also be simply used to describe a norm, and is so in this thesis. In the case of traditional Labour areas, such as Dunfermline and West Fife, it constitutes a highly unionised and working class area of Scotland, which has been focused on ship building in Rosyth and coal mining in West Fife. Only in recent years have these traditional industries given way to the financial sector and national call centres.

¹⁶ Russell A. and Fieldhouse E., *Neither left nor right? – The Liberal Democrats and the electorate* (Manchester, 2005), Whiteley P., Seyd P. and Billingham A., *Third Force Politics – Liberal Democrats at the Grassroots* (Oxford, 2006)

¹⁷ Butler D. & Kavanagh D., *The British General Election of 1997* (Basingstoke, 1997) p.312
Kavanagh D., *Election Campaigning – The New Marketing of Politics*, (Oxford, 1995)

Although this is often argued to be an intellectual pursuit it can be a much more localised attitude.¹⁸ As Avner Grief puts it, ‘historians have paid little attention to the relations between culture and institutional structures.’¹⁹ However, the concept of a political culture, whether national, or as this thesis would argue local notes, ‘the embedding of political systems in sets of meanings and purposes, specifically in symbols, myths, beliefs and values.’²⁰

In addition to these categories within existing literature, this research identifies three major themes: the nature of personality, the balance between local versus national issues, or factors, and the importance of campaigning. As was mentioned earlier, these three aspects of the research, which might be neatly described as “Character, Culture and Campaigns”, will be evaluated and their varying levels of importance in electoral success will be compared. Although the basis of this research project has not been examined in this way before, as normally studies have still focused on national swing rather than local factors, the literature does not fit easily into this pattern, existing work has touched on one or other of these factors and this literature review tries to reflect this by pulling these various strands of information together.

Studies and histories of the Liberals and the Liberal Democrats

Unlike other aspects of this study, there are numerous, often repetitious, sources charting the history of the Liberal Party to identifying the party’s successes and failures, and these fit into the political culture of the party and its predecessors. A few of these are dedicated to the collapse of Liberalism in the years following the fracturing of the party during the First World War²¹ and thereafter until the mid-1930s.²² Some, however, do examine the party within the context of its more recent electoral success. These tend to be those texts that see the ebbs and flows of the

¹⁸ Axelrod R., ‘The Dissemination of Culture: A Model with Local Convergence and Global Polarization’ *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41:203-26 (1997)

¹⁹ Greif A., ‘Cultural Beliefs and the Organization of Society: A Historical and Theoretical Reflection on Collectivist and Individualist Societies’ *The Journal of Political Economy* 102(5): 912-950. (1994)

²⁰ Wilson R., ‘The Many Voices of Political Culture: Assessing Different Approaches,’ *World Politics* 52 (January 2000), 246-73

²¹ Dangerfield G., *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (New York, 1935)

²² Wilson T., *The Downfall of the Liberal Party* (London, 1966), Cook C., *A Short History of the Liberal Party, 1900-2001* (Basingstoke, 2002) Dutton D., *A History of the Liberal Party* (Basingstoke, 2004), Douglas R., *History of the Liberal Party 1895-1970* (London, 1971), Douglas R., *Liberals – The History of the Liberal and Liberal Democrat Parties* (London, 2005)

party's success in a longer timescale. It is these texts which will prove particularly useful when exploring the party's on-going tactic, before the 2010 election, of acting as 'an alternative opposition'²³ party in parts of the country that the Labour Party has been unable to achieve electoral success.

The most relevant historical book that has been produced in relation to the party in Cornwall, and generally across the South West region, is by Garry Tregidga. His book plots the history of the party in the West Country throughout almost the entire period to be researched by this project. His book has been accused of being, 'rather too much a celebration of the Liberals than an analysis,'²⁴ but even Hart concedes that Tregidga has, 'identified several persistent themes in the survival of Liberalism and makes a good case for the peculiarities of politics in the South West.'²⁵ His core argument is that the decline of the Liberal Party, in the South West, was not as inevitable as it may have been in other parts of the country.

Using the Rokkan model,²⁶ Tregidga explains, 'how regional differences along centre-periphery, state-church, and urban-rural lines developed in the wake of socialism.'²⁷ This identification of 'traditional cleavages, combined with the long-term discontent of the *petite bourgeoisie*, ensure that the party's survival as a credible force in some regions during the crucial decades of the mid-twentieth century.'²⁸ This identification of apparent 'traditional cleavages' is vital, not just in understanding the reason for Liberal survival in Cornwall, but the rebirth in the 1960s and how the party used these cleavages to its own electoral advantage from the 1970s onwards, using Community Politics. Tregidga concludes the party's Cornish 'success in 1997 reflected long-term themes, such as local discontent with central government over issues like agriculture and unemployment, the personal appeal of individual candidates and the strong image of the Liberal Democrats as the principal centre-left

²³ Russell A. and Fieldhouse E., *Neither left nor right? – The Liberal Democrats and the electorate* (Manchester, 2005), p.4

²⁴ Hart M., *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 116, No. 468 (2001) p.1004

²⁵ Ibid p.1005

²⁶ Rokkan's argument, based on Norwegian politics, was that political decisions and loyalties were based on traditional 'cleavages' such as urban/rural, Methodist/Church of England

²⁷ Fair J., 'Book review', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, Vol. 34, No.1 (2002) pp.162-163

²⁸ Tregidga G., *The Liberal Party in South West Britain since 1918* (Exeter, 2000) p.22

party,' in the West Country.²⁹ This may be true, but to obtain a tight grip of this 'discontent' it is important to recognise that the Liberal Democrats, using the campaigning techniques of community politics, were distorting that mood to their own electoral benefit - by playing on those very 'traditional cleavages.'³⁰

Mark Egan argues that the 'common explanation for the survival of the Liberal Party, and for the nature of its revival...was that the party was better able to win seats in the Celtic Fringe.'³¹ This survival and subsequent revival was predicated on the 'isolated communities whose remoteness somehow preserved them from the political changes occurring in the rest of the country.'³² Egan's argument is set in the context that the rise of community campaigning stating that, 'a significant factor in the recent history of the Liberal Party and the Liberal Democrats was the advent and development of community politics.'³³

Alan Clark, whose diaries are an important window into the views of the Liberals' opponents, described, their campaigning in the westcountry as the 'constant plugging of an identity concept – no matter how miniscule: "Newton Ferrers Mums outface Whitehall".'³⁴ Although scathing, this is, and was, an accurate description of the party's campaigning techniques, which started with campaigners like Peter Bessell, John Pardoe and David Penhaligon. The tactic identified a common foe with the Cornish voter, namely Westminster, or London metropolitan values, based on the cleavages that have been identified between those areas of residual Liberal support and those that governed them.

Other historical studies of the Liberal Party fall into three categories: those dealing with the collapse of Liberal Britain in the 1920s and 1930s,³⁵ those dealing with the

²⁹ Tregidga G., *The Liberal Party in South West Britain since 1918* (Exeter, 2000) p.224

³⁰ Ibid p.22

³¹ Egan M., *Coming into Focus The Transformation of the Liberal Party 1945-64*, (Saarbrucken, 2009) p.12

³² Ibid

³³ Ibid p.241

³⁴ Clark A., *Diaries – In Power* (London, 1993), p.157

³⁵ Wilson T., *The Downfall of the Liberal Party* (London, 1966), Searle G.R., *The Liberal Party – Triumph and Disintegration 1886-1929* (New York, 1992)

post war³⁶ and those who try to span these two distinct phases of the Liberal Party.³⁷ One which stands out, by Jorgen Scott Rasmussen, attempts to analyse the reasons for the Liberal resurgence following the 1962 Orpington by-election, and this also casts a great deal of light on the internal changes of the party.³⁸ However, many of these texts are more focused on the national swings of the Liberal Party and are not sufficiently localised to contribute significantly to this research.

There are numerous histories of the Liberal Party between 1918 and the 1960s and, although interesting, these only serve as background to this thesis. They identify the general reasons for the party's continued failure. These reasons are characterised by two core factors explaining what led to the collapse of the party's support. There is much argument as to which is pre-eminent - but essentially they can be explained as, either that the Liberals naturally lost relevance, following the First World War, with the emergence of the Labour Party as a new party of the left³⁹; or the party's decline was more due to internal factors and that a great deal of its failure can be explained by the infighting that plagued the party in this period.⁴⁰ This debate explains, to some extent, the culture of the party in the inter-war period, as does later historical research, and gives some indication as to why the campaign strategy of the party changed in the 1960s, to give the party a greater chance of electoral success. The party's internal culture moved from a more traditional approach, similar to the other two main parties, to one which made itself more electable, by making its' localised election campaigning more effective.

Both these factors, being external and internal, may be true in the national context, but do not necessarily stand up to scrutiny in the Cornish context. In Wilson's *The Downfall of the Liberal Party 1914-35* he says it went from 'being the ruling party in

³⁶ Stevenson J., *Third Party Politics since 1945 – Liberals, Alliance and Liberal Democrats* (Oxford, 1993)

³⁷ Cook C., *A Short History of the Liberal Party, 1900-2001* (Basingstoke, 2002) Dutton D., *A History of the Liberal Party* (Basingstoke, 2004), Douglas R., *History of the Liberal Party 1895-1970* (London, 1971), Douglas R., *Liberals – The History of the Liberal and Liberal Democrat Parties* (London, 2005)

³⁸ Rasmussen J.C., *The Liberal Party – a study of retrenchment and revival* (London, 1965)

³⁹ Douglas R., *Liberals* (London, 2005), London p.149-150

⁴⁰ Dutton D., *A History of the Liberal Party* (Basingstoke, 2004), p.68

the land'⁴¹ to 'ceas[ing] to be a contender for office and exhaust[ing] all avenues to revival.'⁴²

'The Labour parliamentary party still existed in 1914 by Liberal indulgence – that is, because the Liberals deemed it advantageous to give Labour a free run against the Conservatives in certain seats,'⁴³ he continues, and this amateurish attitude, on the part of the Liberals, helped, or even encouraged, the Labour Party to gain a foothold in parliament, and to gain national credibility at the expense of their own party.

In Cornwall, this Liberal ambivalence, even preferment, towards the Labour Party, was simply not the case. Tregidga proves a rich source for discovering that politicians like Francis Acland were already identifying an apparently unstoppable rise in Labour support, when he said concerning Camborne in 1918 that he wished 'the seat were safe for Liberalism against all comers, for of course then I would be delighted to stand down so that you [Asquith] could take it but it is not. With a Tory standing Labour would win, for there is a solid block of Labour tin miners who care nothing about politics, but think that a Labour member would get their wages doubled.'⁴⁴ Acland was to be proven wrong. In fact, if anything, Labour supporters in Cornwall were bolstering the Liberals, in the post-war period in Cornwall, and so this premise does not hold true. In Bodmin, for example, the local Labour Party actively campaigned for Isaac Foot in the 1922 by-election, though this support was probably at least as much based on Labour's opposition to the Coalition government, as it was for Foot himself nonetheless it retarded the advance of the Labour Party in Cornwall.

Trevor Wilson identifies two distinct wings of the Liberal Party that generally sat easily together in the good times, but once the spectre of electoral defeat loomed, the alliance was much more difficult to hold together. His analysis is crucial, as he identifies that 'the Liberal Party contained a substantial element of wealthy businessmen, many of whom held individualistic views on economic matters and

⁴¹ Wilson T., *The Downfall of the Liberal Party* (London, 1966) p.17

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Wilson T., *The Downfall of the Liberal Party* (London, 1966) p.19

⁴⁴ Tregidga G., *Killerton, Camborne and Westminster: The Political Correspondence of Sir Francis and Lady Acland, 1910-29*, (Exeter, 2006), p.127: Francis Acland to Herbert Asquith, Asquith Papers, Bodleian Library, MS. Asquith 33, fol. 34

looked askance at the trade union movement.⁴⁵ This economic liberalism, Wilson continues, as opposed to the 'social reforming wing of the Liberal government, [which was now seen to be] making the running.'⁴⁶ The progressive wing, embodied by Lloyd George, had more sympathy with the reformers within the Labour Party than the wealthy businessmen on the right of their own party. This conflict was also clear in Cornwall. Isaac Foot, although personally antipathetic to Lloyd George and the Coalition government, was the Cornish embodiment of this radicalism and Walter Runciman was to become the embodiment of the more capitalist, and eventually protectionist, wing. Intriguingly, both were appealing to the Cornish traditions of radicalism and economic individualism. Whilst the party was in the National Government from 1929-31 both wings sat together on the government benches but as the party fractured again over free trade the two wings spread. Searle, and others, have pointed out that failure of the Liberal Party was quite a shock, stating that 'major political parties seldom disintegrate,'⁴⁷ but it also had 'momentous consequences, since it heralded the arrival of the party duopoly, which has survived to the present day,'⁴⁸ when writing in 1992. The Liberal Party 'was a party of ideas and ideals, much given to discussion and argument. This often made it appear fractious and quarrelsome,'⁴⁹ as its ideas were ones that the increased British electorate, as a whole no longer shared or supported. The party encouraged its own destruction by its infighting, but that did not make its demise inevitable. This split between social liberals and economic liberals persists even today as evidenced by the publication of *The Orange Book*⁵⁰ by free market Liberals in response to the social liberalism that has pervaded the party since the 1960s.

By 1945, the party's fortunes were on an apparently terminal decline across the country and even in Cornwall. Dutton describes how 'in the twenty years after the General Election of 1935 the Liberal party showed few if any signs of genuine revival. All the statistics and indices of decline, which have become so established, continued to move in an unfavourable direction. The debilitating haemorrhage of

⁴⁵ Wilson T., *The Downfall of the Liberal Party* (1966) Fontana p.19

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Searle G.R., *The Liberal Party – Triumph and Disintegration 1886-1929* (Basingstoke, 1992) p.1

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Ibid p.3

⁵⁰ Laws D. & Marshall P., *The Orange Book – Reclaiming Liberalism* (London, 2004)

votes seemed to have no end.⁵¹ Although the Liberals still held North Cornwall at the end of the war the MP, Thomas Horabin, ‘the last parliamentary survivor of West Country Liberalism in the 1940s,’⁵² resigned from the party to join Labour. This left Cornwall without a single Liberal Parliamentarian for the first time in twenty-five years.

As Tregidga notes, in his regional analysis of the party, Liberalism however remained a strong and potent force within Cornwall during this period. Although the party failed to win a single MP, it managed to maintain a position of credibility that it failed to retain in much of the rest of the country.⁵³ This is the period that, in many ways, the party can currently credit for its continued relevance and modern day success. If the party had collapsed as it did elsewhere, it would not be the force it is today in Cornwall.⁵⁴ The party had failed to be successful in any by-election since 1929, save the exception of Torrington in 1958. Until 2010, and the party’s entry in Coalition government, there has become an in-built assumption that Liberals do well in by-elections⁵⁵ and indeed the party has been keen to, and capable of, promoting this presumption.

The literature on the post-war period generally agrees on the reasons for the steady decline of the Liberal Party, but one stands out that deserves special attention, which looks at the structure and campaign effectiveness of the party during the late 1950s and early 1960s with the culmination of electoral success at the Orpington By-election.⁵⁶ Rasmussen’s *The Liberal Party – a study of retrenchment and revival*, briefly mentioned earlier, plots the party following the war and the important Orpington by-election in 1962.

Rasmussen argues that ‘the Liberals received only a limited percentage of the vote in post war elections, but this was due largely to their inability to contest a large

⁵¹ Dutton D., *A History of the Liberal Party* (Basingstoke, 2004) p.137

⁵² Reynolds J. and Hunter I., ‘Liberal Class Warrior’ (ed. Brack D.) *Liberal History Journal* 28 (2000), p.17

⁵³ Tregidga G., *The Liberal Party in South West Britain since 1918* (Exeter, 2000)

⁵⁴ *Ibid* p.190

⁵⁵ Hickson K., *The political thought of the Liberals and Liberal Democrats since 1945*, (Manchester, 2009) p.147

⁵⁶ Rasmussen J.C., *The Liberal Party – a study of retrenchment and revival* (London, 1965)

number of seats.⁵⁷ This indeed would explain why the party was failing to garner nationwide support. However, as was shown earlier, the party's national support is almost irrelevant when it comes to predicting the number of MPs the party will receive in the first past the post system.

A great deal of Rasmussen's argument was predicated on the view that having candidates must, by implication, lead to more seats being won. As the 1950s continued, the increase in the number of candidates standing across the country allowed the party to offer voters more chances to vote Liberal. However, it was a chance the electorate was more than happy to avoid, many viewing it as a wasted vote.⁵⁸ Rasmussen identifies one of the major failings of the party in this period - money - commenting that 'the party headquarters of the Liberal Party is £25,000 per annum, [was] far less even than that of the Communist Party,'⁵⁹ making constituency campaigning the de facto, if equally under-resourced, focus of any Liberal Party campaign. Although the party notionally had a strategy of targeting seats, it simply was incapable of identifying what this actually meant in practice.

The party also placed 'the burden of electoral expenses upon candidates,'⁶⁰ offering no financial or technical assistance to local parties. This was a failure of the national party to understand and emerge from the years of wilderness - they did not recognise the need to focus their work on a few discreet areas and work there furiously. Indeed in 1951, although they contested only 109 seats, which logically forced a strategy of targeting, the party only spent £488 per candidate, compared to £658 for Labour and £773 for the Conservatives.⁶¹ Rasmussen seems to buy into the theory, that more candidates across the country would be beneficial. However, this would hardly be the case if the party continued to lose scarce money on lost deposits, sapping their credibility in the eyes of the public yet further. This increase in numbers of candidates fielded did very little to improve the party's parliamentary representation and when the victories did eventually come, in the 1964 election, they were in fact in seats that had been consistently fought throughout the years since the

⁵⁷ Rasmussen J.C., *The Liberal Party – a study of retrenchment and revival* (London, 1965) p.4

⁵⁸ Butler D., *The British General Election of 1955* (Basingstoke, 1955) p.57

⁵⁹ Rasmussen J.C., *The Liberal Party – a study of retrenchment and revival* (London, 1965) p.29

⁶⁰ *ibid* p.209

⁶¹ Wyburn-Powell A., *Clement Davies: Liberal Leader* (London, 2003) p.201

war. Whiteley et. al. and Russell and Fieldhouse, explored later, argue strongly that the Liberal Democrats shifted away from a global strategy to targeting by the early 1990s.

Assessing if the Liberal Democrats have learnt this lesson and compete financially with their main rivals in Cornwall, the Conservatives, is also an aspect of research that needs to be assessed.

Stevenson argues that the party 'lacked a clear identity for many voters, its capacity to act as a vehicle for protest [was] not yet matched by its ability to project a distinctive, positive image at a general election in competition with the other main parties,'⁶² in this period. The evidence seems to indicate that Stevenson misses the point concerning the Liberals' prospects. Their period of greatest electoral success has been since they abandoned equidistance in the mid-1990s. So, this search for an independent identity, however logical, may have been what was actually holding the party back - this will also need to be tested as part of this project.

With the increased national credibility and relevance of the party, following the Orpington breakthrough, 'people suddenly took seriously the prospect of a Liberal Government.'⁶³ This victory, combined with the dynamic leadership of Jo Grimond, saw the party going on to gain Bodmin in 1964, with Peter Bessell; and North Cornwall in 1966 with John Pardoe. Douglas, in his *History of the Liberal Party 1895-1970* rather understates the success of the Liberals in 1964 describing 'two losses and gained four seats – three in the far North of Scotland and one in Cornwall.'⁶⁴ The gain in North Cornwall in 1966 was one of 'two "Celtic fringe" constituencies'⁶⁵ that 'were won from the Conservatives,'⁶⁶ and is dismissed because 'the Liberal and Conservative votes have been fairly close for three-quarters of a century.'⁶⁷ This exemplifies the limitations of the relevant literature for this thesis - it is far too general, plotting the national fortunes of the party, and is more engaged with the

⁶² Stevenson J., *Third Party Politics since 1945 – Liberals, Alliance and Liberal Democrats* (Oxford, 1993) p.53

⁶³ Douglas R., *Liberals – The History of the Liberal and Liberal Democrat Parties* (London, 2005) p.266

⁶⁴ Douglas R., *History of the Liberal Party 1895-1970* (London, 1971), p.280

⁶⁵ *Ibid* p.282

⁶⁶ *Ibid*

⁶⁷ *Ibid*

national policy debates than with understanding the activity in highly localised areas such as Cornwall. Significantly, David Walter, a leading advisor to Charles Kennedy, when he was leader, identified the main problem with Liberal history and the party's electoral success. He argued, that the problem for the Liberal Democrats and their predecessors was that 'their fortunes have very seldom been in their own hands.'⁶⁸ However, by 2003, when Walter was writing, he identified that, 'the party's position...[was] the result of a slow and steady build up during a period which [had] lasted over a decade...[having] built up local reputations.'⁶⁹

Norman Joyce researched the national strategy of the Liberal Party, from 1945-70, in his 1989 PhD. He argues that, 'there was no evidence of any consistent plan throughout the twenty-five year period concerning the party's role in the British political system and how this role might be achieved.'⁷⁰ He accepts the view that the party wished to retain political independence because 'Liberals believed that the electorate would eventually see the wisdom of the party's approach to politics and provide the party with renewed popular support.'⁷¹ Importantly, Joyce identifies that in this period 'strategy did not flow from the centre downwards but [was] affected by decisions taken lower down the party organisational hierarchy.'⁷² Even if the national party had national strategies and tactics, there was little evidence that the local constituency parties were taking much, if any, notice. Thus, Cornwall was able to adopt its own tactics and fund its own campaigning, regardless of what the national strategy was. This would appear to confirm the suggestion from Rasmussen that the national organisation was disengaged from localised activity, the culture of the party was disjointed, at best. Logically it needs to be seen whether this disassociation persisted when the party became more successful in the 1990s and after.

The election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979, which followed the failure of Jeremy Thorpe's leadership, and his subsequent political disgrace was a clear watershed in the party's direction.⁷³ John Pardoe failed in his leadership bid in 1976 to replace

⁶⁸ Walter D., *The Strange Rebirth of Liberal England* (London, 2003) p.3

⁶⁹ *Ibid* p.223

⁷⁰ Joyce N.P., 'Electoral Strategy and Tactics of the British Liberal Party, 1945-1970' (1989) PhD London University p.521

⁷¹ *Ibid*

⁷² *Ibid* p.534

⁷³ Tregidga G., *The Liberal Party in South West Britain since 1918* (Exeter, 2000), p.214

Thorpe and indeed lost his seat in the 1979 election, which set the party back from its modest national, but significant Cornish, advances in the 1960s and 1970s.

In many ways, the 1980s were the false dawn for the Liberal Party. Chris Cook, in *A Short History of the Liberal Party, 1900-2001* says, 'the massive vote for the Alliance in 1983 proved beyond doubt that, after a generation in the political wilderness, the Liberal Party was very firmly back in the mainstream of British politics.'⁷⁴ This was certainly the case in the national political debate, and certainly in the media debate, but the party had not moved forward in Cornwall, in fact, it had receded from a better position in the 1960s and 1974. Cook's book very clearly plots the national fortunes of the party, but sheds very little light on the characters, party culture and campaigning techniques that were being deployed. This is primarily because the book has such a broad period to cover and cannot penetrate the microcosm of Cornish politics that other research has attempted.

Indeed there has been an assumption that tactical voting, as in Liberal Democrat by-election victories, was key in the breakthrough election of 1997.⁷⁵ Cook argues that, 'this explanation needs to be treated with some caution. If tactical voting means the collapse of the Labour vote in favour of a strongly placed Liberal Democrat to get a sitting Conservative out this was simply not true in 1997.'⁷⁶ On this point he appears to have misunderstood the nature of achieving this tactical switch. As so much of Liberal Democrat support is predicated on local party activity, this thesis contends that 'tactical voting' may not have been uniform, or even clear, in areas that were less well organised.

The voter's exposure to different forms of media and political stimuli will not be uniform and may, in some cases, depend entirely on the national media, avoiding the arguments being posed locally. This will be an important aspect of this research project's objectives. Does Liberal Democrat campaigning have an effect in focusing local voters on the local contest rather than the national one?

⁷⁴ Cook C., *A Short History of the Liberal Party, 1900-2001* (Basingstoke, 2002) p.173

⁷⁵ Douglas R, *Liberals – The History of the Liberal and Liberal Democrat Parties* (London, 2005) p.307

⁷⁶ Cook C., *A Short History of the Liberal Party, 1900-2001* (Basingstoke, 2002) p.238

Although there is a great deal of evidence that Liberals were beginning to adopt 'targeting'⁷⁷ as a strategy by the 1970s and 1980s it was on a very localised basis, without the effort, and finance, being allocated nationally, as it would be in the 1990s.

Many of the texts covered in the modern period deal with the Alliance between the Liberal Party and the Social Democratic Party. Although it was, at times, improbably popular in national opinion polls, the SDP/Liberal Alliance never achieved its objective of 'breaking the mould of British politics.'⁷⁸ Douglas in *Liberals - The History of the Liberal and Liberal Democrat Parties*, places the responsibility for the failure of the Alliance at David Owen's feet, 'the Alliance, to Owen, was never more than an electoral expedient.'⁷⁹ However, despite all the difficulties with the Alliance, 'both the Liberals and the SDP performed remarkably well at by-elections,'⁸⁰ where the party could focus its resources on a specific constituency.

There are numerous historical studies concerning the Liberal Party and the Liberal Democrats. These serve as useful background, but their references to Cornwall are disappointingly very limited and they are therefore only of tangential benefit to the overall scope of this research. Much of the information pertinent to the Liberal Democrats, particularly on their successes towards the end of the last century, can be found in the contemporary research found in the next section.

Two particularly important biographies provide evidence of the importance, not just of campaigning techniques and party strategy devised by the party, but to the importance, perhaps especially in Cornwall, of the personality of the local candidate or Member of Parliament. These two biographies could be placed in either this section on the Liberal Party or that of Cornish Studies, but as they are not specific to Cornwall they sit better as part of the on-going discussion about the Party rather than just its Cornish context. Whilst the histories are useful background, their national focus means that it is almost uniquely in these political biographies that the Cornish perspective can be discovered. Of course these two biographies, authored by family

⁷⁷ David Steel Papers A/2/5 (London School of Economics)

⁷⁸ Stephenson H., *Claret and Chips The Rise of the SDP* (London, 1982), p.6 Bradley, I., *Breaking the Mould? The Birth and Prospects of the Social Democratic Party*, (Oxford, 1981)

⁷⁹ Douglas R, *Liberals – The History of the Liberal and Liberal Democrat Parties* (London, 2005) p.293

⁸⁰ *Ibid* p.294

members, Michael Foot and Alison Highet (in the case of Isaac Foot) and Annette Penhaligon, do not necessarily have the same detachment as academic studies, but nonetheless provide excellent first-hand accounts of the characters of two important Cornish politicians.

These two, *Isaac Foot – A Westcountry Boy – Apostle of England* and *Penhaligon*, which are political biographies, suggest that personality, or character, has an important role to play in Cornish politics. Does this factor make Cornish politics different? The first biography, published recently, is the biography of Isaac Foot co-authored by his son Michael and Alison Highet. The book, like most biographies, is something of a eulogy to Isaac Foot.

Isaac Foot was a key asset to the party, in the West Country in general, and in Cornwall specifically. His Methodism and preaching style of campaigning, coupled with a paternalistic manner, appealed to the constituents he courted in the Bodmin division. His election in the Bodmin by-election of 1922, effectively standing against a government of which members of his own party were supporters, was spectacular, and projected his fame beyond that usually achieved by those elected at a general election.

A key aspect of Foot's politics was, 'his nonconformity in religious matters,'⁸¹ according to John Foot, and many have argued that there is a direct link, as well as familial relationship, between Liberalism and Methodism in Cornwall.⁸² This is important in understanding Foot's role in saving Cornish Liberalism. He embodied the notional nexus between Cornwall, Liberalism and Methodism.⁸³ But, it was also about building a coalition of electoral support.⁸⁴ Foot managed to attract the base support of Liberals and Methodists, but also received the backing of the local Labour Party, to 'overthrow...the coalition government,'⁸⁵ and to attract notable Cornishmen such as Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch. These are aspects of coalition building, beyond the

⁸¹ Foot M. and Highet A., *Isaac Foot A Westcountry Boy – Apostle of England* (London, 2006) p.19

⁸² Tregidga G., *The Liberal Party in South West Britain since 1918* (Exeter, 2000)

⁸³ Rowse A.L., *A Man of the Thirties* (London, 1979), p.56

⁸⁴ Tregidga G., *The Liberal Party in South West Britain since 1918* (Exeter, 2000) p.27

⁸⁵ Foot M. and Highet A., *Isaac Foot A Westcountry Boy – Apostle of England* (London, 2006) p.19

party's base support, that would continue to be important aspects of continuing Liberal success in Cornwall until the present day.

The second is the biography of David Penhaligon by his widow, Annette, published in 1989. This book, as well as enshrining Penhaligon as an heroic figure in Cornwall, shows a deep insight into the everyday life of a local MP and the campaigning that is involved in winning elections, but also the very Cornish nature of this impressive politician. As well as this contribution to the debate about the difference of Cornish politics to the rest of the country, this book also acts as a compendium of all those significant players who were to take their part in this period and the one to follow it.

David Penhaligon combined three key strands to achieve his election in Truro: campaigning ability and enthusiasm; idealism and a strong Cornish edge to his rhetoric. Campaigning, in the modern Liberal Democrat sense, was a recent invention in the 1970s, when Penhaligon began his campaign to become an MP. He was, as Andy Ellis is quoted as saying in *Penhaligon*, 'well ahead of [other local parties] on the production of his leaflets.'⁸⁶ This is vital to understanding that David Penhaligon was ahead of his time compared to his contemporaries in the West Country in terms of campaigning capacity. Annette Penhaligon provides essential detail on the nuts and bolts of her ex-husband's approach. For example, he was 'the first of the Liberal campaigners in the 1970s to persuade his association to buy their own offset-litho printing press,'⁸⁷ vital in the quick production of the ubiquitous *Focus* leaflet. He coupled this with a keen set of ideals to form a foundation to his work and importantly, as many commentators have said, he was 'fiercely proud to be Cornish.'⁸⁸ Assessing the campaigning ability, and techniques, and the projection of a candidate and MP as a local Cornish champion, will be an important part of this research, and one that this book provides a rare insight to.

However, these three aspects were merely the foundation upon which Truro Liberals elected their candidate in the October election of 1974. Thereafter, Penhaligon became a key figure within the national Liberal Party, a strong voice for Cornwall in

⁸⁶ Penhaligon A., *Penhaligon* (London, 1989), p.53

⁸⁷ *Ibid* p.55

⁸⁸ *Ibid* p.53

Parliament and increasingly as a major national political figure, loved by many, especially in Cornwall. Very few politicians, whether before or since, have achieved the affection he did as a politician, which is detailed in Annette Penhaligon's book. This affection was coupled with Penhaligon being the heir presumptive for the party leadership following the 1987 general election, had he survived, 'he would have been the preferred choice of the members of parliament, and had he stood I think he would have been elected,'⁸⁹ something that the eventual winner Paddy Ashdown also argued in his own autobiography.⁹⁰ This speculation fits neatly into the modern lens of counterfactual history, as defined by Black and Macrailld, 'conjecturing on what did not happen, or what might have happened, in order to understand what did happen.'⁹¹

The admiration and affection felt towards Penhaligon is difficult to measure as a factor in the party's success in Truro, but the letters attached at the end of the biography, which were sent in consolation to Annette Penhaligon, are clear in their expression. Described by one correspondent as 'a great Cornish person and a fine champion of progress in the world,'⁹² or by another as 'it was not necessary to *meet* him in order to *know* him...'⁹³ or even that 'he gave an example of how to hold public office while remaining approachable and with an everyday humanity which I and many others will remember and hope to emulate. He gave a spark to our lives which touched us all and will remain.'⁹⁴

His personal contribution to the fortunes of the Liberal Party in Cornwall, understanding it and quantifying it will be essential in understanding the way the Liberal Democrats have achieved political dominance within the county in the twenty five years following his death. According to Paul Tyler, quoted in *Penhaligon*, 'there was an immediate rapport,'⁹⁵ between Penhaligon and even difficult interest groups like the NFU; 'David was clearly one of them.'⁹⁶ But, combined with this capacity to

⁸⁹ Penhaligon A., *Penhaligon* (London, 1989), p.235

⁹⁰ Ashdown P., *A Fortunate Life* (London, 2009) pp.227-228

⁹¹ Black J. & Macrailld D., *Studying History* (Basingstoke, 2007), p. 125

⁹² Penhaligon A., *Penhaligon* (London, 1989), p.246

⁹³ *Ibid* p.244

⁹⁴ *Ibid* p.251

⁹⁵ *Ibid* p.69

⁹⁶ *Ibid*

speak the language of local people, he was at the cutting edge of modern campaigning, 'every young voter received a special message from David (such "targeting" is commonplace now, but was then unheard of),'⁹⁷ but equally they 'knew the more people David met personally, the better his chances were.'⁹⁸ This doorstep canvassing does not instantly chime with the belief that community politics is essentially a literature based process and needs assessment in Cornwall.

Historically, it has always been assumed that the candidate, and their personal qualities in relation to their opponents, is important as a motivation to garnering votes.⁹⁹ This has not always been the campaigning presumption of the Liberal Democrats in recent years, seeing campaign management and being a local candidate as being vital rather than the other personal qualities of the candidate and it will be important to assess whether in Cornwall this theory still holds true. Penhaligon's character, and that of Isaac Foot before him, gives substantial evidence that personality politics can be important in Cornwall, whether it is more important in Cornwall, than elsewhere, is difficult to evaluate from these books, but modern examples will be assessed in this research.

There are a considerable number of political diarists over the period that this research project covers. The majority of them, like the various Alan Clark diaries, Barbara Castle diaries and Benn diaries have some comment on the changing fortunes of the Liberal Party and a little on some of the Cornish Liberal figures. They will serve as background, but will offer little in intensive insight, except possibly for the interesting insight into the activities of David Penhaligon by Alan Clark.

Clark described Penhaligon as 'an unmemorable figure really, with his (demi-bogus) West-Country vowels and *homespun* philosophy. But he personified, I suppose, a kind of soft-centre Cornish provincialism.'¹⁰⁰ He also savaged Liberal Party campaigning techniques as 'to force people to lower their sights, teeny provincial problems about bus timetables, and street lighting and the grant for a new

⁹⁷ Penhaligon A., *Penhaligon* (London, 1989), Ibid p.78

⁹⁸ Ibid

⁹⁹ Butler D., *The British General Election of 1955* (Basingstoke, 1955) p.57

¹⁰⁰ Clark A., *Diaries – In Power* (London, 1993), p.157

community hall. They compensate by giving the electorate uplift with constant plugging of an identity concept – no matter how miniscule: “Newton Ferrers Mums outface Whitehall” and a really bouncy commonplace little turd (or big turd in the case of Penhaligon) as candidate, and they’re in.’¹⁰¹ This exemplifies the Conservatives’ underestimation of Liberal Party campaign tactic: of an effective, local campaign to get elected.

Clark might be an extreme example, but Conservatives seem to have considered the Liberal tactics demeaning, preferring more traditional forms of campaigning that did not actively campaign for votes by this door-to-door method of literature distribution. An attitude they have changed, to some extent, in recent years. One set of diaries does cover some aspects of Cornish politics in the period of the run up to the general election and aftermath of the 1997 general election, namely those of Paddy Ashdown, the then leader of the party.

Although they are designed to take an overview of Ashdown’s involvement with the potential Labour government before the election they show a growing, if restrained, optimism towards the party’s chances in the 1997 election. Ashdown, for example, describes Paul Tyler as ‘pretty confident that he can hold North Cornwall,’¹⁰² when in reality he won with 31,100 votes, a majority of 13,847 over the Conservatives, a swing of 10.3% on top of the 6.5% swing he achieved in 1992 to gain the seat.

Although the diaries have very useful insights into Ashdown’s awareness of the impending success of the party, they more helpfully show clear evidence of the party’s weighting of activity (demonstrated by where Ashdown chose to visit), towards their targeting of a very few seats, in the West country and especially Cornwall. This being to the extent that Ashdown’s last campaigning visit on the eve of the 1997 election took him, ‘by helicopter to Sutton, Eastleigh, Eastbourne, Christchurch, Poole, Bideford and Torpoint,’¹⁰³ although actually it was the playing field of the Saltash Community School.

¹⁰¹ Clark A., *Diaries – In Power* (London, 1993), p.284

¹⁰² Ashdown P., *The Ashdown Diaries – Volume I* (London, 2000), p.545

¹⁰³ Ashdown P., *The Ashdown Diaries – Volume I* (London, 2000), p.554

International and UK literature on political and election campaigning

In the area of campaigning there is an abiding view that 'next to canvassing, leafleting is the most important campaigning activity.'¹⁰⁴ This is the view, for example, of Lionel Zetter, a former senior member of staff at Conservative Central Office, who was involved in every election since 1979, for the Conservatives. Zetter is one of many people who argues the case that canvassing is pre-eminent amongst local campaign activities. However, the high opinion of canvassing as a campaigning technique is not one that has been shared by senior, and indeed the most influential, Liberal and Liberal Democrat campaigners for many years. Although canvassing, or voter identification, as it is increasingly called, 'is the political equivalent of speed dating,'¹⁰⁵ the real objective is not seen by Liberal Democrats as being one of persuasion, but 'to work out the voter's intention in the shortest possible time.'¹⁰⁶ As Zetter points out, canvassing is not designed 'to convert the electorate on their doorstep.'¹⁰⁷ However, amongst many candidates of all parties this latter view still remains the attitude.

Voter identification is important for Liberal Democrats, as it is with other parties. But the Liberal Democrats use it slightly differently - as much to identify (and then ignore) those opposed to the party as to identify, cultivate, or even shore up, support. According to the party's own campaign manual, canvassing 'is not there to convert people to our party,'¹⁰⁸ and 'voter identification is simply an information gathering exercise which allows [the party] to target certain groups of voter in a number of ways.'¹⁰⁹

Some academics question whether constituency campaigning has any effect at all. For example, it has been suggested that 'the 1997 election does not appear to support claims made that local campaigning can make a difference in respect of

¹⁰⁴ Zetter L., *The Political Campaigning Handbook* (Petersfield, 2007) p. 84

¹⁰⁵ Ibid p.93

¹⁰⁶ Ibid p.84

¹⁰⁷ Ibid

¹⁰⁸ Ault J. and Stephenson H., *The Liberal Democrat Campaign Manual* (Hebden Bridge, 2000) p.21

¹⁰⁹ Ibid

other parties' performances too. The Labour party targeted 90, mostly marginal Conservative constituencies...Yet... the performance in these constituencies was very similar to that in other Conservative/Labour contests.¹¹⁰ However, studies assessing local campaigns have suggested that, 'constituency campaigning in the 1992 general election has shown very clearly...that the easy generalisation made in many academic studies – that, in modern conditions, local campaigning is merely a ritual, a small and insignificant side show to the main event – is seriously misleading.'¹¹¹ As Denver and Hands argue what may superficially appear to be minor variations in the local reflection of national swing cannot simply be assigned to national issues, there can be more specific local factors affecting local results.

Accordingly, as the Liberal Democrats put it themselves, in all circumstances, 'literature is the main part of any Liberal Democrat campaign in any election. Because of the position the party is in nationally, it does not get the same level of national media and press coverage as Labour and Conservative'¹¹² and must therefore compensate with literature delivered through letterboxes. Of course the party does now receive significant levels of national media, since this manual was written in 2000, but in the period under discussion the importance of local activity to the Liberal Democrats cannot be overstated. This Liberal Democrat focus on constituency campaigning through modern campaigning improvements has been described as 'post-Fordism'¹¹³ by Denver and Hands, stating that 'post-Fordism... has clearly emerged in key seats,'¹¹⁴ suggesting that blanket literature and general canvassing has been replaced with targeted messages based on increasingly effective voter identification.

Although other parties may see the campaign as being a process of identifying support and reminding supporters to vote, the Liberal Democrats must change opinion through their own campaigning, an aspect of their campaigns that historically

¹¹⁰ Butler D. & Kavanagh D., *The British General Election of 1997* (Basingstoke, 1997) p.312

¹¹¹ Denver D. and Hands.G., *Modern Constituency Electioneering* (London, 1997) p.305

¹¹² Ault J. and Stephenson H., *The Liberal Democrat Campaign Manual* (Hebden Bridge, 2000) p.31

¹¹³ Post-Fordism referring to the more focused use of campaigning such as target letters or messages rather than the production line methods of the factory (originally Henry Ford's car factories) such as general leafleting

¹¹⁴ Farrell D. & Schmitt-Beck D., *Do Political Campaigns Matter? Campaign effects in elections and referendums* (New York, 2002) p.125

seems poorly understood.¹¹⁵ The key difference with other parties is that voter identification, for the Liberal Democrats, is not campaigning; it is intelligence gathering to support literature-based campaigning. As Kavanagh states, the campaigning techniques which the two major parties use - marketing and media campaigns, often run by major public relations companies, the Liberal Democrats 'largely [do] without.'¹¹⁶

The campaigning techniques that the present Liberal Democrats use are based on a book published, and edited, by Peter Hain,¹¹⁷ as well as other Young Liberals at the time; *Community Politics*. Although published in the 1970s, following the national adoption of community politics it was because so many Young Liberals 'contribute[d] a great deal of hard work to the party,'¹¹⁸ that the party adopted the campaign technique. This book was 'an attempt to explain the steady build-up of community action,'¹¹⁹ in the 1960s and 1970s. This book, seminal in Liberal circles with the handbook produced by Bernard Greaves and Gordon Lishman,¹²⁰ argues for campaigning to be conducted on a very local basis, engaging and involving the public, with the objective of empowering those communities and, in the process, encouraging them to vote Liberal.

However, community politics in Cornwall has not taken the route that it did in the urban areas which pioneered the techniques and values, such as Birmingham, Pendle and Liverpool. Community politics was originally designed as a natural reaction against traditional and bureaucratic government - giving power back to people, through the institutions that served them. As Greaves and Lishman argue, 'community politics is not a technique. It is an ideology,'¹²¹ which as Hain et al say in *Community Politics*, the 'development of community activity will lead to the habit of participation.'¹²² In Cornwall, there has long been a sense of community involvement,

¹¹⁵ Dutton D., *A History of the Liberal Party* (Basingstoke, 2004) p.274

¹¹⁶ Kavanagh D., *Election Campaigning – The New Marketing of Politics* (Oxford, 1995) p.152

¹¹⁷ Now a Labour MP but at the time a leading member of the Young Liberals

¹¹⁸ Lord Gladwyn Papers, GLAD 1/5/4 Letter from David Steel concerning the Young Liberals 29/04/74

¹¹⁹ Hain P., *Community Politics* (London, 1976) p.9

¹²⁰ Greaves B. & Lishman G., *The Theory and Practice of Community Politics* (Hebden Bridge, 1980)

¹²¹ Ibid

¹²² Hain P., *Community Politics* (London, 1976) p.80

not necessarily catalysed by Liberal politicians, and the theory of community politics appears to have had more resonance in areas where this community engagement needed encouragement, such as more urban northern areas, where it could be argued that communities had become less cohesive due to the decline in traditional industries and a freer movement of people.¹²³ An aspect of Cornish politics, that persists in local government until today is the existence of an Independent presence in local government, which arguably lends Cornwall to a more localised agenda and implicitly a personality based politics.¹²⁴ Although Cornish Liberals adopted the techniques of the *Community Politics* movement within the party, it needs to be assessed whether it is credible to argue that this would 'lead to the development of new structures which are more open and more effectively and clearly controlled,'¹²⁵ as determined by community politicians. An important question arises: does community politics campaigning work where effective communities and community structures already exist? This question is key to answering if the Liberal Democrats have used their campaigning techniques effectively in Cornwall. Paul Richards, a former Labour campaigns manager in the 1990s and 2000s, does acknowledge that, 'local newsletters and leaflets have a role to play in the modern campaign,'¹²⁶ but this underestimates the weight of importance the Liberal Democrats place on this method of campaigning, again, like Zetter, because his party has the backing of national media outlets which the Liberal Democrats generally do not.

Although, in 2005, 'polling conducted for the British Election Study showed that the Liberal Democrats ran the campaign that most impressed the voters,'¹²⁷ it still failed to break the 25% barrier 'that restricts the party to winning between 55-75 seats.'¹²⁸ A key aspect of understanding the Liberal Democrat method of getting elected is to grasp their own belief that, whilst Labour and Conservatives can rely on national credibility supported by a virtual monopoly in the national political press and media prior to the 2010 general election, Liberal Democrat campaigners have to find methods, through their own unadulterated media, of communicating directly with the

¹²³ Egan M., *Coming into Focus The Transformation of the Liberal Party 1945-64* (Saarbrücken, 2009)

¹²⁴ Lee A., *Political Parties and Elections in Cornwall Since the War* (ed. Payton P.), (Redruth, 1993)

¹²⁵ Hain P., *Community Politics* (London, 1976) p.80

¹²⁶ Richards P., *How to Win an Election* (London, 2004) p.156

¹²⁷ Rennard C., *2005 General Election Management Team Report* (London, 2005) p.3

¹²⁸ *Ibid* p.143

public. That is why it will be extremely important to compare the attitudes and techniques put forward in Liberal Democrat manuals with Richards' views on *How to win an election*.

The Liberal Democrats have begun to identify seats to target based on their apparent capacity to win them, this is not simply based on their marginality but also the context in which seats are found. This is a theme stressed by MacAllister et. al. who identify that, 'Liberal Democrat seats could be seen to fall in to one of two categories; traditional heartland seats and emerging heartlands. Although the *source* of electoral credibility was different for these two categories, this credibility was paramount in accounting for success in both.'¹²⁹ In their research they identify the importance of locality in the electoral prospects for the Liberal Democrats, a possible indication that culture, or community, matters for the party's electoral chances.

According to Hoegg and Lewis 'It is widely accepted that candidate appearance influences election outcomes.'¹³⁰ They argue that 'candidate personality trait impressions have been found to significantly influence voter choice,'¹³¹ assessing this as part of the research will be a valuable facet of seeing which, if any, of the aspects of 'character, culture and campaigns' has the most importance with the electorate. The importance of character will be returned to in the section on political biography as little work has been done into the importance of personality in the context of a constituency campaign like those seen for Westminster elections. This research is primarily focused on United States congressional elections where budgets are much larger and there is a direct capacity for the political parties to purchase television space, something not open to UK political parties.¹³²

Assessing the comparative importance of campaign literature as part of a Liberal Democrat elections operation, to that of the Labour and Conservative parties, is one of the major objectives of this research. Not a great deal of academic work has been

¹²⁹ MacAllister, I., Fieldhouse, E. and Russell, A., 'Yellow fever? The political geography of Liberal voting in Great Britain.' *Political Geography*, 21(4), (2002),p.433

¹³⁰ Hoegg J. & Lewis M., 'The Impact of Candidate Appearance and Advertising Strategies on Election Results' *Journal of Marketing Research* (2011) p.895

¹³¹ Ibid p.896

¹³² Benoit W., *A Functional Analysis of Political Television Advertisements* (Lexington , 2014)

conducted on assessing the impact of localised electioneering, especially in the case of the Liberal Democrats, but Lees-Marshment argues that political parties have moved away from traditional methods of campaigning in the media age. Her counter argument to the effectiveness of community politics is postulated in her so-called 'market-orientated or market driven'¹³³ view of party campaigning. She goes on to try to identify how political parties have developed their media messaging, through the age of Saatchi and Saatchi campaign slogans, to the modern day. As Semtko et. al. argue 'once a campaign is announced... [there] is an unleashing in earnest of an implacably competitive struggle to control the mass media agenda.'¹³⁴ Although the Liberal Democrats are given fair airtime by the public media during the election campaign itself, by law, if not by the non-broadcast media, they still rely heavily on local campaigning. On a local level it will be of interest to see if it is possible to complement Lees-Marshment's model as to whether the Liberal Democrats are market-orientated or market driven and whether that has developed over the years, though this might be difficult to evaluate. However, this model is heavily dependent on the capacity of the Liberal Democrats to break into the national media. Although the party did achieve this national break through, as a result of the Prime Ministerial TV debates of 2010, leading to 'an expectation that the Liberal Democrats would significantly increase their numbers in parliament,'¹³⁵ in the event, the local constituency results were an 'electoral disappointment.'¹³⁶ Being in government may assist with this problem of credibility and national recognition outside election time, though in the process creating more opportunities for a 'negative' image during a period of government unpopularity, something the party has not had to face since the 1930s. However, it is probably not likely, even now, that the party can completely move away from its now traditional campaign techniques, still being a third party with only localised levels of electoral success.

However, as has become apparent in the prelude to the 2010 election, 'in April 2007, a paper was brought to Federal Executive by Robin Teverson...which praised the

¹³³ Lees-Marshment J., *Political marketing and British political parties* (Manchester, 2008), p.203

¹³⁴ Semetko H. et.al., *The Formation of Campaign Agendas – A Comparative Analysis of Party and Media Roles in Recent American and British Elections* (Hoboken, 1991), p.176

¹³⁵ Cutts D., Fieldhouse E. & Russell A., 'The Campaign That Changed Everything and Still Did Not Matter? The Liberal Democrat Campaign and Performance' *Parliamentary Affairs* (2010) p.692

¹³⁶ Ibid

successes to date of [the targeting] strategy but suggested its future application was limited and that an alternative strategy was needed to give the Party its next electoral breakthrough. 'Rennardism' was now being questioned.'¹³⁷ Named after its promoter, if not creator, Rennardism was credited with the party's success in the 1990s and 2000s whilst Chris Rennard was the party's Director of Campaigns, and subsequently Chief Executive. Essentially, based on the party's record of success in parliamentary by-elections, the party would no longer function across the 650 seats and focus all its efforts on fewer than one hundred target seats. Building a strong local government base in those areas and promoting the prospective parliamentary candidate as the local champion would be the vehicle by which the party would gradually probe for weaknesses in their opponents' electoral armour. By 2005 this strategy had yielded the best result for the party since the 1920s but *Rennardism*, as it has been described, had become the focus of criticism, according to Kavanagh and Cowley, because 'years of very localised, and largely non-ideological, campaigning had blunted the party's ability to outline a clear vision of what [the party] stood for.'¹³⁸

Political science on the Liberal Democrats

Two recent studies into the Liberal Democrats have been conducted. The first is *Neither left nor right? – The Liberal Democrats and the electorate*, by Andrew Russell and Edward Fieldhouse. These evaluate the nature of the party, but also its increasing campaigning focus and its targeting strategy. Russell and Fieldhouse, although first putting the modern party into a historical context, set out to 'analyse the formal and informal structure,'¹³⁹ of the party and to assess and evaluate 'its electoral strategy and support.'¹⁴⁰

As the authors explain, the book is split into three clear areas, 'first, the history and organisation of the party; second, the nature of Liberal Democrat support; and, third,

¹³⁷ Morrissey H., *Processes and Culture within the Liberal Democrats and Recommendations for change* (London, 2013) p.34

¹³⁸ Kavanagh D & Cowley P., *The British General Election of 2010* (Basingtoke, 2010) p.110

¹³⁹ Russell A. and Fieldhouse E., *Neither left nor right? – The Liberal Democrats and the electorate* (Manchester, 2005), p.4

¹⁴⁰ Ibid

Liberal Democrat electoral strategy.¹⁴¹ Although the first part is of interest to this research, the last two aspects are where there has been very limited research into the modern Liberal Democrats and, as such, will be useful as a comparison to some of the work being undertaken in aspect of this thesis.

Following Paddy Ashdown's public renunciation of Liberal Democrat equidistance before the 1997 General Election, the book argues that the party took a strategic and tactical position to maximise the number of MPs it would elect in the general election that eventually happened in the Spring of 1997, by moving the party to the left, away from the Conservatives to become mainly opposed to the then government, in an attempt to attract Labour voters. It is argued that this was a key point in changing the prospects of the party since it began to act as 'an alternative opposition.'¹⁴² Although the party members never voted formally to drop equidistance, its abandonment by Ashdown was public enough for his to be the stated position of the party.

Russell and Fieldhouse continue to explain how the party's new found strategy of targeting had a significant effect on the party's fortunes, and this will be fundamental as an aspect of this research. Although this is true even the party's most successful result since the 1920s, in 2005, can be seen as 'an opportunity lost.'¹⁴³ They identify five factors in the continued existence of the party, its lack of electoral success before the recent rebirth of the party in 1997 and the gradual growth thereafter in the 2001 and 2005 elections.

One of these is the issue of there being a 'credibility gap'¹⁴⁴ between the party, its electoral aspirations, and the reality on the ground. There can be little doubt that the party nationally had suffered a multitude of false starts,¹⁴⁵ especially in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, and realism perhaps led onlookers to assume that the election of 1997 would not result in members going back to their constituencies and preparing

¹⁴¹ Russell A. and Fieldhouse E., *Neither left nor right? – The Liberal Democrats and the electorate* (Manchester, 2005), p.4

¹⁴² *Ibid*

¹⁴³ *Ibid* p.70

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid* p.6

¹⁴⁵ Steed M., 'The Liberal Party', *Multi-Party Britain* (ed. Drucker H) (New York, 1979) pp.76-8

for government.¹⁴⁶ In the 1970s, 1980s and for a large part of the 1990s, there was a credibility gap between a view of the party as a 'national' force, and the twenty or so Members of Parliament it elected on the ground. Andrew Russell writing in Hickson agrees the party's strategy is 'essentially about building credibility.'¹⁴⁷ This credibility was built locally on a strong local literature campaign.

Nonetheless, this was, in many ways, not the case in Cornwall, which unfortunately, is an area of the country ignored by Russell and Fieldhouse's research. As the book says, 'credibility is therefore the key to third and minor party success in a majoritarian electoral system.'¹⁴⁸ This, as the book explains, is relatively simple in the context of a parliamentary by-election where the party can flood an area with activists and financial assistance, but is much more difficult to deploy in a general election. It is even possible to build up support over a long period through community politics with the objective of running a council. But, in Cornwall, the electoral success the Liberal Democrats have had has not been entirely built on either of these successful formulae.

There is something else at work in the Cornish context that cannot be easily explained simply by campaigning techniques or financial support, or indeed control of the local council (as the party had never controlled the County Council before it gained all the Cornish parliamentary seats). Some of this may be explained through Cornish history, but it is important to note that, although the party suffered a number of false dawns across the country as a whole in the 1970s and 1980s, it was having limited, if notable, success in Cornwall.

The other major work that has been produced recently into the nature of the party is *Third Force Politics* by Paul Whiteley, Patrick Seyd and Anthony Billingham. This included a major survey of the membership of the Liberal Democrats, conducted in 1998, in which 4,443 party members responded to a questionnaire about their

¹⁴⁶ A reference to the leadership speech of David Steel in 1982 in which he urged his party to prepare themselves for victory at the next general election because of the Alliance with the SDP

¹⁴⁷ Hickson K., *The political thought of the Liberals and Liberal Democrats since 1945* (Manchester, 2009) p.147

¹⁴⁸ Russell A. and Fieldhouse E., *Neither left nor right? – The Liberal Democrats and the electorate* (Manchester, 2005), p.6

opinions and their attitudes towards different aspects of the party and its policies. Although this research is now more than 15 years old, it will help to put the membership of the party in Cornwall in context and give an indication if the membership in Cornwall is in anyway at variance with the party at large across Britain.

Significantly, the book identifies that, ‘in the British general election of 1997, the Liberal Democrat’s share of the vote fell by 1 per cent in comparison with the election of 1992, but at the same time, the party more than doubled its representation in the House of Commons.’¹⁴⁹ Whiteley et. al. identify the generally accepted academic view; ‘that the outcome [of the 1997 general election] was determined in the years prior to the election by matters of “high politics,”’¹⁵⁰ namely the Conservative mismanagement of the economy. This is only one aspect of the reason for Liberal Democrat success. Indeed if this were the only factor, one might expect to see the national share of the vote rise accordingly – clearly other factors and techniques were at play. Whiteley et. al. argue that although national issues ‘may have played an important role in explaining Labour’s success, since it was the government in waiting, such an explanation is less convincing when applied to the Liberal Democrats.’¹⁵¹ They continue, ‘there is a clear paradox in explaining a declining vote share, alongside a doubling of the party’s representation,’¹⁵² and conclude that ‘the basic point is that Liberal Democrat electoral success has been largely based on local campaigning, which has taken place over many years. It was the fruit of the community politics campaigning.’¹⁵³ This discussion in *Third Force Politics* of the extent to which community politics and campaigning have contributed to the success of the Liberal Democrats in Cornwall in the modern period will be a key aspect of this research. Whiteley et. al. point towards it being fundamental, but not all the evidence is in that direction, Tregidga argues that some of this support is a hangover from the heights of the Liberal Party in the early twentieth century and a

¹⁴⁹ Whiteley P., Seyd P. and Billingham A., *Third Force Politics – Liberal Democrats at the Grassroots* (Oxford, 2006), p.114

¹⁵⁰ Ibid

¹⁵¹ Ibid pp.114-115

¹⁵² Ibid p.115

¹⁵³ Ibid

preponderance for Methodism in the far west.¹⁵⁴ Fisher, Denver and Hands suggest that party organisation and targeting from the central party can also play a part.¹⁵⁵

The extent to which any improved organisational change has been indigenous to Cornwall, or cultivated from outside is a question that might be posed by Fisher, Denver and Hands who argue that ‘in both 1997 and 2001 central involvement does appear to have had a significant impact on both Labour and Liberal Democrat performance,¹⁵⁶ – national targeting of constituencies worked. They continue to argue that, ‘in the case of the Liberal Democrats things seem clear enough. The party has done well where it has built up strong local membership.¹⁵⁷ This might indicate that culture in Cornwall, where there has been a long tradition of higher than average party membership, as well as electoral support, contributes towards the party’s success as well as campaigning intensity and national targeting. Perhaps significantly, however, there is some debate about the nature of where this campaign originates, ‘whether constituency campaigns are best conceptualised as part of a national strategy or have more to do with grassroots activism.¹⁵⁸ As Johnston and Pattie explain, ‘the Liberal Democrats cannot afford to fight strong campaigns in all seats and so must be selective,¹⁵⁹ which would seem to suggest that the theory of community politics being localised has shifted to it being a centralised party strategy, delivered locally.

As well as specific studies of the Liberal Democrats and its politicians there are also numerous studies into recent elections and these do shed light on the changing nature of the Liberal Democrats and their campaigning techniques, as Andrew Russell asserts, ‘the more successful the party becomes the more it needs a national rather than a local profile.¹⁶⁰ This switch in emphasis would seem to have sat well with the party’s eventual 2010 leader who benefited, if briefly during the campaign,

¹⁵⁴ Tregidga G., *The Liberal Party in South West Britain since 1918* (Exeter, 2000)

¹⁵⁵ Fisher J., Denver D. & Hands G., ‘The relative electoral impact of central party co-ordination and size of party membership at constituency level.’ *Electoral Studies* (2006) p.675

¹⁵⁶ Fisher J., Denver D. & Hands G., ‘The relative electoral impact of central party co-ordination and size of party membership at constituency level.’ *Electoral Studies* (2006)

¹⁵⁷ Ibid

¹⁵⁸ Johnston R. & Pattie C., *Putting Voters in their Place – Geography and Election in Great Britain*, (Oxford, 2006) p.211

¹⁵⁹ Ibid p.204

¹⁶⁰ Norris P & Wlezien C., *Britain Votes 2005* (Oxford, 2005), p.90

from so-called Cleggmania. Despite all the convulsions the party had undergone between 2005 and 2010 having three official leaders in Charles Kennedy, Menzies Campbell and eventually Nick Clegg (with Vince Cable stepping in successfully during the leadership contest that selected Nick Clegg) the 'Liberal Democrat surge petered out on polling day and despite increasing its vote share by 1 point, the party made a net loss of five seats. It was a disappointing end to a campaign that had fostered so much optimism.'¹⁶¹ Although the party placed itself successfully in what it perceived to be a post-Rennardism scenario by trying to break through a national glass ceiling of support, it failed to identify that targeting was still its most effective means of delivering seats in parliament, something that should have been learnt from the Alliance days of the 1980s where seats won never reflected votes achieved across the country.

Cornish Studies

Although the debate around the national fortunes of the Liberals and then the Liberal Democrats is important to this research it does act primarily as a background to the party's activity, and successes and failures, in Cornwall. The most important debate centres more closely upon the party, its candidates and elections in Cornwall itself. These cover aspects of character, culture and campaigning, especially in relation to some of the less nationally recognised characters such as Peter Bessell. The nature of Cornwall, and its contrary, or locally traditional, voting behaviour is also examined by many of those evaluating Cornish politics.

In the early 1990s Philip Payton led a movement to institutionalise an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the particular context of Cornwall. As he says, 'Cornwall has attracted the serious attention of historians, social scientists and others interested in examining the nature and consequences of rapid change since 1945.'¹⁶² Cornish politics has been central to this discussion with a growing number of studies evaluating the different political behaviour west of the Tamar. Thankfully, this area of research has grown in recent years and will be an essential resource in

¹⁶¹ Allen N. & Bartle J., *Britain at the Polls 2010* (Thousand Oaks, 2011), p.83

¹⁶² Payton P., *Cornwall since the War* (Redruth, 1993), p.1

placing this thesis within this argument. Tregidga's *The Liberal Party in South West Britain since 1918* has been reviewed already, but it takes a more general view of the entire region and is not designed to look closely at Cornwall in particular.

An earlier study by Tregidga does however. He states that, 'Cornish Liberalism was in decline during this period,'¹⁶³ yet 'nevertheless, the Liberal Party in Cornwall fared considerably better than it did at the national level.'¹⁶⁴ Importantly, 'the decline of Cornish Liberalism was a much more gradual process.'¹⁶⁵ Tregidga attributes the survival of Cornish Liberalism 'to a combination of social, economic and political factors.'¹⁶⁶

He argues that, 'Methodism remained a powerful force in Cornish society, and this benefited the Liberal cause';¹⁶⁷ 'high unemployment in the early 1920s and 1930s, the weakness of the trade unions and the agricultural base of Cornwall's economy limited Labour's electoral support';¹⁶⁸ and crucially, 'Isaac Foot...played a key role in the party's survival. Foot's by-election victory in February 1922 enabled Cornish Liberalism to regain the political initiative and he became the hero of Liberal Nonconformity.'¹⁶⁹ Crucially Tregidga identifies that local factors are important in Cornwall, and that elections in Cornwall are as much, if not more, dependent on those factors as on outside and national factors.

These were the reasons that Tregidga identified as being significant in the survival of the Liberal Party in Cornwall during this period. However, what puts this work in context is that the revivals and eventual domination that were to come later, were also intriguingly based on this conjunction of circumstances: namely political and social relevance in the local context, economic problems faced within Cornwall and charismatic personalities to act as the spokespeople for the party.

¹⁶³ Tregidga G., 'The Survival of Cornish Liberalism, 1918-45' *Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall Series II, Vol. I*, (1992) p.211

¹⁶⁴ Ibid

¹⁶⁵ Ibid

¹⁶⁶ Ibid p.212

¹⁶⁷ Ibid

¹⁶⁸ Ibid

¹⁶⁹ Ibid

Peter Bessell is a character in Cornish and national Liberalism who receives a widely mixed press. People who knew him, speak affectionately of his term as MP for Bodmin from 1964-70.¹⁷⁰ However, national Liberals remember him as the rather weak chief prosecution witness during the Jeremy Thorpe trial, in ‘that he had difficulty in differentiating between fantasy and fact,’¹⁷¹ though this source might be considered to be extremely biased, being the subject of the evidence Bessell gave.

Tregidga, once again, attempts to clarify Bessell’s role within Cornish politics, describing his election as playing ‘a key role in shaping the Liberal renaissance,’ and, as with later election successes, ‘[Bessell’s] organisational skills were deployed to create an effective political machine in East Cornwall, while his success in identifying with local interests marked the transition between traditional Liberalism and the new politics that was to develop in the 1970s.’¹⁷² Tregidga’s view is that ‘above all, Bessell’s early recognition of a new anti-metropolitan agenda in Cornish politics ensured that he became a pivotal figure in the wider relationship between the post-war Celtic “Revival” and mainstream Liberal politics.’¹⁷³ Bessell even employed campaign techniques, generally in the form of election razzmatazz, that gave him local notoriety and even celebrity status, which helped build his local credibility.¹⁷⁴

This belief seems to hold water, as Bessell’s campaigns seem to have been extremely locally focussed, very organised and centred around the promotion of him personally, even involving torch-lit parades which were much more evocative of 1930s Germany than 1960s America. Once again, the Liberals had shown their relevance in the local context, by being ‘local and vocal’, and this would certainly be their strategy when it came to the major breakthrough in the 1990s.

Philip Payton has also published on the subject of Cornish politics. In *Cornwall – A History* he identifies that ‘although without a seat in Cornwall for the entire 1950s and the early 1960s, the Liberals remained the effective opposition party in Cornwall.’¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁰ Penhaligon A., *Penhaligon* (London, 1989), p.37

¹⁷¹ Thorpe J., *In My Own Time* (London, 1999) p.199

¹⁷² Tregidga G., ‘Bodmin Man’: Peter Bessell and Cornish Politics in the 1950s and 1960s *Cornish Studies Eight* (ed. Payton P.), (Exeter, 2000), p.161

¹⁷³ Ibid

¹⁷⁴ Ibid

¹⁷⁵ Payton P., *Cornwall – A History* (Redruth, 2004) p.289

He also identifies that, ‘Liberals remained highly active and contested a majority of seats at a time that represented the nadir of their fortunes elsewhere.’¹⁷⁶ So, Payton clarifies an important difference to the rest of the country - even in defeat the Cornish Liberals were different, and their time ‘out of office’ in Cornwall will be an important area of study. He also attributes some of the resurgence of the party in Cornwall, at a time when the Liberals were not succeeding nationally, to the fact that both Peter Bessell and John Pardoe ‘were Mebyon Kernow members.’¹⁷⁷ This appeal to an often latent Celtic nationalist heritage, which is essentially anti-metropolitan in nature cannot be underestimated. However, the importance of this is not made clear by Payton.

Payton argues that ‘the Liberals, in particular, with their historic reputation as the “Cornish Party”, went out of their way to respond to the new anti-metropolitanism.’¹⁷⁸ He identifies ‘nowhere was this strategy more successful than in Truro’¹⁷⁹ in the form of David Penhaligon. He also believes that ‘a similar anti-metropolitanism was also evident in the language and activities of MPs Matthew Taylor and Paul Tyler, both of whom continued to play the “Cornish card”.’¹⁸⁰

This cultural, social and often geographical antagonism, based on the Rokkan model, has been identified by both Tregidga and Payton, and is described as anti-metropolitanism by Payton. This capacity of the Liberals, and then the Liberal Democrats, to identify the so-called cleavage issues, so disparaged by Alan Clark, is a key aspect to the party’s success in Cornwall. What is unclear is whether this anti-metropolitanism is unique to Cornwall or whether it has been an aspect of the party’s strategy that has been deployed in other parts of the ‘Celtic Fringe’ and elsewhere for that matter. If it is anti-metropolitanism that works for the party, that would not explain why the party has won seats in Edinburgh, London, Manchester, Birmingham and Cardiff, at parliamentary elections, but it might in Cornwall. This requires further investigation. Though it should also be noted that to some extent this reference to

¹⁷⁶ Payton P., *Cornwall – A History* (Redruth, 2004) p.289

¹⁷⁷ Ibid

¹⁷⁸ Ibid

¹⁷⁹ Ibid

¹⁸⁰ Ibid p.290

anti-metropolitanism is for the earlier post-war revivals when the party was generally weak in these 'urban' areas – if not suburban Orpington.

One of the recurring themes that comes out of those publications produced by Cornish academics, and with a central focus on Cornwall, is the apparent link, however vague, between Cornish Liberalism and Cornish nationalism. The suggestion being that, instead of mere anti-metropolitanism, there is open nationalism in the arguments being promoted by the Liberals and Liberal Democrats. Writing in the *Journal of Liberal History* Tregidga points out the acquisition of nationalist ideas by the Liberals for their own political benefit even in the early 1900s, saying, 'although Cowethas Kelto-Kernuak (the Celtic-Cornish Society) operated on a non-political basis, the Cornish Liberals used the cultural themes raised by this organization for political purposes.'¹⁸¹ He continues, 'radical politics was still based on the traditional agenda of religious nonconformity, while Liberalism was presented as the anti-metropolitan alternative to the new Labour-Conservative alignment at Westminster. This left the Liberals well placed to take advantage of the emergence of political nationalism after the Second World War.'¹⁸² This perhaps also throws up an important question, deserving some research: was Labour's radicalism primarily metropolitan and class-based in nature, leaving the Liberals to fill the gap of rural non-proletarian radicalism?

Tregidga attributes the failure of the official Cornish nationalist party, Mebyon Kernow, to the lack of a tradition of activism and, 'by the late 1960s the Cornish electorate had already been mobilised on the anti-metropolitan issue by the Liberal Party. The crucial point about the long-term development of ethno-regionalism in Cornwall was that, until 1970, this process was mainly associated with the Liberals. That party's local role as the centre-left and anti-metropolitan alternative to the Conservatives was further strengthened after 1974 by the popular appeal of David Penhaligon... and it was only to be expected that a separate electoral challenge by the nationalists would fail at the Westminster level.'¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Tregidga G., 'Devolution for the Duchy – The Liberal Party and the Nationalist Movement in Cornwall' (ed.Brack D.) *Liberal History Journal* 22 (1999) p.21

¹⁸² Ibid p.22

¹⁸³ Ibid p.21

Consequently, the Liberals had embraced the newborn nationalist movement and its inherent anti-metropolitanism that would be garnered in Scotland and Wales by the SNP and Plaid Cymru respectively. This will also need to be assessed within this research.

Much of this research would be described as qualitative, rather than quantitative. Adrian Lee, however, has tried to bring a quantitative approach to his research, similar to this thesis, and writing in *Cornwall since the War*, argues that Cornwall shows significantly different voting patterns compared to much of the rest of England, and notably, rural England. He points out, 'in comparison with England, Cornish electoral politics are divergent,'¹⁸⁴ and 'electoral trends in the former are not necessarily replicated in the latter.'¹⁸⁵

Thus, he anticipates that just because Britain might have been destined to vote Labour in the forthcoming general election in 1997 it would not automatically follow that Cornwall would do the same. Cornwall was willing to stand out from the crowd electorally, as 'a result of this unique pattern of historical development has been that lack of political integration has continued to find political, and especially electoral expression.'¹⁸⁶ He argues that 'Cornish voters [are] marching to a different drum,'¹⁸⁷ compared to the rest of England, and may have more in common with Scottish and Welsh voters, than the English. Of course this book, written in 1993, may have prophesied the rise of the Liberal Democrats in 1997 but certainly did not evaluate it. Even less could it analyse the increased success of the party thereafter and its eventual domination in 2005 and subsequent comparative failure in 2010.

There is, clearly, a debate as to why the Liberals survived in Cornwall, and elsewhere, in a way that the party did not in other parts of the country. This has sometimes been given the shorthand description as being peculiar to the Celtic Fringe. However, this needs to be evaluated. Following on from the quantitative

¹⁸⁴ Payton P., *Cornwall Since the War* (Redruth, 1993) p.269

¹⁸⁵ Ibid

¹⁸⁶ Ibid p.253-254

¹⁸⁷ Ibid p.260

approach shown by Lee this thesis has used phone surveys to speak to Cornish voters, and others across the country, to measure and compare the different ways in which the electorate decide how to cast their vote. Is there evidence of a historical cleavage towards the Liberals that has been the foundation of the Liberal Democrats' success in Cornwall? Has there been a recent use of modern campaigning techniques which has made the party more likely to win elections or has it been the rise of significant political figures to boost the party's prospects, or could it even be other factors that have made the party the dominant force in Cornwall in the past decade? Around the subject areas of 'Campaigns, Culture and Character' this thesis will attempt to show the varying importance of each of these factors in the prospects if the Liberal Democrats in Cornish politics.

Chapter 3 – Culture - Is Cornwall different?

With its remoteness from the metropolis, its support for a dissenting branch of Christianity or even its deeper, almost forgotten, Celtic roots, even emboldened by its proposed recognition as a national minority¹⁸⁸ Cornwall is often perceived as being different from the rest of England. Its voting behaviour seems to have more in common with the remote parts of the so-called Celtic Fringe such as Welsh-speaking North and West Wales or the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. It has been argued that this difference has been a contributory factor towards Cornwall maintaining its support for the Liberals well beyond the time that other parts of Great Britain favoured a more modern form of progressive politics – the Labour Party.¹⁸⁹

Therefore, assessing whether Cornwall tends to support individual candidates more than other areas of the country is an important aspect of this research. As is whether the Liberals maintained a level of credibility through the period when in most of the rest of the country the party had almost ceased to exist. It is important to evaluate whether the very nature of Cornwall makes it more likely to support a minority party such as the Liberals and subsequently the Liberal Democrats.

It is difficult to believe that the ancient history of Cornwall, as a remote outpost of Celtic Britain, following the Anglo-Saxon invasion, could affect modern voting behaviour. However, historians such as Robert Gildea, evaluating collective memory might give this greater credibility, as he argued that ‘collective construction of the past related more to political controversy and power struggles than the scholarly scrutiny of historical documents.’¹⁹⁰ Although this refers to the collective memory of a revolution in 1848, the idea that race and regional self-awareness can pass down through the generations, however numerous, should not be ignored as a possibility. If people believe they are different, however tenuously, this difference should be taken into consideration. However, the idea that Cornish identity, with its own idiosyncratic nature, could foster a sense of anti-metropolitanism which could lend it to be more likely to support minority parties at the state level is enticing. However, as Hobsbawm put it, ‘the Cornish are fortunate to be able to paint their regional

¹⁸⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cornish-granted-minority-status-within-the-uk>

¹⁸⁹ Tregidga G., *The Liberal Party in South West England* (Exeter, 2000)

¹⁹⁰ Gildea R., ‘1848 in European Collective Memory’, *Europe in 1848* (Basingstoke, 2001)

discontents in the attractive colours of Celtic tradition, which makes them so much more viable.¹⁹¹ Hobsbawn argues that having this layer of rich historic identity somehow brands this discontent as being nobler than that of other parts of England where this Celtic tradition may be less obvious. This might lend weight to a sense of identity being a factor in a different voting behaviour to the rest of England if not other parts of the so-called Celtic Fringe. Distinguishing this Celtic tradition from a more modern anti-metropolitanism is not simple however, as both may evidence themselves as voting for the Liberals in Cornwall and other parts of the UK with this Celtic tradition. Of course although nowadays Cornwall would hardly be called industrial its post-industrial landscape shows evidence of once being a focus of commerce – this would suggest it is not implicitly divorced from the metropolis, but arguably is both emotionally and geographically. However, the timing of its industrialisation and the decline of mining came before the rise of socialism and may also show symptoms of why Cornwall has never really supported the new left alternative – the Labour Party. Voting Liberal may be a cause of Celticity as well as a set of symptoms expressing this behaviour on presentation to the observer. There are several strands to the cultural thesis of Cornish voting behaviour and all deserve some assessment. Religion, in the form of Methodism, according to Bernard Deacon ‘as in Wales, nonconformity fed a Liberal political culture, the Liberals achieving a clean sweep of Cornish parliamentary seats in 1885, 1906, 1929, and most recently in 2005.’¹⁹² This may be true but the strength of religious influence in this vast 120 year span has fallen dramatically and the thought that the influence of the Methodist church had the same influence in 1885, with a limited franchise compared to the elections of universal suffrage in 1929 or even a modern election in 2005 may suggest a cultural difference but it needs to be assessed if this political culture could arguably have affected the chances of the Liberal Democrats in 2005 and 2010. Of course by 1929 the temperance movement had achieved prohibition in the United States and the addition of some older women to the franchise in 1918 and younger ones in 1929 might have helped sustain temperance, especially as many of its advocates were women, but it is difficult to believe that this religious effect could persist until 2005, however historically important it might have been.

¹⁹¹ Hobsbawn E., *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, (Cambridge, 1992), p.178

¹⁹² Deacon B., ‘County, Nation, Ethnic Group? The Shaping of the Cornish Identity’ *International Journal of Regional & Local Studies*,(2007), p.31

However, as much as the success, or survival, of the Liberals is important, the failure of the Labour Party to ever become a genuinely credible alternative in Cornwall is also important. This assessment of Labour needs to be more than a presumption that Labour failed to win simply because they failed to contest seats in Cornwall for much of the twentieth century: is there something about the nature of Cornwall that makes it less likely to support Labour and favour the Liberals as the party of protest which might depend on its industrial decline before the party came to be a national force in the twentieth century?

The Celtic Fringe: Celtic Legacy to Cornish Identity

There can be little doubt that one of the factors that led Cornwall to retain a separate identity to the rest of England during the medieval and early modern periods was the persistence of a Celtic language spoken by its indigenous people. This Celtic language persists in Wales and remote parts of the west of Scotland in various forms and even outside Britain in similar regions to Cornwall such as Brittany. This degree of cultural and linguistic separation has become much less obvious in Cornwall in the modern period as Cornish died out as a spoken language in everyday usage in the late eighteenth century and although the modern revival of Cornish, as a spoken language, is notable it can hardly be credited with the persistence of the Liberal Party in the twentieth century.

As Murray Pittock puts it, 'the word [fringe] conjures up an image of a decorative but indefinite edge...Celtic fringe is a term true to this picture, for it expresses both a thinning of population density and a fraying of British identity.'¹⁹³ This seems a logical description but the phrase hardly suggests a self-awareness of a region, or several regions, that behave differently when voting. As Cohen comments 'for the English, the boundary is marked by irresolution, uncertainty, incongruity, derogation or humour.'¹⁹⁴ It is a term used to describe parts of the nation which do not fit the uniformity of a two party system that are easily understood as part of a national political paradigm. This difference, almost similar to Orientalism, delivers, paraphrasing Edward Said,¹⁹⁵ 'a series of crude, essentialized caricatures,'¹⁹⁶ of the

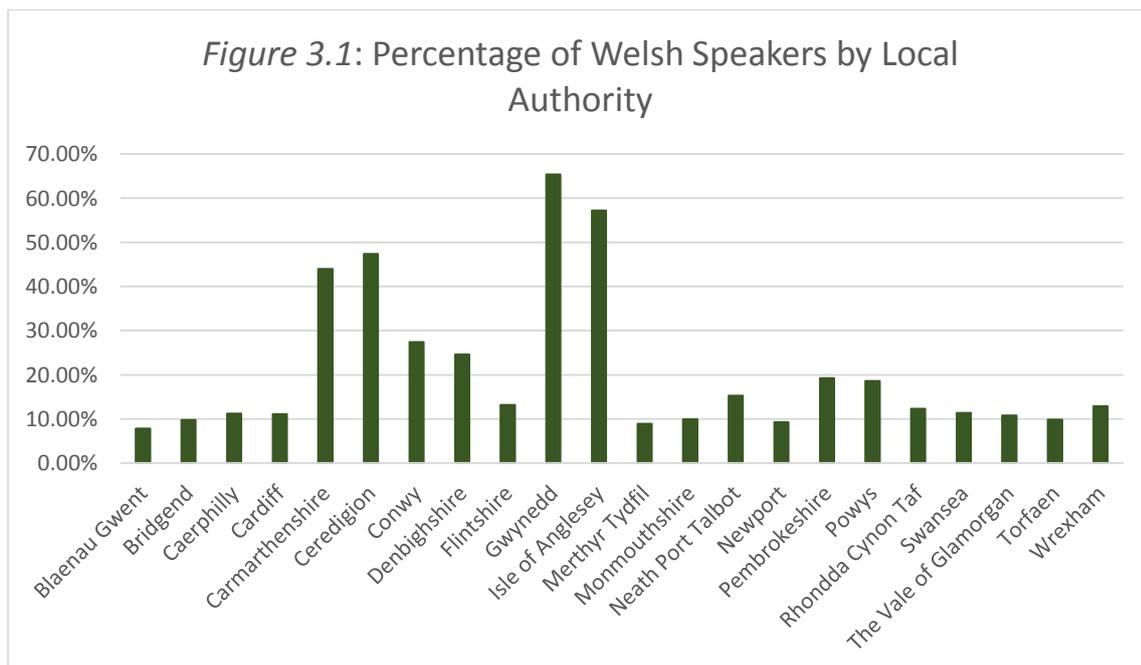
¹⁹³ Pittock, M., *Celtic Identity and the British image* (Manchester, 1999), p.1

¹⁹⁴ Cohen R., *Frontiers of Identity: The British and the others* (London, 1994), p.12

¹⁹⁵ Said E., *Orientalism* (New York, 1979)

¹⁹⁶ Saïd E., 'Islam Through Western Eyes,' *The Nation* 26 April 1980 Last viewed 31/12/13.

voting behaviour of the so-called Celtic fringe. In other parts of the remote British Isles this eccentric voting behaviour persisted in supporting the Liberals for the early part of the twentieth century. As Ella Westland says, ‘the allocation of this function of ancient and semi-civilized Other to the Celtic peripheries of the British Isles has been a prominent feature of English culture for over 200 years, a phenomenon particularly noticeable in the decades leading up to the Great War when ‘Englishness’ was (once again) being reinvented.’¹⁹⁷ However, with the appearance of Welsh and Scottish nationalist parties this difference has increasingly evidenced itself through that medium but there are still parts of Wales and Scotland that persistently vote Liberal or Liberal Democrat as opposed to the nationalists. Constituencies with the highest levels of Welsh speaking population in Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Gwynedd and the Isle of Anglesey all have representatives from Plaid Cymru in the National Assembly for Wales with Ceredigion being the only seat amongst these not sending a Plaid member to Westminster – it being a Liberal Democrat, Mark Williams.



In Wales, it seems clear that there is a link between the less residual Celtic identity and the Welsh language and voting for a dissenting party, Plaid Cymru. Before Plaid Cymru existed these remote areas of west Wales were the last bastions of Liberal Party support in 1935, focused around the familial loyalty for David Lloyd George

¹⁹⁷ Westland E., ‘D.H. Lawrence’s Cornwall: dwelling in a precarious age’, *Cultural Geographies* (2002), p.269

and his children Megan and Gwilym and other Welsh-speaking Liberals. As can be seen from the figure 3.2 areas such as Brecon and Radnor and Montgomery, which have recently elected Liberal Democrats, also have a tradition of supporting neither of the major parties. However, as can be seen from figure 3.1,¹⁹⁸ Powys, which covers the two seats of Brecon and Radnor and Montgomery are not significantly Welsh-speaking compared to West and North Wales, although they are slightly more Welsh-speaking than urban South Wales. In, *Clement Davies*¹⁹⁹ Alun Wyburn-Powell lends an explanation to this apparent disparity:

‘the wealthiest inhabitants [of Montgomeryshire] belonged to the large land-owning families. They tended to vote Conservative, belonged to the established church and spoke English, with perhaps a little Welsh. The middle classes, to which Clem’s family belonged, included doctors, clergymen and small business-owners. By and large these were Nonconformist by religion, mainly Methodists or Presbyterians. They tended to vote Liberal and to speak English and Welsh fluently. The working class – by far the most numerous section of the population – mainly worked as farm labourers, miners or servants. Their religion was Nonconformist, mainly Baptist. They spoke Welsh as a first language and some spoke no English The politics of those who voted would have been Radical Liberal and, later, Labour.’²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ www.statistics.gov.uk (Welsh Language by council area)

¹⁹⁹ Clement Davies was leader of the Liberal Party between 1945-56

²⁰⁰ Wyburn-Powell A., *Clement Davies Liberal Leader* (London, 2003), p.2

Figure 3.2

Map of the west of England and Wales showing the result of the 1935 general election. (This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons.)

This suggests that there were clear social, cultural, religious and consequently political differences between the different social classes in this part of Wales. An area that maintained its support for the Liberals through the twentieth century, as did Cornwall. Of course, Cornwall no longer had the cultural anchor of a separate language as in Wales.

Although this is a significant difference between these two fringe areas of Britain they are nonetheless similar in their remoteness from the metropolis and share a similar Celtic heritage that gives a sense of self which other parts of England cannot so

readily lay claim to. This would seem to link into a more modern aspect of this view of the Celtic Fringe – linking it with a sense of remoteness from the decision-making centres of power.

In *Centre and Periphery*, Havinden et. al. argued that Cornwall's political distinctiveness was due to 'long term factors, of which political tradition may be one, to which its peripheral status contributes.'²⁰¹ This fits the Celtic fringe analysis – that remoteness from the metropolis has preserved a distinct form of politics, different from the norm. Tregidga argues that Stein Rokkan's analysis of Scandinavian politics shows insight into the persistence of the Liberals in the West Country arguing that they were 'in a strong position to survive the onslaught of class politics in [Cornwall] where the Liberal Party was still sustained by a combination of Protestant nonconformity, rural discontent and regionalism.'²⁰² This behaviour is very similar to the survival of the Liberal Party in Wales and Rokkan described this behaviour as the centre-periphery cleavage.²⁰³ As Payton says, the Cornish language 'was a local example of that nostalgia for pre-industrial cultural variants...[which] made it...qualitatively different from the usual run of local customs,'²⁰⁴ this clearly could have helped to foster an anti-metropolitanism not just based on distance from Westminster but founded in local culture and identity.

Just because a region is distant from the metropolis does not automatically mean that it should have a unique voting behaviour but as Cody argues this leads to the 'peripheral predicament'.²⁰⁵ 'This predicament, inherent in peripheries and largely inescapable, prevails when a region lies a sufficient physical distance from core areas, manifests a difference from its neighbours in maintaining a minimum level and sense of separate identity, and suffers from a dependence upon core regions for political and economic decision-making.'²⁰⁶ He continues, 'peripheries may experience some or all of a steadily decreasing economic security, a declining standard of living (relative to core regions, if not absolutely), a loss of cultural

²⁰¹ Havinden M., Quienart J. & Stanyer J., *Centre and Periphery – A Comparative Study of Brittany and Cornwall and Devon* (Exeter, 1991), p.210

²⁰² Tregidga G., *The Liberal Party in South West England* (Exeter, 1999), p.8

²⁰³ Rokkan S., *Citizens, Elections, Parties* (New York, 1970), p.181

²⁰⁴ Payton P. *Cornwall A History*, (Redruth, 2004), p.93

²⁰⁵ Rokkan S. & Urwin D., *Economy, Territory, Identity: Politics of West European Peripheries* (London, 1983), p. 2.

²⁰⁶ Cody H., 'MPs and the peripheral predicament in Canada and Britain', *Political Studies* (1992), p.346

distinctiveness and a progressive decline in political power.²⁰⁷ This last point would seem especially well-observed in the case of the Celtic Fringe: all these regions/nations have somehow had their traditional power reduced or consumed by the British state. Wales and Scotland lost through conquest, or bequeathed through consent, their power to London. This could arguably be also seen as the case in Cornwall as so many of the historic, essentially pocket or rotten, boroughs had lost their say in the nation as part of the 1832 Reform Act, reducing Cornwall's representation ten-fold. This loss of power, however justified for democratic modernisation and the increased representation of more urban areas, which had previously been unrepresented, certainly led to a loss of power and control over the decision-making of parliament.

However, as stated before there is the potential for confusion in this debate as to Cornwall's status as part of the Celtic fringe and as well as this centre-periphery. Cornwall's voting behaviour does seem to have a similar voting history but to assign this to a Celtic tradition seems unwarranted. This might be best summed up by Deacon who has criticised some 'academic approaches [which] have been over-concerned with the more articulate and romantically appealing revivalist identity, which is often uncritically equated with Cornishness.'²⁰⁸ This Celtic revival, which ostensibly took place at end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, may well form the roots of the Cornish nationalist movement but this does not explain the persistence of the Liberal tradition in Cornwall which existed before this event and continues long after it has become an accepted part of the Cornish paradigm, even if it does mirror the emergence of the Liberal Party itself. The Liberals may have benefited from this revival but they are not inherently the beneficiaries of a nationalist agenda per se.

This said Cornwall has always been geographically remote from the centre of power in Britain and this reality of distance from London combined with a sense of being neglected by central governments, of whatever colour, leavened by an ancient culture might lead to an increased sense of dissent which might consequently lead to a political culture of anti-metropolitanism. This anti-metropolitanism does not, as yet,

²⁰⁷ Cody H., 'MPs and the peripheral predicament in Canada and Britain', *Political Studies* (1992), p.346

²⁰⁸ Deacon B., 'County, Nation, Ethnic Group? The Shaping of the Cornish Identity' *International Journal of Regional & Local Studies*,(2007), p.31

have a credible nationalist outlet as in Wales and Scotland at a parliamentary election and as such it has persisted in expressing itself through the Liberal Party and now through the Liberal Democrats.

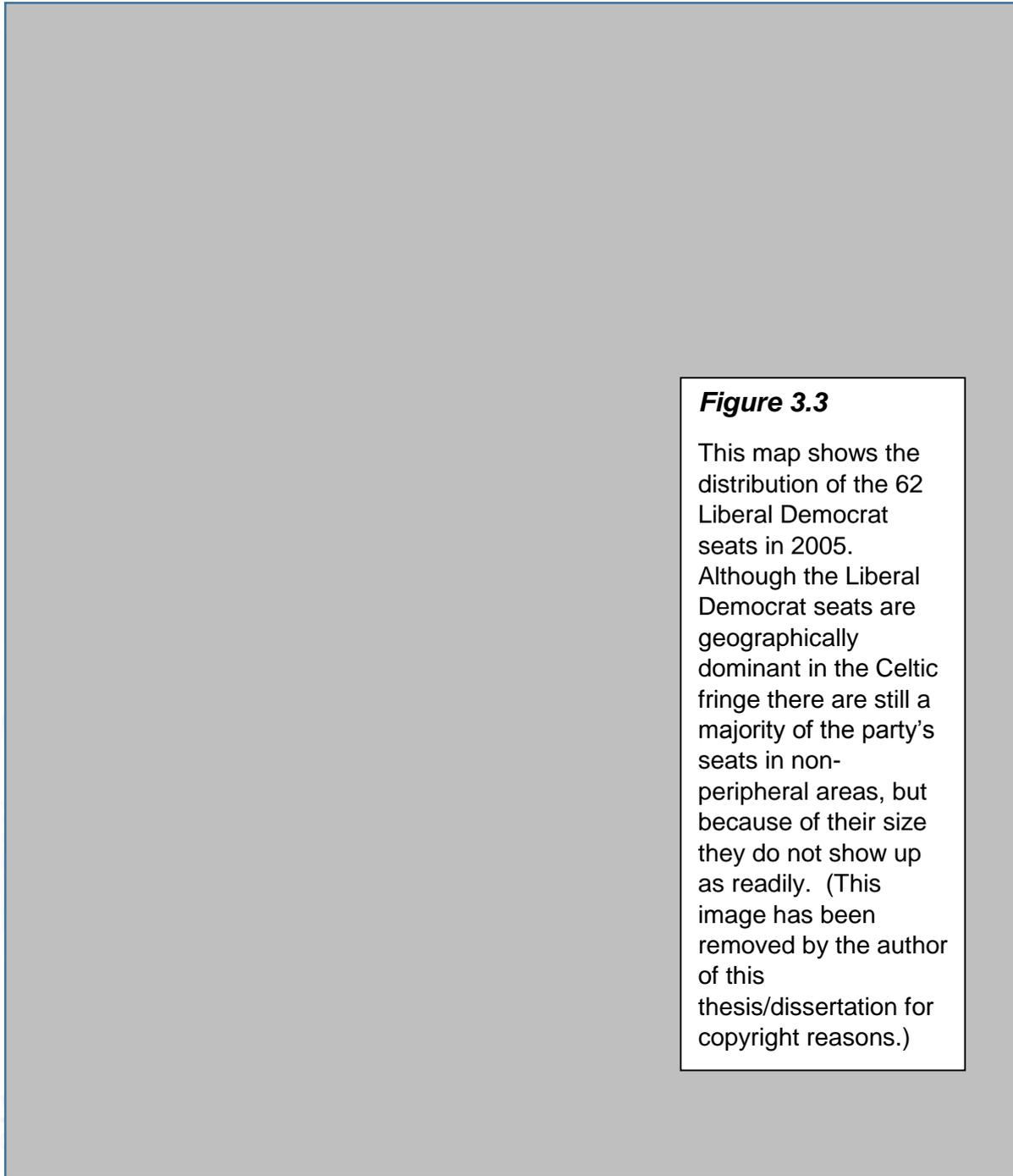
This dissent against the centre is, of course, not a modern phenomenon. The changes in liturgy in the Tudor period making the use of English an increased requirement eroded the Cornish language and resulted in open rebellion against the crown. Centuries later this still led to a view, in a revealing statement by Sir Richard Vyvyan,²⁰⁹ that 'the prevalence of dissent and of an independence of character which is almost republican (although there is a universal attachment to the Queen),'²¹⁰ still persisted in Cornwall. This has been described as being 'the fate of Cornwall at the hands of the colonists may be taken as a metaphor for the general relationship between the Celts and the English. The Celts are licensed [due to] their unique contribution to, and place in, the national culture: the cost is that they know their peripheral place as the subject of the metropolitan centre.'²¹¹ However, this ignores the slightly more complicated reality that as Cornwall has become less ethnically Cornish with the changing demographic nature of Britain, with many non-Cornish settling, the Liberal Democrats have actually done much better electorally than they did in the mid-twentieth century when Cornwall was much less ethnically diverse. Thus, although a legacy of belonging to the Celtic fringe may well form a foundation upon which the Liberals have built their recent success, to substantially account their success to this seems illogical. After all the party, as well as benefiting from the peripheral parts of Britain it has also elected Members of Parliament in Greater London, the South East of England as well as much of the North of England. These areas have arguably no Celtic fringe identity and some are even within sight of Westminster. This might be that a political paradigm of being in the periphery is self-created, as well as geographical, but although it may be a contributory factor to the Liberal Democrats' success it cannot possibly be the only contributor. Essentially it helped the Liberals to survive the critical period of the middle decades of the 20th century. This Celtic latent legacy enabled the Liberal Democrats by the 1990s,

²⁰⁹ Conservative MP in Cornwall in the nineteenth century

²¹⁰ Vyvyan MSS, V. 22M/BO/36/46: Sir R.R. Vyvyan to Lord Churston, 6 Jan. 1864

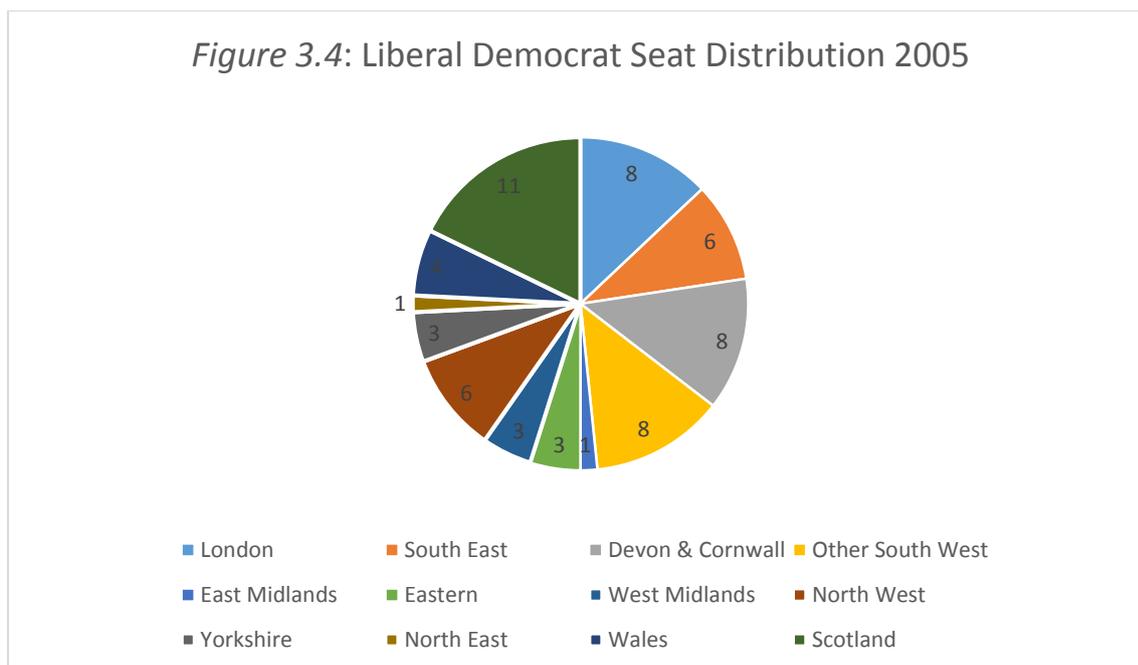
²¹¹ Colls R. and Dodd P., *Englishness: politics and culture 1880–1920*, (London, 1986), p.15.

following significant in-migration, to be seen as the main challengers to the Conservatives.



A more detailed look at the seats the Liberal Democrats won in 2005 suggest that the party was no longer dependent on a rump of anti-metropolitan seats which behave differently.

Figure 3.4: Liberal Democrat Seat Distribution 2005



Although the party still had substantial representation in Scotland, Wales and Devon and Cornwall, some 23 seats, the party has just as many seats in London as it does in Devon and Cornwall and more in the South East than Wales. The Celtic Fringe is still important to the Liberal Democrats as a foundation but it is no longer the last bastion of liberalism but apparently the foundation upon which the party builds its more metropolitan support elsewhere. As has been stated earlier Tregidga argues, the Liberal Party was ‘in a strong position to survive the onslaught of class politics in those regions where [it] was still sustained by a combination of Protestant nonconformity, rural discontent and regionalism.’²¹²

Methodism – Protestant Nonconformity

Methodism has been the lifeblood of the Liberal tradition, if not simply the modern day Liberal Party in Cornwall for many years. Its deep roots in the middle and working classes in Cornwall have saved the declining Liberal Party from total political extinction. However, this assumption that Methodism naturally leads to Liberalism needs to be challenged. Although A.L. Rowse, a Labour candidate, described the liberalism of Isaac Foot as ‘the political expression of Nonconformity’ and that Foot enraptured his Methodist congregations with ‘Nonconformist Liberal humbug’ he did concede that ‘the little chapels out in the China Clay district were virtually Liberal

²¹² Tregidga G., *The Liberal Party in South-West Britain since 1918* (Exeter, 2000), p.8

recruiting stations.²¹³ Although Rowse can hardly be seen as an unbiased observer, as he was trying to break the link between Liberalism and Methodism for his own electoral prospects, this perception that the two were, and for that matter are, intrinsically linked is apparent. If Tregidga is right that this combination of separation, regionalism and religious nonconformity create a unique brand of local community, which cleaves towards liberalism and against socialism, then logically we should see this in other, similar areas of Britain. Arguably he identifies this in the comparative similarity between Cornwall and the persistence of Liberalism in Berwick-upon-Tweed.²¹⁴

Although not in Northumberland but in Durham, an area where Methodist chapels more than doubled the established church, the resilience of the Methodist/Liberal axis did exist and persist where 'the [Durham Miners Association] was initially officered by Methodists, but once the union became well established it developed its own interests and values and provided a secular structure for generating a leadership cadre. Although the Durham miners lagged behind miners elsewhere in supporting the Labour party, they did eventually abandon the Liberals.'²¹⁵ Tregidga's thesis that there were competing forces pulling voters towards, and away, from their traditional cleavages fits neatly into the Rokkan theory of antagonistic societal groups. If Durham miners were initially staffed by Methodists it makes sense to question why this concluded with the strength of working class collectivism defeating the pull of religious conviction. As Bruce continues, 'Methodism was an individualistic faith. It provided a great deal of social activity, but at its heart was the idea that we are saved severally rather than jointly, that we each must answer for ourselves before God.'²¹⁶ This tone, if not language, resonates more with the individualistic principles of Margaret Thatcher than of collective union action. Finally, he argues that 'there is always a danger of replacing the romantic myth of the Methodist miner with an equally romanticised vision of the socialist miner, but there is little doubt that the secular ethos of the colliery villages was a collectivist vision which did not sit at all well with either the individualism or the other-worldly orientation of evangelical

²¹³ Rowse A.L., *A Man of the Thirties* (London, 1979), p.55

²¹⁴ Tregidga G., *The Liberal Party in South-West Britain since 1918* (Exeter, 2000), p.16

²¹⁵ Bruce S., 'Methodism and mining in County Durham, 1881-1991', *Northern History* 68, (2011), p.354

²¹⁶ *Ibid* p.355

religion.²¹⁷ The decline of religion in modern society has perhaps naturally led to a decline in the fortunes of the Liberals, if one accepts a direct link between Methodism and Liberalism. Secularism has removed, or at least weakened, the link between liberalism and this part of the country. Arguably it created a new quasi-religion which was socialism and even exemplified the Methodist tradition as being much more akin to the embourgeoisement of Thatcherism than working class values arguing that, 'puritanical religion is perennially associated with upward social mobility is well known.'²¹⁸ Of course this thesis is not concerned with the politics of County Durham, but the argument that those who were trying to better themselves through personal responsibility and improvement does seem to go against the idea of collectivism but does not answer why Methodism and liberalism persisted in Cornwall – is it credible to believe that all those with get-up-and-go in Cornwall had left for the mine prospects of South Australia and elsewhere, bettering themselves, to leave a husk of local society behind it following an outdated religion which persists in a now essentially secular Britain?

Of course this analysis has only limited capacity to assess the nuances of the various strands of non-conformity and its support for political parties. This difference might stem from the nature of Methodism in Durham, which generally followed a Primitive form whereas Cornwall did, and does, still follow the Wesleyan Methodist and Bible Christian traditions. One of the key aspects of this was that the church in Cornwall was not replaced by unionisation in the way it was in the industrial north.

It may seem evident that there could be an Anglican/Methodist or Protestant/Catholic cleavage in politics, indeed we still see a clear one in Northern Ireland in the second instance to this day. But there appears to be an argument that as well as the clear centre/periphery cleavage, that was discussed earlier, that a more damaging one for the nascent Labour Party was the growing cleavage between Socialism and Methodism: and this focused around the rather illiberal elements of Methodism. According to Keith Laybourn, 'the Labour Party moved from a position of outright opposition to gambling and gaming towards one of relative toleration and acceptance. This sea change began seriously in 1931 when many of the early Labour MPs, who were influenced by the anti-gambling sentiments of the

²¹⁷ Bruce S., 'Methodism and mining in County Durham, 1881-1991', *Northern History* 68, (2011)

²¹⁸ *Ibid* p.356

Nonconformists and the Free Churches, lost their seats in the general election.²¹⁹ If this is true then this policy change would have created a cleavage between natural Labour voters and traditional Methodist adherents.

However, Methodism did, and for that matter does, persist in Cornwall as the leading religion, even in an increasingly secular society, and this combined with Cornish identity to form 'the particular regional identity traditionally sensed by the Cornish [which] became more clearly defined and expressed during the 19th century, and, as with nonconformity in Wales, Methodism in Cornwall came to serve as a badge of regionalism, and as a buttress to Cornish 'nationalism' in the face of encroaching forces and influences from 'up-country' England.'²²⁰ Payton concurs with this view that Methodism, rather than being a natural stimulant to latent Cornish nationalism was actually a negative force on Cornish ethnicity, the religious movement sweeping away remainders of the periphery's Celtic heritage and older Cornish customs.²²¹ Thus Methodism appears, according to the arguments above, to be a nexus around which a number of complimentary political forces amalgamated; regionalism, liberalism, anti-socialism and even anti-nationalism. Kayleigh Milden argues that this Liberal-Methodist nexus²²² is just that, but as this tradition persisted in Cornwall, when it failed in other parts of Britain, it makes sense that there is more to it than the traditional view that liberalism and Methodism are simply two sides to the same coin. However, there seems to be evidence that as well as being the natural historic synergy between liberalism and Methodism there is also an aspect of this axis that is opposed to the collectivist nature of Socialism and the separatist nature of Cornish nationalism. Of course liberalism should not be seen as being a consistent set of policies but a set of guiding principles. The age of Gladstone and even Asquith saw a laissez-faire form of classical liberalism which sat well with the individualistic nature of Methodism. However, as the age of 'new liberalism' dawned, led by the reforming David Lloyd George, this, although still supported by the Methodist heartlands, was

²¹⁹ Laybourn K., 'There Ought not to be One Law for the Rich and Another for the Poor which Is the Case To-day': The Labour Party, Lotteries, Gaming, Gambling and Bingo, c.1900–c.1960s' *The Historical Association*, (2008), p.201

²²⁰ Luker, D.H., 'Cornish Methodism, Revivalism, and popular belief, c. 1780–1870', Unpublished PhD thesis, 1987, University of Oxford.

²²¹ Tregidga G., 'Politics of the Celto-Cornish Revival, 1886-1939', in *Cornish Studies Five* (ed. Payton P.), (Exeter, 1997), p.135.

²²² Milden K., 'Remembered Places and Forgotten Histories: the complexities of the cultural memory of politics and religion within Cornish Methodism', Unpublished PhD thesis, 2005, University of Exeter

not so clearly associated with self-help as with collective action to combat poverty and support the elderly. This was, as with the Durham Miners Association, started by Methodists but then much more firmly taken up by socialists and the working class themselves as Britain moved away from the paternalist Liberals and embraced Britain's evolutionary form of socialism. However, as much as this study seeks to evaluate the importance of Methodism to the survival of the Liberal Party there can be little doubt that it was also one of the foundations of the Labour Party as was clear in Durham. However, it should not be underestimated how important it was in areas where the Liberals were eventually superseded by Labour. After all the Welsh Valleys were Liberal, Methodist and arguably Celtic, but they also eventually lost faith with the Liberals and began to support Labour.

More recently researchers at the Theos think-tank tried to evaluate if this link between religion and voting behaviour persisted in modern elections. There seems to be clear evidence that even today the Liberal Democrats are slight beneficiaries of their Methodist heritage and the two other main parties also benefit from these historic cleavages: Conservatives with Anglicanism and Labour from Catholicism. As they say, 'establishment Anglicans and upper/middle class Methodists voting Tory; trading/ middle class Nonconformists voting Liberal; immigrant and working class Nonconformists and Catholics voting Labour.'²²³ Although the lines between the parties are perhaps now more blurred than they were before a report in 2014 discovered that 'only the URC vote was more likely to be for the Liberal Democrats, although the Methodist vote was also disproportionately for the third party.'²²⁴

	Anglican	Catholic	Methodist	URC	Muslim
Conservative	45.5	29.3	37.2	39.3	36.6
Labour	25.5	39.9	26.4	12.5	7.3
Lib Dem	20.5	23.2	31.2	42.9	52.4

Figure 3.5 Voting Behaviour by religion in the 2010 UK General Election²²⁵

Although the Liberal Democrats have been superseded by the Conservatives amongst Methodists, primarily because the Liberals have not been a significant UK

²²³ Clements C. & Spencer N., *Voting and Values in Britain: Does religion count?* (London, 2014), p.24

²²⁴ Ibid p.42

²²⁵ Ibid

player until recently, and certainly not since the early twentieth century, the fact that the Liberal Democrats still gain from their association with Methodism is notable. Whether the two are directly linked is difficult to tell as this may be the nature of party targeting, which encourages support for the Liberal Democrats in these Methodist areas, including Cornwall, where the party has historic support and campaign activity. Although all UK religions are in the original 2014 report by Theos seeing that 52.4% of the UK’s Muslim voters supported the Liberal Democrats does suggest that the party’s attraction is not simply based around tradition. Presumably this support came from the Liberal Democrats’ residual opposition to the War in Iraq, though the report does not assess this.

However, the Liberal Democrats also perform well amongst atheists in the report which suggests that although there is residual cleaving due to religious conviction ‘people are too independent-minded now to be herded into the voting booth by religious considerations alone.’²²⁶ The survey upon which the report is based unfortunately does not breakdown beyond the regions and nations but perhaps intriguingly the breakdown in the South West of England does not seem to desperately benefit the Liberal Democrats amongst Methodists. Indeed they actually perform better amongst Catholics in the South West region.

	All	Anglican	Catholic	Methodist	Non-Christian
Conservative	37.4	50.0	40.8	47.1	30.2
Labour	16.2	16.7	22.4	13.7	14.7
Lib Dem	37.4	23.9	32.7	31.4	47.4

Figure 3.6 Voting Behaviour by religion in the 2010 UK General Election (South West England)²²⁷

As Kayleigh Milden debates in, ‘Remembered Places and Forgotten Histories: the complexities of the cultural memory of politics and religion within Cornish Methodism,’ the link between Methodism and Liberalism in Cornwall retains clear links since in 1997 ‘three of the four Liberal Democrat MPs in Cornwall [had]

²²⁶ Sanderson T., *The Guardian*, 24 February 2010, ‘Don’t court the ‘religious vote’’;

²²⁷ Clements C. & Spencer N., *Voting and Values in Britain: Does religion count?*, (London, 2014), p.52

connections with the Methodist Church.²²⁸ As Milden demonstrates as much as there may be an historic link between the faith and the cause the belief that religion can now be a driving force behind the party's success in Cornwall seems unlikely.

Date	Methodist Membership	Sunday Attendance
1961	21,272	-----
1971	18,333	-----
1979	-----	27,700
1981	14,134	-----
1986	12,594	-----
1989	11,820	22,500
1998	-----	14,900

Figure 3.7, Methodist attendance in Cornwall 1961-1998²²⁹

However, Methodists might disproportionately support the Liberals and thereafter the Liberal Democrats, this does not mean that a dwindling number of people still has the same influence over the outcome of elections in Cornwall as they used to do. Although no doubt the Methodist tradition can still be an important aspect to the party's fortunes a number as small as 14,900 can hardly overwhelm the outcome of an election in Cornwall, but they can certainly affect it in an election which is marginal.

Milden also leaves a fascinating insight into the survival and eventual resurgence of the Liberals/Liberal Democrats in Cornwall by saying, 'the chronological and spatial consistency of the Liberal-Methodist nexus is... *uncertain*.'²³⁰ Although she accepts the traditional view that the two are strongly linked the over-simplification of linking the two and seeing them as symbiotic ignores some key aspects in the changing complexion of Cornish politics in which: 'Methodists who look to the "New Jerusalem" promised by Labour's 1945 victory, or those who admire the "strong moral leadership" of the Thatcher years, or others who link Methodism to Cornwall's more distant past,²³¹ might well look elsewhere to express their religious convictions.

²²⁸ Milden K., 'Remembered Places and Forgotten Histories: the complexities of the cultural memory of politics and religion within Cornish Methodism', Unpublished PhD thesis, 2005, University of Exeter p.50

²²⁹ Ibid

²³⁰ Ibid p.52

²³¹ Ibid

This residual link may have been important to the Liberals during their period of political wilderness of the middle of the twentieth century but a declining religion can hardly be the logical cause of the resurgence of a party's fortunes in a more secular age, even if, as Milden identifies, the party organisation still finds candidates who come from that tradition.

The Failure of the Labour Party

One of the continuing idiosyncrasies of the Cornish political landscape is the apparently almost continual failure of the Labour Party, the working class replacement for the Liberal Party, in the early twentieth century. This failure, and the persistence of the Liberal Party to survive is one of the contrary aspects of Cornish politics.

This failure to break through has stimulated academic discussion and frustrated Labour politicians alike, lending to the view that Cornwall's distance from the metropolis is also a distance from political reality. This particularly exercised A.L. Rowse, then also a Labour candidate, who viewed the survival of the Liberal Party as 'simply a fossilised survival...in a backward area like Cornwall.'²³² Of course, it is only partly true to say that Labour failed in Cornwall. In the immediate post-war period the Labour Party has as much, or more, representation as the Liberals did. In 1945 Cornwall saw its first Labour MP elected in Falmouth and Penryn and he was joined when the Liberal MP for North Cornwall, Tom Horabin, defected to Labour in November 1947, having sat as an Independent since 1946. Thus by 1947 Labour actually had two of the Cornish constituencies whilst the Liberals had none, and they continued to have none until Peter Bessell's election in Bodmin in 1964.

However, this is not a restatement of the electoral history of Cornwall it is an assessment as to whether the very nature of Cornwall, whether this be geographic, ethnic or as discussed above, religious, could have contributed to this failure by the Labour Party to replace the Liberals as the more credible alternative to the Conservatives nationally. The fact that Thomas Horabin was even elected in the greatest Labour victory, was impressive, and seemed to go against the increasingly convincing 'alignment' paradigm of British politics 'demonstrating Cornwall's full

²³² Rowse A.L., *A Man of the Thirties* (London, 1979), p.55

integration into a truly national party system.²³³ This being the apparent systemic view that Britain is naturally a two-party state and within that, in the post-war period, with Labour winning its first overall majority in 1945, this had settled to being a Labour/Conservative duopoly. Of course this was not the case in Cornwall which the Liberals consistently contested in the post-war period but as Lee continues, 'Labour's late emergence onto the Cornish political scene made its establishment as a significant contender difficult and allowed the Liberal Party to continue as the main repository for the anti-Conservative vote long beyond its loss of that function in other rural areas.'²³⁴ This suggests that there is some local or cultural cause of Labour's failure in Cornwall which makes it different from other rural areas of England. Of course this rather ignores the different nature of Cornwall's post-industrial landscape which although geographically spread, with agriculture as a core industry, Cornwall retained a defined industrial centre which should have appealed to working class voters to support the Labour Party. Payton attributes a great deal of Labour's failure for breaking through in the inter-war period to 'the continuing decline of mining, the consequent retardation of trade unionism, and emigration.'²³⁵ This does suggest that, although perhaps this is not a so-called cultural difference, Cornwall's socio-economic situation denuded it of a solid working class base upon which Labour could build. The relative absence of Trades Union activity undermined the chances of the Labour Party to sink deep roots in Cornish industry and arguably the way in which miners were paid made them more independent, rather than co-operative, in the way they sought work and consequently sought improvements in working conditions. The collapse and general decline in the Cornish mining industry in the twentieth century is surely a factor in the failure of trades unions to build a strong base in the industrial parts of Cornwall. This has been emphasised by more recent studies of Philip Payton's, which identifies ex-patriot Cornish tin miners as being at the centre of trades unionism in South Australia and being prime movers in the creation of the South Australian Labor Party.²³⁶ This region of Australia was dominated by the Cornish hard-rock miners and the fact that they were not averse to

²³³ Lee A., *Political Parties and Elections in Cornwall Since the War* (ed. Payton P.), (Redruth, 1993), p.256

²³⁴ *Ibid* p.257

²³⁵ Payton P., 'Labour Failure and Liberal Tenacity: Radical Politics and Cornish Political Culture, 1880-1939,' *Cornish Studies Two* (ed. Payton P.), (Exeter, 1994), p.90

²³⁶ Payton P., *Making Moonta: The Invention of Australia's little Cornwall* (Exeter, 2007)

being at the heart of a new Labor movement in Australia rather proves that their absence from the political debate in Cornwall must have retarded the growth of an indigenous labour movement.

The culture of Cornwall was not inherently opposed to the growth of a Labour Party, it was not dissimilar to working class, mining Wales, but the circumstances of a migrant working class leaving Cornwall for the promised riches of mining across the globe, left Cornwall with a post-industrial and agrarian economy which, as Rowse argued, 'fossilised' Cornish politics in its late nineteenth century context of being a Liberal/Conservative contest.

The Fringe Nature of Cornish Nationalism

One of the key aspects of the Celtic Fringe since the Second World War has been the growing impact of the two main nationalist parties on the mainland – Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National Party. From small beginnings in the middle decades of the century they have both grown to become significant players in their respective nations. The pressure that the parties achieved, particularly in Scotland, arguably led to the creation of the Kilbrandon Commission which, as a Royal Commission, was tasked with assessing the possible future constitutional framework of the United Kingdom. Whilst Scotland and Wales were both recommended for a form of limited devolution despite Cornwall's 'individual character and strong sense of regional identity, there is no evidence that its people have a wish to see it separated for the purposes of government from the rest of England.'²³⁷ Consequently Cornwall was to have no devolution and when the referendums in Scotland and Wales failed to deliver reform the likelihood of Cornwall achieving any form of devolution seemed even more remote.

With the creation of the Scottish Constitutional Convention the likelihood of Scottish and Welsh devolution seemed almost unstoppable by the time Tony Blair and the Labour Party won the 1997 election and the subsequent referendums in those nations delivered devolution, although the result in Wales was much closer than the Scottish equivalent. The failure of the North East referendum again made the likelihood of any devolution in Cornwall much less likely.

²³⁷ *Royal Commission on the Constitution 1969 – 1973*, Volume I, Report (Cmnd 5460)

It is in this context, of being ignored by the metropolitan elite and being almost universally ignored on the issue of devolution, that Cornwall and its nationalist movement, Mebyon Kernow, finds itself. Logically this ambivalence to Cornish self-determination might lend one to believe that nationalism, like in Scotland and Wales, would have gone from strength to strength, feeding on resentment to a metropolitan elite incapable of responding to the desire for self-determination. However, although Mebyon Kernow now does have a small number of councillors on Cornwall Council it is yet to save a parliamentary deposit when contesting a Westminster seat and seems to be permanently placed as a fringe party with little prospect of electing a Member of Parliament.

Deacon, Cole and Tregidga argue that 'for a large proportion even in Cornwall, Cornwall was and is felt to be an English county.'²³⁸ Nationalism is explicitly dependent on an identity and as they continue, 'it is the existence of this Cornish identity, remarkably surviving a thousand years of incorporation into the English state, which has facilitated the emergence of the Cornish national movement and, at the same time, been stimulated by it.'²³⁹

However, despite the potential for nationalism to have an apparent foundation in Cornwall it has simply remained a peripheral part of the Cornish political scene, except at local government level. It has simply failed to break into the Cornish duopoly of the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives. This may seem odd but can be partly seen to be because of the Cornish branding, if not nationalism, of the Liberal Democrats. The party has somewhat engulfed nationalism as part of its identity. Present MP Dan Rogerson introduced his own devolution bill for Cornwall²⁴⁰ which he argued gave equal status to Scotland and Wales saying, 'If the government is going to recognise the right of Scotland and Wales to greater self-determination because of their unique cultural and political positions, then they should recognise [Cornwall's].'²⁴¹ This Liberal Democrat support for Cornish nationalism, if not Mebyon Kernow, is not, however, a modern phenomenon. Peter Bessell, the Liberal MP for Bodmin from 1964-70, according to Tregidga, recognised 'a new anti-metropolitan agenda in Cornish politics [which] ensured that he became a pivotal

²³⁸ Deacon B., Cole D. & Tregidga G., *Mebyon Kernow and Cornish Nationalism*, (Cardiff, 2003), p.1

²³⁹ Ibid p.3

²⁴⁰ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/cornwall/8149209.stm>

²⁴¹ Ibid

figure in the wider relationship between the post-war Celtic 'Revival' and mainstream Liberal politics.'²⁴² This link clearly persists as only recently it was Liberal Democrat MPs who were publically credited with securing a grant of £120,000 for development of the Cornish language.²⁴³ Indeed the recent recognition of the Cornish as a national minority, with the same status as the other indigenous Celtic nationalities, Irish, Scottish and Welsh, has also allowed the Liberal Democrats to acquire the mantle of being the most Cornish of the Westminster parties.²⁴⁴

Another aspect that should be assessed is the timing of the emergence of Cornish nationalism. Unlike Plaid Cymru and the SNP, Mebyon Kernow emerged as political parties in the 1960s and 1970s, just at the time the Liberals were having their most successful period since the 1920s. The other two nationalist parties emerged whilst the Liberals were in apparent terminal decline in the 1930s. As such they were able to take up some of the mantle, which the Liberals also retained, of being the anti-metropolitan vehicle, which Mebyon Kernow could not.

Thus Cornish nationalism, unlike its Welsh and Scottish equivalents, has failed to make anywhere the same level of impact on its domestic political landscape. This has been partly due to the lack of nationhood that Cornwall has, in comparison to Scotland and Wales, but also because the Liberal Democrats have effectively stolen the clothes of national identity, if not nationalism, for themselves. This capacity to be the vehicle for anti-metropolitanism is clearly another factor in the survival and eventual success of the Liberal Democrats in Cornwall. However, as Deacon, Cole and Tregidga concede this is apparently due to the rather limited impact that nationalism could have in an area where a great deal of the population consider themselves to be English rather than having a separate Cornish identity. Implicitly they concede that Cornwall has simply not been Cornish enough to have a vibrant nationalist party as an alternative. However, recent research conducted by Deacon does suggest that an increased number of the population to self-identify as Cornish

²⁴² Tregidga G., 'Bodmin Man: Peter Bessell and Cornish politics in the 1950s and 1960s', in *Cornish Studies 8* (ed. Payton P.) (Exeter, 2000), p.161

²⁴³ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-devon-26675839>

²⁴⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cornish-granted-minority-status-within-the-uk>

rather English or British and this change, enhanced by the recognition of Cornish national status may contribute, in the future, to this changing.²⁴⁵

Conclusions

When assessing the culture of Cornwall and whether it has a role to play in the arguments as to the survival and recent resurgence of the Liberal Democrats it should be seen through a series of historic lenses.

In this chapter it should be clear that the situation in which Cornwall finds itself, remote from the centre of power, might expect Cornishness to have taken a more nationalist tinge, indeed through the Liberal Democrats it arguably has. However, the most surprising aspect of this separation is that it has not found its expression through the Labour Party, a much more natural party of government, and thus influence, in the late twentieth century. This failure to support the Labour Party is clearly a cultural difference which Cornwall seems to share with some other parts of the remote Celtic Fringe. In the case of Cornwall this has not been superseded by the apparently ever-growing tide of nationalism that Welsh-speaking Wales has seen and Scotland would seem to continue to see. The apparent lack of impact that nationalism can make on a community that only slightly cleaves towards independence and against an English identity which many in Cornwall sustain due to the less ethnically homogenous population.

There can be little doubt that the modern concept of the remoteness from the metropolis leads to an amount of anti-metropolitanism and a degree of separation. This is almost certainly contributed to by a combination of Cornish identity and a distinct historic cleavage in religious culture. There can be little doubt that the growth of the Celtic revival from the mid-nineteenth through to the early twentieth century was notable and identifies Cornwall as being different from other parts of England. The capacity of the Liberals, and subsequently the Liberal Democrats, to sustain their existence on the foundation of Methodism, emboldened by the weak influence of nationalism and the failure of the Labour Party may have left the Liberals with a disproportionately high level of support in Cornwall compared to other parts of England, but this would not account for their recovery in the 1960s and eventual

²⁴⁵ Deacon B., 'The unimportance of being Cornish in Cornwall' in *Cornish Studies 21*, (ed. Payton P.) (Exeter, 2013)

domination in the late twentieth century. This success must have been based on something more than the culture of Cornwall otherwise the party would presumably have been successful throughout the century. The party was, at times, the third party of Cornwall not the party most likely to represent the county.

The decisive factor must have been the way it began to change the way it appealed to the electorate and this is what succeeding chapters will seek to show.

Chapter 4 – Character -

Does personality politics matter in Cornwall?

In the twentieth century, several key figures stand out as significant Liberal personalities, and need some assessment. However, understanding their comparative impact is challenging. A direct comparison between these historical figures and contemporary figures examined in surveys in this thesis (in 2008-2010) is almost impossible - as no similar surveys were conducted during the earlier period. Nonetheless, it is important to attempt to assess where the balance lies between the roles of personality politics and campaign activity in the electoral success of the Liberal Party in these and the more modern periods. The theoretical debate concerning the importance of candidates to electoral success is often focused on their policy priorities as well as their capacity to be local leaders. As was stated earlier Hoegg and Lewis argue that 'it is widely accepted that candidate appearance influences election outcomes.'²⁴⁶ They argue that 'candidate personality trait impressions have been found to significantly influence voter choice.'²⁴⁷ This is further argued by Buttice and Stone who state that two 'dimensions of candidate difference are fundamental to the workings of representative democracy because voters must enforce their interests in policy outcomes and high-quality leaders by selecting between competing candidates.'²⁴⁸ Intriguingly they go on to argue 'that candidates may not benefit from moderating their ideological position if doing so increases the impact of a quality disadvantage with their opponent.'²⁴⁹ They also admit that the personality of a candidate is often rolled into a scholarly view 'such candidates are likely to mount effective campaigns'²⁵⁰ rather than have any particular traits that make them more suitable to be politicians. Research on the importance of candidates to the likelihood of electoral success is quite extensive and ranges from the asserted relative importance of smiling²⁵¹ and research which has looked at the more scientific approach of evaluating a Condorcet winner in a first-past-the-post

²⁴⁶ Hoegg J. & Lewis M., 'The Impact of Candidate Appearance and Advertising Strategies on Election Results', *Journal of Marketing Research* (2011), p.895

²⁴⁷ Ibid p.896

²⁴⁸ Buttice M. & Stone W., 'Candidates Matter: Policy and Quality Differences in Congressional Elections' *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 74, No. 3 (2012) p.870

²⁴⁹ ibid

²⁵⁰ Jacobson, G. & Kernell S., *Strategy and Choice in Congressional Elections* (Yale, 1983)

²⁵¹ Horiuchi Y. & Komatsu T., 'Should Candidates Smile to Win Elections? An Application of Automated Face Recognition Technology,' *Psychology*, Vol. 33, No. 6, (2012)

electoral environment based on candidate approval rather than other factors affecting voter choice, such as policy or geography or even likelihood to win.²⁵² The research around candidates is enormous and would constitute a research project in itself, but two key aspects are important. Does policy compete with the candidate for pre-eminence in the voters' decision-making process? Is there significance in the notion of locality, or community, in the debate between the relative importance of local candidates compared to their national party leaders. These two aspects will be assessed as part of the constituency surveys conducted between 2008 and 2010.

Personalities pre-1945

Cornwall, being so remote from Westminster has arguably never been the most desirable place to launch an illustrious political career, compared to other areas closer to London. However, as the Liberal Party essentially ceased to have constituencies in these less remote areas of the country and many Liberals, from other parts of the country, went to Cornwall to extend their political careers.

Of course there are numerous candidates who contested elections for the Liberal Party in the pre-war period, when the party still maintained levels of support in Cornwall consistently above the national average, but several, as the literature covering the period suggests, stand out.²⁵³ They are not uniformly Cornish nor necessarily have any local credentials for that matter, but, as long-standing MPs and local candidates, they were the basis for the majority of electoral success for the party in this period. They were, Isaac Foot (MP for Bodmin 1922-24 and 1929-35 and candidate for the 1937 St. Ives by-election), Sir Francis Acland (MP for Camborne 1910-1922 and North Cornwall 1932-39), Sir Donald MacLean (MP for North Cornwall 1929-32), Walter Runciman (MP for St. Ives 1929-37), his wife Hilda Runciman (MP for St. Ives 1928-29) and Tom Horabin (MP for North Cornwall 1939-1950).

They are all memorable in Cornish politics because of their electoral success and to varying extents, for their championing of the Liberal cause, and arguably its

²⁵² Potthoff R., 'Simple manipulation-resistant voting systems designed to elect Condorcet candidates and suitable for large-scale public elections', *Social and Welfare Choice*, Vol. 40 Issue 1, (2013) p.101

²⁵³ Tregidga G., *The Liberal Party in South West Britain since 1918*, (Exeter, 2000), Foot M. and Highet A., *Isaac Foot, A Westcountry Boy – Apostle of England* (London, 2006)

surrogate, Methodism, despite some of the leading figures like Acland and Horabin not being Methodists themselves. In modern times, we try to assess the impact of Cornish nationalism in the electoral success of a candidate. However, none of the six people who could have arguably been described as personality politicians in the pre-war period, were, in fact, Cornish. Of these, Isaac Foot is the best notable candidate for the argument that character is a significant factor in Cornish politics, despite not being the most electorally successful.

Although Isaac Foot was increasingly a champion of Cornwall, he originally came from Plymouth, was eventually Lord Mayor of Plymouth and indeed supported Plymouth Argyle at football. He made his family home in Cornwall and became a strong leader for the county, and Liberalism in the West Country in general. Of the six, he had the strongest claim to being a 'local' candidate, essentially based on his longevity and persistence and the familial legacy he left behind him.

Francis Acland, a notable Devonian and Cornish landowner, had perhaps the second best local credentials. However, even he only arrived in Camborne in December 1910 having lost his Richmond seat in Yorkshire, which itself was not historically natural Liberal territory, but had been won that seat as part of the Liberal landslide in 1906. He and his son, Richard, would move to the left as the Liberals became less significant in national politics. It is conjecture to assess what would have happened to Acland's career had he lived beyond 1939, but both his son Richard and his successor were to join Labour in the 1940s.

Walter Runciman and Donald MacLean are both from even further afield. Both having being rejected by their local constituents in the North and both essentially engaging in a 1920s version of the modern 'chicken run'²⁵⁴ in the face of changed electoral circumstances for the Liberals nationally.

Hilda Runciman, although the first ever woman MP in Cornwall, was seen essentially only a 'warming pan',²⁵⁵ who was preparing for her husband's second 'chicken run' from Swansea in 1928 when the by-election in St. Ives came.

²⁵⁴ <http://conservativehome.blogs.com/goldlist/2010/03/labours-laura-moffatt-joins-the-chicken-run.html> last viewed 22/07/13

²⁵⁵ Vallance E., *Women in the House – A study of Women Members of Parliament* (London, 1979)

Tom Horabin was unlike many of his Liberal predecessors. In many ways, he was a forerunner for a new breed of Liberals that would become more prevalent in the post-war period. The winner of the North Cornwall by-election in 1939, on the eve of war, Horabin was a businessman – more similar to future politicians like Eric Lubbock, winner of the Orpington by-election, than his landed and gentrified predecessors. He was much more a middle class candidate, than the likes of MacLean, Acland and the Runcimans, all knighted or benefiting from a baronetcy. This class difference may have been one of the reasons that eventually led Horabin to defect to the Labour Party in the 1940s, whilst still MP for North Cornwall, rather than to the Conservatives, like so many other Liberals gradually did.

Modern politicians, and their parties, can be tested by opinion surveys to assess levels of satisfaction, or dissatisfaction. As a result, it is important, however imprecisely, to try to qualitatively apply these tests to historic politicians to understand the importance of personality politics in Cornish politics. If quantitative analysis is impossible then qualitative analysis should be used to assess this, wherever possible.

What are the skills and attributes that politicians display which make them more attractive to the electorate? Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, is the test of whether they win. Although this is very simple to assess it shows a capacity of politicians to pass the credibility test that all candidates need. The second, is whether they display particular skills in doing this - skills of oratory or coalition building in their communities that stands them apart from other politicians. Importantly, and almost impossible to quantify, is it possible to empirically analyse the attractiveness of a politician to their respective communities. Finally is it possible to comprehend whether this affection and respect can actually project itself beyond their own geographic electoral constituency to other parts of Cornwall, or for that matter, even further afield.

Rt. Hon. Isaac Foot (MP for Bodmin 1922-24 and 1929-35)

Although Isaac Foot's eight year parliamentary career was somewhat brief, his fifty year contribution to Cornish and West Country politics, and the on-going fortunes of the Liberal Party, should not be underestimated. Many major UK-wide Liberal histories do not rate Foot's role in pre-war, and, for that matter, post-war, Liberal

politics very highly. This is possibly due to his limited capacity to make himself a major national political figure in Parliament. However, there seems little question that his almost single-handed battle in Cornwall to maintain Liberalism as a credible and coherent political force, combined with his leadership of the Methodist movement, his writings and his familial legacy, make him the major figure in pre-war Liberal politics in Cornwall.

Being a local candidate, if not Cornish, was an important factor in the affection that built up around Isaac Foot. In many ways he became a permanent fixture in West Country politics. He first contested an election in January 1910 in Totnes. Even then, Foot was showing the oratorical skills that would prove to be the foundation of his popularity. At one public meeting in Plymouth, where Lloyd George was given a 'great reception', Foot was given a 'greater [one] because the courage of the young Liberal who was going to lead a forlorn hope in the Totnes Division...delivered a fighting speech that was cheered to the echo,'²⁵⁶ by the 10,000 strong crowd in Plymouth.

Despite losing the Totnes seat he was almost immediately chosen for the second election of 1910 for Bodmin. Despite being comparatively young and facing many arguments for 'selecting an experienced and mature fighter,'²⁵⁷ the selection might have seemed strange in such a tumultuous year in politics, they had however, 'chosen a man who possessed the essential qualities of leadership.'²⁵⁸ However, it is important to note that despite his later popularity Foot did not win an election in Cornwall for twelve years between 1910 and 1922. His assumed overnight success took twelve years in blossoming, in which period he lost two general elections, being described as the 'latch-key candidate,'²⁵⁹ undermining his credentials as a local champion being described as an outsider, by one unsupportive correspondent of the *Cornish Times*. His success in the unofficial test of local support in the *1912 all Cornwall Model election*²⁶⁰ did suggest that Foot had support beyond his own constituency, beating all the sitting Liberal and Unionist MPs, but in the context of

²⁵⁶ Foot M. and Hight A., *Isaac Foot, A Westcountry Boy – Apostle of England* (London, 2006) p.125

²⁵⁷ Ibid

²⁵⁸ Ibid

²⁵⁹ *The Cornish Times* 24th May 1912 p.5

²⁶⁰ Unknown, 'The All-Cornwall Model Election', *Representation* (1912)

first-past-the-post, with this only being a test of a proportional voting system, Foot remained unelected.

Foot not having the 'Coupon'²⁶¹ in the 1918 election almost certainly cost him a seat in Parliament. As John Foot said, 'in normal circumstances, my father might have hoped to win Bodmin' but, 'as a noted supporter of Asquith,' he was cast out of the coalition election machine. Although not an electorally sensible decision by Foot in 1918, it was this sort of free thinking and independence that would eventually see him elected in 1922 in a by-election, once again fighting without the 'coupon'. As Tregidga states, Foot's victory in the by-election implied that one of the continuing reasons for Foot's affection amongst voters in South East Cornwall, was his Methodism, 'with his evangelical style of campaigning restoring the party as the true heir to the old Radical tradition.'²⁶²

Methodism, and its adherents, were a key factor in the maintenance of Liberal fortunes during the early part of the twentieth century, and Foot 'emerged as the real symbol of the Liberal revival'²⁶³ in Cornwall. This foundation of non-conformity did not appeal to everyone however. A.L. Rowse²⁶⁴ 'couldn't bear his public idiom as standard-bearer of Nonconformist Liberalism.'²⁶⁵ However, there can be little doubt that 'benefiting from his status as a popular local preacher,'²⁶⁶ the nonconformist nature of much of Cornwall, gave Foot a firm foundation upon which to build his electoral prospects. Yet even this would not be enough to see him victorious more often than not – logically some other factor other than his personality or Methodism was important in his election.

His decision to oppose Lloyd George's Coupon candidate in 1918, contest a candidate with the Coupon in 1922, combined with his championing of Nonconformist Liberalism shows a key part of Isaac Foot's personal makeup; he was loyal, (to Liberal leader Herbert Asquith, against Lloyd George who he believed had usurped the premiership during the First World War). He was arguably too loyal at

²⁶¹ Issued to sitting members of the Coalition government which meant they should not be opposed by a another member of the Coalition

²⁶² Tregidga G., *The Liberal Party in South West Britain since 1918* (Exeter, 2000), p. 27

²⁶³ Ibid

²⁶⁴ Labour candidate for Penryn and Falmouth and a notable Cornish writer and contemporary of AJP Taylor

²⁶⁵ Rowse A.L., *A Man of the Thirties* (London, 1979), p.56

²⁶⁶ Payton P., 'Labour Failure and Liberal Tenacity', *Cornish Studies Two*, (Exeter, 1994), p.91

times, leading to him being ostracised from much of liberalism's adherents for long periods, single-minded and even perceptibly stubborn. This single-mindedness certainly made him a political survivor in Cornish political terms. To contest election after election across the West Country from 1910 to 1945, and supporting others that followed him, shows a belief in his cause, but did it show ambition?

It is very difficult ever to fully comprehend the motivations of politicians. When they make pronouncements on policy there will be a combination of political conviction, personal interest and party integrity. In retrospect, Foot shows a lot of evidence of political conviction, but was not unwilling to engage in either of the other two. He was clearly willing to play the Cornish card in elections as 'the natural champion of Cornwall,'²⁶⁷ by emphasising that Cornwall 'was a long way from London,'²⁶⁸ raising the issues of centre-periphery politics that would later encompass the manner in which Liberals and Liberal Democrats would campaign. This encouragement of perceived differences between Cornwall and the metropolis would be an enduring factor in Liberal campaigning. However, Foot was also making an important point not merely to secure local votes, but to speak for his electorate, and those in Cornwall beyond the Bodmin Division. This marriage of Liberalism, Nonconformity and Cornish identity is a key aspect of his personal attraction to voters in South East Cornwall and the rest of Cornwall. Foot's Cornish identity was firmly linked with his victory, not just over the opposition in the 1922 by-election, but by his capacity to be the standard bearer of what he perceived to be the preferred, Gladstonian, and at that point Asquithian, even traditional, Liberalism. 'Foot was an inexplicable enigma,'²⁶⁹ but not to the Cornish who immortalised his 1922 victory and firmly cemented him, his politics and his future position in Cornwall, by singing his campaign song 'inevitably to the tune of "Trelawny."' ²⁷⁰ He was the candidate that embodied the three key aspects of successful Cornish politicians.

Given his mixed electoral record, it is right to question how successful Foot's approach actually was however. As has been indicated Foot was not universally successful. Despite being involved in Cornish politics for decades, he enjoyed limited

²⁶⁷ Tregidga G., 'Politics of the Celto-Cornish Revival 1886-1939', *Cornish Studies Five*, (ed. Payton P.) (Exeter, 1997), p.142

²⁶⁸ *The Cornish Guardian*, 16th February 1923

²⁶⁹ Payton P., 'Labour Failure and Liberal Tenacity', *Cornish Studies Two*, (Exeter, 1994), p.91

²⁷⁰ *Ibid*

electoral success. Some of this can be attributed to the almost permanent and consistent decline of Liberal fortunes across the country. Yet Bodmin did not stay in the Liberal fold as long as North Cornwall did and Foot's personal popularity did not deliver him permanent success. Some of this also depends on other factors beyond Foot's localised impact. Historically Bodmin had not been the most successful seat for the Liberals in Cornwall, so as the low tide of his party came, from 1930s-1960s, even this popularity was not enough to prevent defeat.

When Foot lost Bodmin in 1935, to 'the youngest candidate elected at that election,'²⁷¹ Unionist John Rankin Rathbone, who was neither Cornish nor Methodist, North Cornwall would re-elect Liberals for another three elections. A.L. Rowse tried to identify why he thought Foot's capacity for electoral success was almost self-limiting. Rowse, 'was more than willing to compromise,'²⁷² to ensure that Conservatives were unsuccessful in Cornwall. The Labour Party, 'succeeded in getting the Labour people to support Isaac,'²⁷³ and urging Foot to campaign actively, in the 1937 St. Ives by-election, to oppose the Government's policy of appeasement, 'Isaac wasted his breath on the wrongs of Nonconformity.'²⁷⁴ Damningly Rowse concluded that, 'it was the end of [Foot's] political career and he had only himself to blame.'²⁷⁵ This may be Rowse's view, but Foot's failure, at St. Ives, to be returned to Parliament would have, on a platform of opposing Chamberlain's government, been of questionable benefit, at a time when Appeasement was still extremely popular. It is perhaps truer to identify that Foot's refusal to welcome Lloyd George to the campaign would have damaged his chances through personal animosity towards the former Prime Minister. The Liberals themselves did not put Foot's failure down to his lack of policy, 'in a constituency in which his opponent could plausibly argue that Free Trade would deprive everybody of his work, shows the electoral value of standing by one's principles. Mr Foot made absolutely no compromise on Free Trade or Temperance or anything else...with better organisation he would have won by 1,000.'²⁷⁶ So whilst a range of challenging circumstances made his election difficult, it was not attributed to his policy stance by Liberals, but to the belief that the local

²⁷¹ Wright P., *A Brittle Glory* (London, 1986), p.26

²⁷² Rowse A.L., *A Man of the Thirties* (London, 1979), p.56

²⁷³ *Ibid* p.57

²⁷⁴ *Ibid*

²⁷⁵ *Ibid*

²⁷⁶ Thurso Papers, THRS II/62/4, 'Political Inferences from the Miniature General Election' (1937)

organisation had atrophied under Runciman, who had not fought an election since 1929 - unopposed as a member of the National Government. Foot still remained 'the inspiration of Liberals in West Cornwall,'²⁷⁷ as well as his own East Cornwall former constituency, but perhaps politicians like Runciman, because of their own ambition, were more successful in steering a course through the dangerous political waters of the 1930s, switching allegiance rather than Foot's single-minded loyalty to Liberalism and its historic causes. Although Foot was a part of the Cornish community this desire to follow his principles is clearly different from the rather more populist approach that more recently became advocated under *Rennardism*. The Liberal Party's report on the so-called 'General election in miniature' does seem to suggest that the party linked a commitment to principles oddly as being more desirable than electoral success, as not a single one of the seats the party was attempting to win in this series of by-elections fell to the party in 1937. Perhaps this is some indication that the party was relying on Foot's personality to win at St. Ives rather than organisation.

Foot's commitment to the Liberal Party was apparently unflinching. Many of his contemporaries left for either the Conservatives or Labour in the post-war period, including two of his own sons, both of whom went on to be Labour ministers. This is another area where Rowse identifies a weakness in Foot, concerning campaigning as part of the popular front, against the Conservatives. Whilst Rowse was able to conclude deals with Sir Francis Acland, whereby Labour would not seriously contest North Cornwall, and Acland would leave Rowse a free hand in Penryn and Falmouth, Rowse 'could get no such understanding with Isaac Foot,'²⁷⁸ with Acland describing Foot to Rowse as a "'hard-bitten party man.'"²⁷⁹ This intransigence in dealing with Labour, despite having benefited from overt support from local Labour figures in 1922, is a sign of Foot's stubbornness which made him both difficult to deal with as a political opponent, but which probably also ensured the continued existence of the Liberal Party in Cornwall: stubbornness being a useful commodity in survival. His missionary zeal in continuing the Liberal agenda long after it had ceased to be a national party in the mid-1940s, made former Liberal colleagues remember him with

²⁷⁷ Foot Family Papers 2762/68. Letter from Jeanette Peacock to Sarah Foot, (1991)

²⁷⁸ Rowse A.L., *A Man of the Thirties* (London, 1979), p.56

²⁷⁹ Ibid

genuine dislike, 'Walter [Runciman] and I have come across him in very unpleasant ways and we both warmly dislike [Foot]. He behaved extremely badly to Walter in Cornwall and we did so rejoice when Alec Beecham [sic] managed to beat him at St Ives!'²⁸⁰ His pious nature even tested national figures with Foot 'smiling with a triumph that even his native modesty [could not] restrain.'²⁸¹

His capacity to antagonise his neighbours and contemporaries was perhaps born of their incapacity to grasp, and to equal, his personal popularity and moral superiority. As Tregidga puts it, 'he was a rare example of a Liberal MP who was able to build a political career through his personal efforts at the community level.'²⁸² Foot's persistence, even stubbornness, in support of his Liberal cause was not so much as Payton would say the 'politics of paralysis'²⁸³ or as Rowse put it 'fossilised survival',²⁸⁴ but the politics of surviving the extinction level event which annihilated most of his Liberals colleagues. Some survived by joining the Conservatives, such as Leslie Hore-Belisha and Winston Churchill; others joined the Labour Party, Megan Lloyd George, Tom Horabin and Dingle Foot amongst them. Yet Isaac Foot appeared to have seen the survival of his cause as being more important than his own earthly career.

Foot achieved notoriety and popularity across Cornwall for five decades, making him the pre-eminent politician in the period. However, despite this fame he failed to win the vast majority of the general elections he fought and failed to win two by-elections (Plymouth Sutton 1919 and St. Ives 1937). He lost his Bodmin seat in 1935 to a very junior Conservative who was a recent Oxford graduate with no links to the area or Cornwall's predominant Methodism. This, despite being in Cornish politics for decades, rather than months like Rathbone, would seem to suggest that personality politics are not vitally important in Cornwall and are certainly not the deciding factor in elections. Although Foot is the example of a personality politician in pre-war period his failure to be more successful early in his career and his defeat by a much more

²⁸⁰ Viscount Simon Papers, MS 97 Folios 59-61 Letter from Viscountess Runciman to Viscount Simon 9th December 1947

²⁸¹ Winston Churchill, Hansard, July 30, 1935, lines 2571-72

²⁸² Tregidga G., 'Francis Acland and Cornish Politics 1910-1922', *Cornish Studies Fifteen*, (ed. Payton P.) (Exeter, 2007) p.179

²⁸³ Payton P, *The Making of Modern Cornwall: Historical Experience and the Persistence of 'Difference'* (Exeter, 1992), p.130-60

²⁸⁴ Rowse A.L., *A Man of the Thirties* (London, 1979), p.55

junior candidate in 1935, and never being elected thereafter, would seem to suggest it is not vitally important to electoral success.

Sir Francis Acland Bt. (MP for Camborne 1910-22 and North Cornwall 1932-39)

Although Francis Acland served seventeen years as a Cornish MP, his political career was much longer than this in reality, first being elected for Richmond (Yorkshire) from 1906-10 and briefly for Tiverton 1923-24. In Richmond, 'Francis demonstrated and flair for political oratory.'²⁸⁵ Unlike many of his peers of this period, and later, Acland was of landed gentry stock, and according to Tregidga, despite his support for 'progressive causes like internationalism and social reform' he did suffer from being 'rather pompous' in line with the 'traditional role in the affairs of state that befitted his status in landed society.'²⁸⁶

Acland was described by Sir Arthur Carkeek, in 1910, at his victory in Camborne, as, 'a man of lofty ideals, high principles, straight in every walk of life, full of power and political sagacity who would go far in the counsels of the nation.'²⁸⁷ Acland was clearly highly thought of as a new Member of Parliament for the area, and was expected to be one of the party's high fliers in the new Parliament. Thrust back into government by Asquith, Acland seemed destined for Cabinet office, and would almost certainly have been promoted if it were not for Lloyd George ousting Asquith in 1916. Being such a close acolyte of Asquith made him a target for Lloyd George and he 'went into the political wilderness with the other anti-Coalition Liberals.'²⁸⁸

After his brief period as MP for Tiverton, by 1925, Acland, no longer shackled by his loyalty to Asquith, 'emerged as a key ally of Lloyd George', based on his 'reputation as a progressive landowner.'²⁸⁹ However, Acland returned to Parliament again in 1932, following the death of Sir Donald MacLean, the MP for North Cornwall, Acland benefitting 'from a local tradition of deference towards the Aclands,'²⁹⁰ mainly because the Cornish holdings of the family were concentrated in the North Cornwall seat.

²⁸⁵ Tregidga G., *Killerton, Camborne and Westminster* (Exeter, 2006), p.6

²⁸⁶ *Ibid* p.7

²⁸⁷ *West Briton*, 22nd December 1910

²⁸⁸ Tregidga G., *Killerton, Camborne and Westminster* (Exeter, 2006), p.7

²⁸⁹ *Ibid* p.15

²⁹⁰ *Ibid* p.18

On the death of his predecessor Donald MacLean, Acland was described as, ‘a Cornishman, and has already had a distinguished political career,’²⁹¹ clearly establishing his local credentials. Acland exhibited many of the skills and attributes that made Liberals successful before the war, despite these being very lean times for the party, when it was in steep decline in other parts of the country. He could display local credentials as a Cornishman, however questionable this was; he was an orator of some quality; and, above all, he had the credibility of being a local personality, appealing to the inherent deference to the Aclands in North Cornwall. He was, however, not simply a local gentleman who played at national policy. Acland was also very engaged with improving the lot of his constituents. He was also a rather sharp political operator who tried, from a position of political strength in North Cornwall, to stifle his opponents by attempting to prevent negative campaigning during elections.²⁹²

It is perhaps surprising that such an influential Westcountry politician would be described by Tregidga as ‘the forgotten Liberal,’²⁹³ but this is where there needs to be a clear distinction between those people who benefit from their own personality and those who are local personalities. Unlike Foot, who personified, ‘the regional interests of Cornwall’ and who ‘established a model that was to be embraced later in the century by popular and charismatic politicians from Harold Hayman for Labour to David Penhaligon for the Liberals,’²⁹⁴ Acland ‘found it difficult to develop a similar appeal that could enable his parliamentary career to pass into cultural memory.’²⁹⁵ As Tregidga explains, despite Acland’s best efforts to help his constituents he was seen as being from ‘the aristocratic elite who could not truly understand the daily struggle of his constituents.’²⁹⁶ As one of the largest landowners in the region and part of a long dynasty, stretching back to the Civil War, which had represented Devon and Cornwall in parliament the capacity for Acland to connect with an electorate that, however remote from London, was still affected by the social

²⁹¹ MacLean Papers, Dep. c.473 The Succession to Sir Donald MacLean (*Morning Post* 22nd June 1932)

²⁹² North Cornwall Conservative and Unionist Papers X381, Executive Minutes, 3rd February 1936

²⁹³ Tregidga G., ‘Francis Acland and Cornish Politics 1910-1922’, *Cornish Studies Fifteen*, (ed. Payton P.) (Exeter, 2007), p.165

²⁹⁴ *Ibid* p.166

²⁹⁵ *Ibid*

²⁹⁶ Tregidga G., ‘Francis Acland and Cornish Politics 1910-1922’, *Cornish Studies Fifteen*, (ed. Payton P.) (Exeter, 2007) p.166

changes that affected Britain after the First World War were considerable. However, deferential Cornish society remained in the inter-war period, Acland could almost certainly not become a local community politician like many of his successors.

Nonetheless he is an important figure in inter-war Cornish politics who benefited from impressive local credentials, combined with a skill for oratory, he was able to represent Cornish constituencies even when the party was entering the political wilderness in the 1930s. He prepared the ground for similar post-war politicians with similar attributes and electoral appeal. However and evaluation of the North Cornwall newsletters that Acland religiously sent to his party members in the 1930s demonstrate his focus was always as a national politician rather than a local MP and this has probably led to him being the forgotten MP that Tregidga refers to.²⁹⁷

Sir Donald MacLean (MP for North Cornwall 1929-32)

Although Donald MacLean only served as a Member of Parliament in Cornwall for some three years before his untimely death²⁹⁸, his influence on Cornish politics, particularly in North Cornwall, should not be underestimated.

He is, in many ways, part of Isaac Foot's extended legacy, which spread beyond the borders of his own Bodmin fiefdom and afforded him influence, because of his county-wide activity on the Methodist preaching circuit. As Foot said himself, 'it was a great gratification to me when, in response to my urgent representations, he became associated with Cornish politics and became the Liberal candidate for the neighbouring constituency.'²⁹⁹ MacLean's represented one of the ever-dwindling numbers of Liberals from the pre-war period. Like many contemporaries, he moved around the country to find a winnable seat having lost his previous constituency in Peebles and Southern Midlothian in 1922, placed third, with Labour winning.

MacLean had no local links at all. He had previously been MP for Bath between 1906 and 1910, and he was a former leader of the Liberal Parliamentary Party, when Asquith lost his seat in 1918. As a former Cabinet Minister, MacLean was a star candidate drawn to Cornwall, like Runciman in St. Ives and Walters in Penryn and

²⁹⁷ North Cornwall Liberal Association Papers, Newsletters 1933-39

²⁹⁸ This resulted in the by-election in 1932 won by Francis Acland.

²⁹⁹ Donald MacLean Papers, Dep. a.50 Quoting Isaac Foot (*Western Evening Herald* 18th June 1932)

Falmouth, because of the resilient nature of the Liberal vote in Cornwall. His leadership of the oppositionist Liberals immediately after the 1918 Coupon election, although not greeted with enthusiasm by Francis Acland, was seen as ‘respectable – if not brilliant.’³⁰⁰ MacLean was seen to give the Asquithian Liberals credibility and authority at a time when their numbers were very low following the 1918 election. Despite early antagonism, within weeks MacLean and Acland had ‘established most friendly relations.’³⁰¹ His election in 1929, when the Liberals won all the seats in Cornwall, was at a comparatively high water mark for the party nationally, having reunited under Lloyd George. His, and others’, victories in 1929 laid the ground for ‘the idea that “Good Old Cornwall” was now the “last refuge of Liberalism.”’³⁰²

MacLean was key in setting up a group within the Parliamentary Party which sought to create an agreement with Labour, called the Popular Front, which would seek electoral deals with Labour, in opposition to the Conservatives. This so-called Popular Front was a major reason that the Liberals were able to keep electoral support high in areas like Cornwall, by preventing Labour a foothold in seats that naturally they might have been able to win. This is particularly clear considering the results Labour achieved in St. Ives and Camborne in 1918, arguably Cornwall was natural territory for Labour. Despite this, he took a role in the National Government in 1931 as Secretary for Education as, ‘the situation was still not stable enough for a return to party politics.’³⁰³ Despite opposing government policy on tariffs, as part of the “agreement to differ” [which permitted him] to retain [his] office and yet oppose government policy on protection,³⁰⁴ he sat in cabinet alongside Conservatives as Liberal Democrats do today.

He died of a heart attack in 1932, having only served in North Cornwall for three years which makes him an arguable figure in terms of personality politics. It would not be unreasonable to consider MacLean to be a carpetbagger who rightly identified Cornwall as one of the few remaining bastions of Liberal support, having attempted to be re-elected in Kilmarnock and Cardiff East in the years between losing in

³⁰⁰ Tregidga G., *Killerton, Camborne and Westminster* (Exeter, 2006), p.130

³⁰¹ *Ibid* p.132

³⁰² Tregidga G., ‘Politics of the Celto-Cornish Revival 1886-1939’, *Cornish Studies Five*, (ed. Payton P.) (Exeter, 1997), p.143

³⁰³ Tregidga G., *The Liberal Party in South West Britain since 1918* (Exeter, 2000), p. 66

³⁰⁴ Brack D, et.al., *Dictionary of Liberal Biography* (London, 1998), p.244

Peebles and Midlothian and his 1929 victory in Cornwall. Nonetheless, unlike Acland, he did become a popular figure in Cornwall, possibly even enhanced by his untimely death.

Colourfully described as having, 'dauntless energy, good fighting qualities, and dogged determination to overcome all obstacles,'³⁰⁵ he was a major political figure who 'had greatness thrust upon him.'³⁰⁶ On his death, it was said that 'here was a gentleman who through all the stresses and vicissitudes of party politics, which sometimes bring the worst side of human nature to the top, maintained his standards of conduct, faith and sincerity.'³⁰⁷ If anything identifies the importance of personality politics in Cornwall it was not just that which engaged the public, but that which continued to bind the party together as living and breathing unit;

'No member of the House of Commons is feeling the loss of Sir Donald MacLean so keenly as is Mr Isaac Foot, the Minister for Mines. He speaks of his old friend and found emotion. There have been couples in Parliament who have been called political "twins," but few companionships have been so sincere and close as that which existed between these two ministers. They had so much in common. Their Liberalism was of an almost identical texture. The "Nonconformist conscience" was very real in both. The Scotsman came to Cornwall and found a seat, while young Dingle Foot went to Scotland and won at Dundee. This served to bring them still more closely together.'³⁰⁸

Isaac Foot had lost a close political friend and ally and the 'Duchy's loss of a great adopted son.'³⁰⁹

As much as this was true his notoriety pre-existed his political success in Cornwall and it is important, in terms of comparing this fame with that of the more indigenous Foot that was more similar to the community politics that people like Penhaligon and

³⁰⁵ Donald MacLean Papers, Dep. c.469 Folio 57 Pen Sketches of Mr Donald MacLean – Liberal Candidate for Bath 1906 (Reprinted from *The King and His Navy and Army*, Jan 21st 1905)

³⁰⁶ Brack D, et.al., *Dictionary of Liberal Biography* (London, 1998), p.242

³⁰⁷ Donald MacLean Papers, Dep. c.473 Tribute to a Gentleman (Western Evening Herald 18th June 1932)

³⁰⁸ Donald MacLean Papers, Dep. c.473 *Political Twins – Birmingham Daily Mail* 20th Jun 1932

³⁰⁹ Donald MacLean Papers, Dep. c.473 *Notes by Cornishman Western Morning News* 18th June 1932

Rennardism would build on later. These were national politicians with a local reputation rather than local politicians with a national one.

Walter Runciman (MP for St. Ives 1929-37)

Runciman was, like MacLean, another of the former Cabinet ministers who eventually found a winnable seat in Cornwall. By the time Runciman contested St. Ives in 1929 he too had moved around the country in search of seats that could still be won by the Liberals. First elected in Oldham in 1899, losing to Winston Churchill in 1900, MP for Dewsbury between 1902 and 1918 and Swansea West from 1924-1929, and having contested Edinburgh South in 1920, Berwick-upon-Tweed in 1922 and Brighton in 1923, he was a much travelled candidate and he had already been selected for St. Ives when the 1928 by-election occurred.

A career politician, Runciman headed the 'Liberal Council' - a radical group of Liberals who effectively set up an alternative party to Lloyd George. The 'moves to set up the Liberal Council also coincided with Runciman's decision to abandon Swansea.'³¹⁰ Runciman was primarily warned by Alfred Mond, who had 'some experience of the Georgian methods in Welsh constituencies,'³¹¹ of Lloyd George's capacity to turn Welsh seats against sitting members he was not fond of. As Wallace continues, 'his openly hostile attitude to the former Prime Minister was costing him support amongst Liberals in the town.'³¹² Like MacLean, Runciman found a safe haven for his politics in St. Ives, 'under encouragement from MacLean.'³¹³

Campaigning, like Foot and MacLean, on common issues such as temperance and more traditional Gladstonian Liberalism, allowed Runciman to attract traditional Liberal support in Cornwall. This was in contradiction to Lloyd George's more modern form of progressive Liberalism.

Runciman was essentially a national politician who had found a safe harbour at St. Ives where the stretch of Lloyd George's animosity towards him could not quite reach. This Liberal Party civil war in the late 1920s was one of the main reasons for

³¹⁰ Wallace J., 'The Political Career of Walter Runciman', Unpublished PhD Thesis, Newcastle University, (1995), p.290

³¹¹ Ibid p.291

³¹² Ibid

³¹³ Ibid

the party's almost terminal decline and Runciman was one of the main protagonists. But with Foot and MacLean he was one of the three leading members of the Liberal Council who were also involved in Cornish politics. When invited to help at the Tavistock by-election, the wings of the party were in open warfare when 'Foot warned Runciman that a poster was circulating which pointed out the opposition of Runciman, MacLean, Foot and others to Lloyd George and called on electors to "Follow the lead of prominent Liberals and vote for the Conservative candidate."'314

A key issue in the split that engulfed the Liberals in the inter-war period, with Walter Runciman at their centre, was that the party did hang on, and increase its support in the 1929 election. One reason for the continuing existence of the Liberals in Cornwall is down to the brand of Liberalism that survived in the area. The more traditionalist, Gladstonian Liberalism, of free trade, sound finance and temperance was enshrined in the characters that were attracted to Cornwall to evangelise its cause, and indeed 'the successes of the Liberal Council were limited mainly to Cornwall.'³¹⁵ This maintenance of traditional Liberal policies and values is one of the reasons for the party's continued success in Cornwall.

Runciman was, like MacLean, a politician of national renown having been President of the Board of Trade, and returning to that post when he joined the National Government in 1931. Cornwall was never a focus for Runciman. By the time he left in 1937, being ennobled as Viscount Runciman, the constituency party was in ruins, having not contested an election since 1929, Runciman being elected unopposed in both 1931 and 1935, following his conversion to being a National Liberal, 'things [had] been going too much the local Conservative's way in this Liberal constituency.'³¹⁶ His defection to National Liberalism and his apparent disinterest in Cornwall, contesting only one general election despite being an MP for St. Ives for eight years makes Runciman a counterpoint to the apparent popularity that figures like Foot and MacLean received during the same period. His success in St. Ives, at a moderately high water mark for the party in 1929 was not a personal vote, despite his role as a national figure of political importance. His longevity was essentially

³¹⁴ Wallace J., 'The Political Career of Walter Runciman', PhD Thesis, Newcastle University, (1995) p.298 quoting Isaac Foot to Walter Runciman 3rd October 1928 WR 218

³¹⁵ Ibid p.309

³¹⁶ *The Guardian* 31st March 1937

down to his tacking with the political wind to prevent opposition forming against him to be elected unopposed in both 1931 and 1935, as part of the National Government.

Although Runciman himself, was successful in winning in Cornwall, it was not on a platform like Foot, where he appealed to local feelings, this was a policy-driven candidacy focused on what he believed to be greater things than West Cornwall.

Hilda Runciman (MP for St. Ives 1928-29)

Although Hilda Runciman is in many ways a political and historical footnote, serving only as MP for St. Ives between the by-election of 1928 and her husband's election in 1929, she deserves mention in the pre-war group of Cornish politicians who made an impact.

Cornwall's first woman MP was anything but a feminist suffragette. She was 'Runciman's loyal wife who was equally embittered to Lloyd George'³¹⁷ and wanted to see her husband's political career continue after the unhelpfully timed elevation of the previous St. Ives' MP to the bench. Her willingness to keep the seat warm for her husband until the election of 1929 was a sign that the Runcimans were a political unit.

Her election as Cornwall's first woman MP, making the Runcimans the first husband and wife team to sit in Parliament together is a sign that Hilda Runciman was more than willing to continue her campaign against Lloyd George. The political storm continued with the party nationally, over her selection as candidate for Tavistock for the 1929 election, in order to give way for her husband in St. Ives. In many ways, she acted as a lightning rod for Lloyd George's personal animosity for Walter Runciman during this period.

Tom Horabin (MP for North Cornwall 1939-50)

Tom Horabin, although an MP during and after Second World War, was elected at a by-election on the eve of war in 1939. His election is a rare case, in modern times, of a Liberal being elected on a national wave of sentiment against a government's

³¹⁷ Wallace J., 'The Political Career of Walter Runciman', PhD Thesis, Newcastle University, (1995) p.294

international policy, namely Appeasement. Unlike Foot in St. Ives in 1937, where the policy was probably still an electoral benefit, by late 1939 it certainly was not.

Again, Horabin had no local credentials in Cornwall, but as a business consultant from South Wales, he arguably had Celtic links. According to Wyburn-Powell, 'he was a radical, outspoken politician, not afraid to disagree with anyone but unwilling to compromise in the interests of party unity.'³¹⁸ His election in North Cornwall was perhaps unsurprising when the Liberals still held the seat and with the government in catastrophic trouble over its collapsing policy of Appeasement towards Nazi Germany. Horabin, and his leader Archibald Sinclair, were deeply opposed to the policy and used it to focus their campaign in the constituency. Both Churchill and Lloyd George gave assistance in person or in spirit. Horabin, like so many of the radical politicians in Cornwall was an orator, wherever he spoke 'he aroused enormous enthusiasm.'³¹⁹ Like many of his contemporaries, Horabin was an advocate of the Popular Front in which Liberals and Labour would not openly contest each other's seats. A.L. Rowse argued that Labour should not contest North Cornwall and urged Labour voters to back Horabin, a 'Radical-Liberal'³²⁰ candidate.

Arguably, Horabin was a surprising choice to defend one of the Liberals' very few remaining winnable seats.'³²¹ Whilst it was 'his friendship with Dick Acland'³²² [which] secured his selection as Liberal candidate for North Cornwall,'³²³ 'the crucial factor in his selection seems to have been his appeal to non-Liberal voters. Horabin stood as a candidate for the Popular Front and his nomination papers were signed by both Labour members and dissident Conservatives.'³²⁴

Horabin's personality and approach may have chimed with the electorate in Cornwall at a time of massive international and national change, but his 'ideas sit uneasily within the traditional parameters of Liberalism. In some respects he can be seen as a

³¹⁸ Wyburn-Powell A., *Clement Davies Liberal Leader* (London, 2003), p.148

³¹⁹ Thurso Papers, THRS II/66/10, North Cornwall By-election – Horabin election leaflet

³²⁰ Reynolds J. & Hunter I., 'Liberal Class Warrior', *Journal of Liberal Democrat History*, (ed. Brack D.) (2000), p.17

³²¹ Ibid

³²² Francis Acland's son and the main Liberal advocate of the Popular Front and Liberal MP for Barnstaple.

³²³ Ingham R., 'Tom Horabin Remembered', *Journal of Liberal Democrat History*, (ed. Brack D.) (2006), p.37

³²⁴ Reynolds J. & Hunter I., 'Liberal Class Warrior', *Journal of Liberal Democrat History*, (ed. Brack D.) (2000), p.17

Lloyd George radical.³²⁵ Horabin was 'also a conscientious constituency MP. His daughter worked in his office for a time and remembers him dealing with casework and holding surgeries in Cornwall. His nickname in the House was "Honest Tom".³²⁶ His amiability may have been one of the primary causes for his eventual defection to the Labour Party after the war, 'but essentially he was always a radical, and I think he joined the Liberals because they were the people he tended to mix with before the War. He was close to Clement Davies, but in Parliament he also became friendly with Labour MPs such as Nye Bevan, Jennie Lee and Harold Wilson.'³²⁷ He left the Liberals because he believed that 'every Liberal who wants to carry out liberal principles in the context of the modern world must of necessity vote Labour and fight the Tories to the death.'³²⁸ On leaving the Liberals he briefly sat as an Independent Liberal then joined the Labour Party where;

'he was part of the "Keep Left"³²⁹ group, which included Bevan. They used to meet in [Horabin's] London home. When he left the Liberals, my father decided not to contest North Cornwall again as he didn't wish to oppose old friends.'³³⁰

His reason for leaving was that, 'there was nothing in the Labour government's programme with which the Liberals could quarrel.'³³¹ This decision to retire from the distant North Cornwall was possibly compounded by his severe injuries in an air crash in 1947 and his increasing incapacity to deal with a large rural constituency like North Cornwall. Moving to Exeter to contest the seat for Labour 'Tom Horabin must also have known that, with the local Liberal association determined to run the experienced former MP Dingle Foot against him, his chances of holding the seat against a strong Conservative challenge were bleak.'³³²

³²⁵ Reynolds J. & Hunter I., 'Liberal Class Warrior', *Journal of Liberal Democrat History*, (ed. Brack D.) (2000), Ibid p.19

³²⁶ Ibid p.37

³²⁷ Ibid

³²⁸ Dingle Foot Papers DGFT 1/5 Newspaper Article by Tom Horabin MP "Why I Left the Liberals – Liberal/Tory Alliance stands for Privilege"

³²⁹ Hollis P., *Jennie Lee – A life* (Oxford, 1997), p.173

³³⁰ Reynolds J. & Hunter I., 'Liberal Class Warrior', *Journal of Liberal Democrat History*, (ed. Brack D.) (2000), p.37

³³¹ Ibid p.19

³³² Ibid p.20

His skills as a speaker and as someone who was willing to speak his mind made him an attractive character. He was a 'very personable, charismatic, big-hearted man. He had a varied career in business and was very generous. He lived life to the full,'³³³ according to his daughter Mary Wright, though one wonders if this quite chimed with local Methodist sentiments.

As Reynolds and Hunter concisely put it:

'He was a consistent Popular Fronter, more committed to a broad progressive alliance against the Tories than to Liberal Party values and always more sensitive to the faults of opponents on the right than of allies on the left. His brand of radicalism offered no escape from the political impasse in which the Liberal Party found itself in the 1940s because it offered no substantive critique of socialism, whether of the democratic or indeed the undemocratic variety. In many ways Tom Horabin's defection to Labour was the least surprising aspect of his career as a Liberal MP.'³³⁴

Horabin's career as MP for North Cornwall showed politics in a period of flux and transformation. His was the last Cornish by-election that the Liberals had to defend for decades and was one where someone of moderately humble background was able to achieve electoral success, a trend that would become more apparent in the post-war period, where MPs would be better paid and Parliament would no longer be the preserve of the landed gentry or the independently wealthy.

His capacity to draw the Labour vote to his cause was crucial to making him electable in both 1939 and 1945 and would be the basis for future Liberals in Cornwall after the war. Although they would not maintain the terminology of the Popular Front, they would pragmatically use the concept to their electoral advantage. His defection to the Labour Party was part of a wave of defections that had started early in the century and would continue with people like Dingle Foot in the 1950s. The capacity for Liberals to blur the edges of Liberalism and Socialism in the eyes of the Cornish electorate was an important factor in making them still relevant when the

³³³ Ingham R., 'Tom Horabin Remembered', *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* (ed. Brack D.) (2006), p.37

³³⁴ Reynolds J. & Hunter I., 'Liberal Class Warrior', *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* (ed. Brack D.) (2000), p.21

rest of the country had turned away from Liberalism. Not so much as Payton would say the 'politics of paralysis'³³⁵ or as a Rowse's 'fossilised survival,'³³⁶ but the politics of surviving extinction for the Liberals.

Personalities – post-1945

Just as before the Second World War it is possible to identify several Liberal politicians as key figures in the development of the Liberal cause in the UK. By selecting a few of the more modern politicians these are more easily compared to those who are subjects of the surveys undertaken as part of this research. However, few of these politicians achieved the same levels of electoral success as their pre-war counterparts because of the even more derelict state of the party during the 1950s and early 1960s.

One aspect of the surveys in Chapter six, in Northern Scotland, has shown that personality politics, as embodied earlier by Isaac Foot in the Cornish context, can be generational. Foot's children benefited from their father's electoral legacy in Cornwall, so although neither Dingle nor John Foot gained a seat in Cornwall in the 1940s or 1950s their tireless efforts are important, if not for their own electoral success, for the on-going existence and relative credibility of the Liberal Party in Cornwall. Their efforts in maintaining relatively high levels of support in both North Cornwall and Bodmin in the 1950s retained the national party's interest in the seats as potential targets when the opportunity for actual electoral success came later. This Foot legacy, is something that deserves attention, to assess whether Isaac Foot's legacy to the Liberal Party, through these two sons, was crucial in winning them support by the time others came along in the 1960s and 1970s.

West Cornwall was increasingly a Liberal-free zone by the 1960s, with the Liberals' remaining strength confined to the banks of the Tamar. Three key figures from this area deserve particular examination as part of the effect of personality in politics; Peter Bessell, John Pardoe and Paul Tyler.

³³⁵ Payton P, *The Making of Modern Cornwall: Historical Experience and the Persistence of 'Difference'* (Exeter, 1992), p.130-60

³³⁶ Rowse A.L., *A Man of the Thirties* (London, 1979), p.55

Peter Bessell, who later became the Crown's star witness in the Thorpe case, was MP for Bodmin between 1964 and 1970. He had acute political skills which allowed him to wrest a relatively safe Conservative seat from its incumbent. Although his later career is subject to a great deal of personal criticism, his influence on the Cornish revival for the Liberals should not be underestimated and his time in Cornwall deserves evaluation.

John Pardoe, a much more mainstream politician, if with a flair for the media, was one of the main movers within the Liberal Party which increased its professionalism in the 1960s and 1970s which saw them gain numerous seats, predominantly in by-elections, using the community politics brand. His use of campaigning in North Cornwall has direct parallels with the campaigning that has been since in the county. His regaining and subsequent retention of North Cornwall from 1966-79 made him one of the longest serving post-war Liberal politicians in Cornwall, no mean feat in a period when the party had limited national impact. Paul Tyler, holding the dubious honour of longest political re-tread, who lost Bodmin when Bessell retired in 1970 was then elected for Bodmin in February 1974, losing at the second election of that year, only to return to elected politics in 1992 for North Cornwall, eventually retiring in 2005. His persistence to get elected was admirable, and made him another of the brand of Liberals that was intent on retaining the Liberal tradition however soul-destroying the cause was at times. He was also the politician to eventually be the Liberal MP who eventually succeeded both Bessell and Pardoe in the two East Cornwall constituencies.

With due respect to all these notable Liberals in Cornwall, there is one key figure who transcends all of them in the post-war period, and arguably in the entire twentieth century. A politician who not only made his Truro constituency a Liberal stronghold, but one who was seen by many as The MP for Cornwall, not just Truro: David Penhaligon. Although only an MP for twelve years between October 1974 and 1986, he rose to a position of national prominence, regional significance and local hero-worship.

Penhaligon was, rather oddly, the only personality in this post-war group, and for that matter the pre-war group, actually to be Cornish. His brand of community politics, combined with his personality and communication skills make him a key figure, like

Isaac Foot, when examining the impact of personality in the Cornish context. His success in Truro left a legacy to Matthew Taylor, who has been tested as part of this research project, and shows the lasting impact of personality politics in Cornwall. Taylor, for the purposes of this chapter, will be dealt with in the section 2005-10, later as will other MPs including Colin Breed (MP for South East Cornwall 1997-2010) and Andrew George (St. Ives 1997-present) who have been assessed in terms of public opinion, by means of survey like those who contested the 2010 election for the Liberal Democrats.

One other politician, never an MP, deserves note. Robin Teverson, who was elected as Cornwall's first, and only, directly-elected MEP for the Liberal Democrats in 1994. His election formed an important part of the party's building of credibility and his input into the success in the 1990s also deserves consideration.

Dingle Foot (North Cornwall candidate 1950 and 1951) and John Foot (Bodmin candidate 1945 and 1950)

There were many Liberal candidates throughout the 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s who fought the Liberal corner and were unsuccessful in their attempts to get elected to Parliament. These would include, Stuart Roseveare in the Bodmin division and Edwin Malindine in North Cornwall, but probably most notable amongst these were two sons of Isaac Foot, Dingle and John. Candidates like Malindine³³⁷ and Roseveare³³⁸ maintained the Liberal cause, but, however unsuccessfully, Dingle and John stand out as requiring a little attention - namely whether there is a benefit to being a part of a political dynasty. Dingle Foot, himself, having conducted his own electoral chicken run from Dundee, where he lost his seat in 1945, identified that centre-periphery was an issue in the 1950s when he said, 'Cornwall is blessedly remote.'³³⁹

A highly political family, the Foots were not unique in having a dynasty with a national and regional resonance. Families like the Asquiths, Bonham-Carters, Lloyd Georges, and even the Aclands produced legacies through several generations. Mark Bonham-Carter being elected MP for Torrington, Jo Grimond, part of the

³³⁷ Liberal Candidate in North Cornwall 1955 and 1959

³³⁸ Liberal Candidate in Bodmin in 1955

³³⁹ Dingle Foot Papers, DGFT 1/6 Letter from William Beveridge to Dingle Foot 03/06/51

Bonham-Carter dynasty by marriage, being MP for Orkney and Shetland, and the Lloyd George family retaining seats in Wales until the 1960s.³⁴⁰ Michael Foot was the most successful of the next generation of the Foot family, primarily because he joined the Labour Party, but Dingle and John also went into politics. Dingle's electoral success was as MP for Dundee, which when he lost in 1945, returned to Cornwall to fight North Cornwall which he was never successful in winning. Only when he defected to Labour with Megan Lloyd George did he become electorally successful again at Ipswich. The Popular Front in North Cornwall did not prove as popular as it had done for Tom Horabin, primarily because Labour support was already insignificant.

John Foot was never elected to Parliament contesting Bodmin in both 1945 and 1950 - both terrible years for the Liberal Party electorally - but he did eventually become a life peer. Perhaps comparing them unfavourably to other post-war contemporaries is unfair, as they were fighting not just for electoral success but for the party's survival during this period and just achieving second place, in this post-war electoral desert for the Liberals, might be considered success for both. Nonetheless something can be learnt from their failure. What is clear is that they were anything but community politicians, they were aspiring national political figures, indeed Dingle had held ministerial office during the war at the Ministry for Economic Warfare, which oversaw the clandestine work of the Special Operations Executive.. Dingle in particular, having held office at a senior level, wanted to be elected to speak about the nation's affairs. Although both benefited from their father's local political legacy they never achieved the same level of public affection or recognition because neither tapped into the local anti-metropolitan sentiment, if anything their opponents were doing this.

As John Foot himself said, 'there were too many MPs already who were more concerned with the welfare of their own constituencies than with the wider and more important national and international issues.'³⁴¹ A view that simply contradicts the

³⁴⁰ Both Mark Bonham-Carter were part of the Asquith family. Mark being son to Violet Bonham-Carter (hence great grandson of Prime Minister HH Asquith. Jo Grimond being Violet's son-in-law.

³⁴¹ *Western Morning News* 31st January and 22nd February 1950

later arguments of community politics and Rennardism to work locally to get an MP elected.

The period in which both John and Dingle Foot were campaigning, and for that matter Roseveare and Malindine, was the period before the party adopted community politics. They had not yet adjusted to the situation that faced the party and assumed that community campaigning was somewhat beneath serious politicians. However, to be elected in the 1950s and 1960s for the Liberals required more than policy and serious politicians, it also took a flair for campaigning.

Peter Bessell (MP for Bodmin 1964-70)

If flair describes any Cornish politician in this period it would be Peter Bessell. He is without doubt one of the most controversial Liberal politicians in modern history to represent Cornwall. His appearance in the conspiracy to murder case brought against Jeremy Thorpe is well documented and seriously undermines any assessment of the valuable work he did to reengage Cornwall with Liberalism in the late 1950s and 1960s. His persistent campaign to regain Bodmin, after originally standing in Torquay at a by-election, seemed a forlorn hope. However, using the heritage of Isaac Foot and the campaigning zeal and colour that would come to dominate the party in the 1970s, Bessell transformed the party's hopes west of the Tamar.

Launching his 1959 campaign in Bodmin, Bessell was a surprise to the Conservatives in the seat - being described as an 'energetic and publicity minded Liberal candidate who had somehow spent twice as much as we had on publicity,'³⁴² he was quite a contrast to the long term Conservative incumbent described as having lost 'popular appeal.'³⁴³

He was unquestionably ahead of his time, being, 'an early advocate of community politics' and a 'professional approach to electioneering.'³⁴⁴ Despite Cornwall, and Bodmin in particular, being historically strong for the Liberals, the party had not actually won the seat at a general election there since 1929 by the time Bessell was

³⁴² Papers of the Bodmin Conservative Association, X385/2 Minutes of a meeting 28th November 1959 – Report on the General Election

³⁴³ Ibid

³⁴⁴ Brack D, et.al., *Dictionary of Liberal Biography* (London, 1998), p.37

selected in 1956. He made the campaigns of 1959 and 1964 'American-style.'³⁴⁵ In addition to community politics, Bessell also identified the electioneering opportunities presented by the increasing self-awareness of Cornish nationalism - which he enthusiastically embraced by becoming a member of Mebyon Kernow. A well-known, well-respected and compelling Methodist lay preacher, Bessell also tapped into the historic Methodist core of Liberal support in Bodmin, which figures like Isaac Foot had embodied. Most importantly he was a showman, who enjoyed and encouraged the limelight. Annette Penhaligon describes a visit to Totnes in the 1970 election; 'As always, with Bessell, it was done with considerable panache.'³⁴⁶

'Despite his chapel background, Peter Bessell favoured a style more appropriate to a nineteenth-century Whig. A parking space had to be held for him outside the club, regardless of no parking regulations, then up he swept in a white Bentley, and strode into the hall.'³⁴⁷

This response gives an indication of the long standing impact, whether positive or negative, that Bessell left both locally and nationally. This unquestionable star quality was, however, matched with significant flaws. 'Allegedly a notorious womaniser and supposedly an agent of the American CIA in the 1960s,'³⁴⁸ his career was cut short in 1970 as he decided to stand down from Parliament because of some of his business ventures failing. This was rather confirmed when Paul Tyler was interviewed for this project, and was presented with the description of Bessell as a nineteenth-century Whig he responded 'more like an eighteenth century rake!'³⁴⁹

His attraction to Bodmin, according to Bessell himself, was 'that in some strange, indefinable way, the local Liberals and I were attuned to each other.'³⁵⁰ He formed a close affinity with Jeremy Thorpe and 'both genuinely loved the constituencies [they] were fighting to win and the warm-hearted West Country Liberals who treated [them] like young prophets.'³⁵¹ Being a lay preacher helped Bessell get 'better known in the area,' but he questioned whether it 'affected his political prospects one way or the

³⁴⁵ Brack D, et.al., *Dictionary of Liberal Biography* (London, 1998), p.37

³⁴⁶ Penhaligon A., *Penhaligon* (London, 1989), p.37

³⁴⁷ Ibid

³⁴⁸ Tregidga G., "Bodmin Man": Peter Bessell and Cornish Politics in the 1950s and 1960s', *Cornish Studies Eight* (ed. Payton P.) (Exeter, 2000), p.161

³⁴⁹ Interview with Lord Tyler of Linkinhorne, January 2011

³⁵⁰ Bessell P., *Cover Up* (Oceanside, 1981) p.12

³⁵¹ Ibid p.15

other.³⁵² But others disagree, 'Bessell's gift was fervour, his non-conformist preaching reminiscent of the style that had swept Isaac Foot to Westminster between the wars.'³⁵³ Whichever is true, Bessell's 1964 campaign was extremely dynamic, saying himself;

'I fought an all-out campaign. My name was plastered on hundreds of billboards. The windows of thousands of houses displayed my picture. I barnstormed through the towns and villages often making as many as 20 speeches a day from the gaudily decorated Land-Rover...it was blatant showmanship, backed by a superb organisation.'³⁵⁴

Bessell found 'nothing as moving as the little groups of Liberals, many in their seventies and eighties, who believed their steadfast political faith had been rewarded,'³⁵⁵ as he toured the constituency in the days following his victory in 1964.

In Bodmin, Bessell combined in his campaigns the essential tools and skills that became necessary to elect Liberals in the reawakening of the party in the 1960s. He combined his own natural showmanship, party organisation, community politics, with an appeal to traditional Methodist Liberalism and he even managed to outspend the Conservatives in elections.

He built his own credibility on a direct appeal to the Bodmin electorate which made them feel Cornwall was different to the rest of the country, just as Isaac Foot had done in the 1920s. If the test of personality politics is a capacity to perform, be an attractive personality and have boundless energy Bessell surely displays these talents. He turned a seat that had not returned a Liberal MP for thirty-five years back to a relative stronghold for the party, and done so by placing himself as the local champion, building his credibility through oratory, campaigning, political positioning, organisation and willpower but also on the twin pillars of traditional Cornish Liberalism: Methodism and difference.

However, as Tyler was to discover in 1970 this brand of personality politics is not transferable to a successor. Tyler lost the seat in 1970 partly according to him

³⁵² Bessell P., *Cover Up* (Oceanside, 1981) p.21

³⁵³ Penhaligon A., *Penhaligon*, (London, 1989), p.68

³⁵⁴ Bessell P., *Cover Up*, (Oceanside, 1981), p.24

³⁵⁵ Ibid

because, 'Bessell said he would appear at the adoption meeting and then fade into the background. But none of it, he was there throughout confusing the local electorate.'³⁵⁶

John Pardoe (MP for North Cornwall 1966-1979)

As Cornwall's longest serving post-war MP, until the 1990s, John Pardoe is an important figure in their journey from the political wilderness of the 1940s and 1950s to their position of dominance in the 1990s. The re-capture of North Cornwall is hardly an electoral earthquake when one considers that the constituency had elected Liberals throughout the 1930s and as recently as 1945, and had continued to be at the forefront of their electoral prospects throughout the intervening years. Not a Cornishman, Pardoe became active in politics following the Suez crisis, first joining Labour, then the Liberals.

He was a controversial figure, if not in the same way as Bessell, in that he wished to challenge the inherent establishment, not just outside the Liberal Party. Described as a 'rambunctious campaigner, a man of grand visions, bright ideas and good intentions,'³⁵⁷ he gave the Liberals 'new credibility'³⁵⁸ on economic matters.

'John Pardoe radiated energy,'³⁵⁹ which helped him capitalise on the continuing Liberal support for the party in North Cornwall and the upturn in Liberal fortunes in the mid-1960s. He also incorporated the professional campaigning techniques and American-style campaigning Bessell had done two years earlier in Bodmin. He introduced an innovation in his large rural constituency, 'an annual travelling surgery which visited all the towns and villages in the constituency.'³⁶⁰

However, the most interesting part of Pardoe's political career for many Liberal historians comes later, as a leading participant in the Liberal Party during the Lib-Lab Pact in the mid-1970s, and when he contested the leadership of the party following the resignation of Jeremy Thorpe in 1976.

³⁵⁶ Interview with Lord Tyler of Linkinhorne, January 2011

³⁵⁷ Brack D, et.al., *Dictionary of Liberal Biography* (London, 1998), p.291

³⁵⁸ Ibid

³⁵⁹ Penhaligon A., *Penhaligon* (London, 1989), p.68

³⁶⁰ Ibid p.150

As a 'sharp-elbowed and quick-witted man'³⁶¹ he was perhaps not best suited as the Liberal foil to Denis Healey during the Lib-Lab Pact, in which they were 'an explosive combination.'³⁶² By the end of the Pact Pardoe dealt with Healey's deputy Joel Barnett, earning the refrain from Healey that Pardoe was, 'Denis Healey with no redeeming features.'³⁶³ Contesting the leadership of the party, following Thorpe's removal was more suited to Pardoe's skills, a natural performer and speaker he was one of the two 'fitted for the job.'³⁶⁴ Unlike Steel who, although considered an effective parliamentary tactician, having steered through his own Private Member's Bill on abortion, Pardoe was,

'by nature a much more ebullient character, [who] was all for taking the battle to the enemy, for campaigning outside parliament, for backing and using the expertise [the Liberals] were building up in local government. He was very much the candidate of the more radical element in the Party...John's supporters always described themselves as the "activists."³⁶⁵

In this respect he was much more like later leader Paddy Ashdown. As Annette Penhaligon suggests, 'his loss was a terrible blow to the Liberals in Devon and Cornwall,'³⁶⁶ as 'some pundits claimed that he was then a victim of an anti-Thorpe swing in the south-west. John has never agreed...he was simply a victim of a pro-Tory swing at the end of the Lib/Lab Pact.'³⁶⁷ Whether the impact of the Thorpe scandal is true Pardoe's loss in North Cornwall ended his parliamentary career, although he did later work for the Liberals on general election campaigns nationally.

Pardoe clearly fits a number of aspects that are important in a personality politician: a public speaker, a campaigner and a local advocate. But, as the party's spokesman on Treasury matters and as a leadership candidate in 1976 he also broke through into the national consciousness. This was mainly achieved through a longer elected career than many of his fellow Liberal MPs at the time. His closeness to Thorpe's

³⁶¹ Williams S., *Climbing the Bookshelves* (London, 2009), p.305

³⁶² Owen D., *Time to Declare* (London, 1992), p.299

³⁶³ Brack D, et.al., *Dictionary of Liberal Biography* (London, 1998), p.292

³⁶⁴ Grimond J., *Memoirs* (London, 1979), p.249

³⁶⁵ Penhaligon A., *Penhaligon* (London, 1989), p.68

³⁶⁶ Penhaligon A., *Penhaligon* (London, 1989), p.162-163

³⁶⁷ Ibid p.123

leadership probably also helped to seal his demise and, unlike Foot, he never returned to Cornish politics after 1979.

Paul Tyler (MP for Bodmin 1974 and North Cornwall 1992-2005)

'A real trooper,'³⁶⁸ may not be quite the term that those who know Paul Tyler might be best used to describe him, yet it does perhaps reflect his political doggedness. His academic, even old-fashioned demeanour tends more to suggest an heir to Sir Francis Acland, rather than one of Paddy Ashdown's loyal squaddies in the 1992-1997 Parliament. Tyler's political career has been spread over five decades; first contesting Bodmin in 1970, regaining it in 1974, only to lose it in the October election of that year. He contested the Cornwall and Plymouth European Parliamentary seat in 1989 at a time when his party was all but finished following the merger of the SDP and Liberal Party, coming second, when the next best result in the UK was fourth. Tyler's almost blind stubbornness to be returned to Parliament was rewarded in 1992 when he regained North Cornwall, thirteen years after John Pardoe lost it to the Conservatives, and eighteen years after he himself had been rejected by his original Bodmin constituents.

As Annette Penhaligon confirms, Tyler 'is a man of immense resolution,'³⁶⁹ in this case to regain the Bodmin seat he had lost in 1970 to Robert Hicks, Tyler's, and the South East Cornwall Liberal's, emollient Conservative nemesis. His capacity, as with so many other Liberals during the 1930s to 1980s, to stand for election and be beaten, and just continue the fight for the party without any realistic prospect of success shows an extraordinary level of belief in the cause of Liberalism, and the party in Cornwall in particular.

Tyler is arguably Cornish, although born in Devon, 'claiming to be a direct descendant of Bishop Jonathan Trelawny.'³⁷⁰ He understood the importance of campaigning on local issues using community politics techniques and being 'Cornwall's man in Westminster rather Westminster's man in Cornwall', invoking

³⁶⁸ Ashdown P., *The Ashdown Diaries Vol. I 1988-1997* (London, 2000), p.291

³⁶⁹ Penhaligon A., *Penhaligon* (London, 1989), p.69

³⁷⁰ Brack D, et.al., *Dictionary of Liberal Biography* (London, 1998), p.366

rhetoric throughout his campaigns, 'only a Liberal MP [is] free to work for one and all.'³⁷¹

His persistence paid off with the recapture of North Cornwall in 1992. Tyler was seen as a formidable face of the party in the region, 'the south-west Conservatives were frightened of him. His prodigious grasp of subjects and tenacity in pursuit of them made him formidable,'³⁷² being 'an effective parliamentary campaigner who is a first-rate strategist and political tactician.'³⁷³

Becoming the Liberal Democrats' Agriculture spokesman in the run up to the 1997 general election made him an extremely influential figure in Westcountry politics, with reach beyond his constituency to attract support to the party, being used on literature across Cornwall during the 1997 election,³⁷⁴ being seen as a significant figure for the party's electoral chances.

If one of the tests of a successful Cornish Liberal is that they can build effective coalitions of support to get elected, such as the Progressive Front, as in the earlier section on personalities. Tyler shows this ability - being, 'backed by both his local Green Party and the Cornish Nationalists Mebyon Kernow.'³⁷⁵ His longevity as a Liberal politician, now serving in the House of Lords, is essentially down to his own tenacity and personal resilience to the ebbs and flows of Liberal fortunes which he helped to solidify in the 1990s for the Liberal Democrats.

If it were not for the pre-eminence of David Penhaligon in the post-war period as a Liberal figure in Cornwall, he would certainly be seen as a leading contender for the position, fusing anti-establishment rhetoric with an Oxford education with near impeccable Cornish credentials, persistent character and belief in the cause of Cornish Liberalism, he is a major character in the argument that personality politics does count in Cornwall. He may not have been loved by his electorate, or the Cornish in general, but he was certainly respected as a major politician from

³⁷¹ LSE Miscellaneous Collection 0712/11N Paul Tyler Bodmin Election Leaflet 1979

³⁷² Nicholson E., *Secret Society - Inside and Outside the Conservative Party* (London, 1996), p.233

³⁷³ Brack D, et.al., *Dictionary of Liberal Biography* (London, 1998), p.367

³⁷⁴ LSE General Election Collection 1997/3/39 Colin Breed South East Cornwall election leaflet

³⁷⁵ Brack D, et.al., *Dictionary of Liberal Biography* (London, 1998), p.367

Cornwall, not a major politician who came to Cornwall to get elected, like so many in the inter-war period.

David Penhaligon (MP for Truro 1974-86)

With due respect to all these notable Liberals in Cornwall, there is one key figure who transcends all of them in the post-war period, and arguably in the entire twentieth century. A politician who not only made his Truro constituency a Liberal stronghold, but one who was seen by many as 'The MP for Cornwall', not just Truro: David Penhaligon. Although only an MP for twelve years between 1974 and 1986, he rose to a position of national prominence, regional political significance and local hero-worship.

Penhaligon was, rather oddly, the only personality in this post-war group, and for that matter the pre-war group, actually to be born in Cornwall. His brand of community politics, combined with his personality and communication skills make him a key figure, like Isaac Foot, when examining the impact of personality in the Cornish context. His success in Truro left a legacy to Matthew Taylor, who has been tested as part of this research project, and shows the lasting impact of personality politics in Cornwall. Taylor, for the purposes of this chapter, will be dealt with in the sections on 2005 and 2010.

One of the key issues to note from the pre-war Liberals compared to their post war counterparts is the apparent switch from what might be loosely described as the landed gentry and upper middle class (with the exception of Tom Horabin) to a more middle class candidate. By the time figures like Bessell and Pardoe were being elected in the mid-1960s this dynamic was increasingly different. David Penhaligon changed that profile even more. Although it would probably be wrong to describe Penhaligon as working class, the Cornish would have no hesitation in seeing Penhaligon as 'one of us' unlike all of his Liberal peers. An engineer by trade, rather than university educated, he was a practical man who wanted to find practical solutions to the problems of his fellow Cornish.

There can be no doubt, in the case of Penhaligon, that being Cornish was a key aspect of his appeal to the electorate across Cornwall, was what might nowadays be called, his authenticity. Described as 'refreshingly down-to-earth as a politician and

man, with a distinctive Cornish accent, he revelled in representing all that was best in the Cornish tradition of Liberal policy.³⁷⁶ Although this appealed to his constituents, it wasn't simply his authentic Cornishness that made Penhaligon the post-war iconic figure in Cornish politics - 'David's energy and enthusiasm were infectious.'³⁷⁷

Penhaligon appealed to the historic traditions of Liberalism as did candidates like Pardoe and Bessell. He did not do this as an interloper attempting to use tradition as a means to an end. Truro was not an area where Liberals had received much post-war support. In fact, the party had slipped into third place. Post-war Liberalism had been contained on the banks of the Tamar in North Cornwall and Bodmin, his victory in Truro was something new.

'Let no one say that David was simply a good natured Cornishman, marvellous attributes though they may be. He was a rare campaigner for justice for the poor, the elderly and for Cornwall, highlighting not only the problems but proposing imaginative and far-reaching solutions.'³⁷⁸

Although superficially a 'merry Cornishman'³⁷⁹ Penhaligon built up an organisation in Truro to rival any like it for the Liberals anywhere in the country. Although community politics was essentially seen as being an urban phenomenon, he used it to organise the local Liberal Party from what had previously been an almost moribund state – as Ashdown wryly notes, 'when [Penhaligon] went to Truro, the average age of the membership was deceased.'³⁸⁰ Despite this, Penhaligon revitalised the membership, campaigned on local issues across the constituency and engaged the Clay districts like no previous candidate had attempted.

'Penhaligon established a reputation as the natural champion of the clay country by claiming that it was Cornwall's "forgotten area,"'³⁸¹ according to Tregidga. His success was not just his personality and his capacity to act as a local candidate who had strong links in Truro but because of, 'his ability to champion local interests in

³⁷⁶ Owen D., *Time to Declare* (London, 1992), p.669

³⁷⁷ Penhaligon A., *Penhaligon* (London, 1989), p.37

³⁷⁸ Matthew Taylor, Hansard, March 23rd 1987, Maiden Speech

³⁷⁹ Grimond J., *Memoirs* (London, 1979), p.236

³⁸⁰ Ashdown P., *A Fortunate Life* (London, 2009), p.166

³⁸¹ Tregidga G., 'Electoral Landscapes: Political Ecology of the Clay Country Since 1885', *Cornish Studies Seventeen*, (ed. Payton P.) (Exeter, 2009), p.129

different parts of the sprawling Truro constituency.³⁸² Importantly, perhaps contradicting the legacy of hero-worship, Annette Penhaligon said, having failed to win the February 1974 election 'between February and October 1974...went out campaigning every day...and kept the pressure up,'³⁸³ between the two elections of that year. It was down to the pressure of his campaigning that she attributes his success in October 1974, and not anything to do with his personality, other than as a candidate who was determined to win. His was the only gain for the party in October 1974. However, she also believed that the then Conservative MP, Piers Dixon, was an easier target for the Liberals than the previous Conservative incumbent, Geoffrey Wilson. 'It was nothing to do with the name Penhaligon, or him being Cornish, it's because he worked hard for people in the areas like the Clay District and St. Blazey.'³⁸⁴ However, she did concede that 'people thought he was their friend. I wasn't allowed an answerphone – I had to answer the phone to constituents' problems.'³⁸⁵

After his election in 1974, he would, even with the Conservatives in opposition, treat them as the political cause of Cornwall's ills, in 1976 he challenged Margaret Thatcher to explain her support for the structure of South West Water two years after the Conservatives left office saying, 'I think the whole setup is a nonsense but you voted for it, so could you let me know what you think?'³⁸⁶

His retention of Truro in 1979, when the party was all but destroyed in the westcountry, 'partly because of the Thorpe factor,'³⁸⁷ bucked the national trend, 'John Pardoe went and supported Thorpe, but [Penhaligon] kept his distance,'³⁸⁸ from him. Bearing in mind North Cornwall and North Devon had a common boundary this was probably simpler for Penhaligon to achieve. Thorpe had opposed Penhaligon getting support from the national party in 1974, 'because although his accent worked for him in the constituency it worked against him with Thorpe.'³⁸⁹ This

³⁸² Tregidga G., 'Electoral Landscapes: Political Ecology of the Clay Country Since 1885', *Cornish Studies Seventeen*, (ed. Payton P.) (Exeter, 2009), p.129

³⁸³ Dame Annette Egerton (formerly Penhaligon) interview, July 2010

³⁸⁴ Dame Annette Egerton (formerly Penhaligon) interview, July 2010

³⁸⁵ Ibid

³⁸⁶ Thatcher Papers, THCR 2/1/1/18 Letter from David Penhaligon to Margaret Thatcher 20th April 1976

³⁸⁷ Dame Annette Egerton (formerly Penhaligon) interview, July 2010

³⁸⁸ Ibid

³⁸⁹ Ibid

underlined the persistence of a class distinction between Penhaligon and the Thorpe leadership.

Despite his personal support in Truro the party, and then the Alliance with the SDP in the 1983 general election failed to secure the party any more seats. So, despite his popularity this did not transform itself into votes in the ballot boxes of other Cornish constituencies, possibly because of the uneasy relationship with the SDP in a region that was still had notable Liberal support. Paul Tyler refers to this in his correspondence with the national party in 1981, when regional chair of the Liberal Party, describing the two parties as ‘our respective “awkward squads”’.³⁹⁰

Penhaligon’s sudden death in December 1986, was a crushing blow to the party in Cornwall and for that matter the rest of the country. ‘Suddenly everyone was his friend in politics,’³⁹¹ his fame and popularity had not just made him known as the ‘MP for Cornwall’³⁹² but had made him a national household name, ‘he had a genuine wit and was many people’s favourite performer on Question Time.’³⁹³ As Matthew Taylor put in his maiden speech;

‘...such a huge wave of sympathy and such a great sense of loss are sparked off. That is true not only of my constituency and of Cornwall as a whole, although perhaps the greatest sense of loss has been felt there, but of many throughout Britain who felt that they had lost an ally, a straight talker and someone on whom they could depend. Indeed, many who had never met him personally felt that they had lost a genuine friend. David had become known throughout the nation as a politician who was honest, down to earth and deeply caring—in short, a politician of warmth and humour who could be trusted and relied upon.’³⁹⁴

He was a politician who connected with people across Cornwall, the West Country and the nation in a way that very few politicians ever do. Paddy Ashdown conceding that, ‘by [1986] it was pretty clear that when David Steel stood down, I would probably try for the Leadership, and I had reckoned that David Penhaligon would do

³⁹⁰ SDP Party Papers, Letter from Paul Tyler to SDP HQ 20th August 1981

³⁹¹ Dame Annette Egerton (formerly Penhaligon) interview, July 2010

³⁹² Steel Papers, STEEL B1/6/5 David Penhaligon Commemorative Leaflet

³⁹³ Owen D., *Time to Declare*, (London, 1992), p.669

³⁹⁴ Matthew Taylor, Hansard, March 23rd 1987, Maiden Speech

so too. I thought then (and still do) that, if I had had to fight him, he would probably have won.³⁹⁵

It was because of his 'tragic death at such a young age,³⁹⁶ being only forty-two, that Annette Egerton attributes his subsequent political immortality. If personality politics have ever counted in Cornwall, he was the embodiment of its zenith.

Despite the February 1974 election being the launch pad for his success, he did not win that election. His fame and popularity cannot therefore have been immediate. His popularity would seem to have come with his continued campaigning throughout 1974, between the two elections. His continued success, in being a local champion for Truro specifically, and Cornwall in general, and the benefits of continued political incumbency built this fame and personal following. Being the only Liberal MP in Cornwall from 1979-86 made him unique and easily identifiable at a time when Liberal politicians were few and far between in the west and most of the country. His regular appearances on election night specials and BBC's *Question Time*, when the programme was in its infancy, made his personality transcend the Cornish border to become a national politician, as yet unequalled by any Cornish elected representative before or since. Penhaligon combined zeal, enthusiasm, Cornishness and a flair for campaign organisation and messaging which left a lasting impression on Cornish and British politics - one that helped to build the foundations that have given the Liberal and Liberals Democrats a lasting level of support in Cornwall.

As part of this research, although it is not possible to assess the popularity of a deceased politician more than twenty-five years after their death, his success would seem to suggest that incumbency and a continued local presence might allow politicians to build local victory even when their party is performing less well nationally. When John Pardoe lost his seat in 1979, in the face of the Thorpe scandal and an incoming Conservative government, Penhaligon increased his majority from just a few hundred to nearly nine thousand. This might be due to incumbency, though of course Pardoe was also incumbent, but it might also be to do with his personality, and this should not be discounted at this point.

³⁹⁵ Ashdown P., *A Fortunate Life*, (London, 2009), p.227-228

³⁹⁶ Dame Annette Egerton (formerly Penhaligon) interview, July 2010

Robin Teverson (Candidate for South East Cornwall 1992 and MEP for Cornwall and West Plymouth 1994-1999)

Robin Teverson, although possibly not the most famous of the group selected in the post-war period has an important place in the progress of Liberal Democrat fortunes, which will also be discussed in the campaigning and elections section of this thesis. But, Teverson brought a new emphasis in Cornwall on the so-called 'Team for Cornwall.'

Although this was not a new idea, the five Liberal MPs elected in 1929 having a similar arrangement, it allowed the party to present itself as the alternative to the Conservatives across the county, not just in localised areas. Teverson, in reality, personified this change, being the only Liberal parliamentarian ever to be elected by the county as a whole, as the MEP for Cornwall and West Plymouth from 1994 to 1999. Working closely with Matthew Taylor and Paul Tyler, he acted as a surrogate MP for the areas which did not have a Liberal Democrat MP between those years.

This elected position gave him the authority to speak for Cornwall in a revolutionary way for the Liberal Democrats, and gave them a credibility of an elected parliamentarian who could claim that his party was a credible alternative, and could win - an important psychological hurdle for the party to jump.

Born in London, he was not Cornish by birth but with a name that appeared to be Cornish he soon became an adopted son, contesting the South East Cornwall seat in 1992, but falling further behind the incumbent Robert Hicks. With Paul Tyler, the previous European Parliamentary candidate in the Commons in 1992, Teverson was able to be selected for the European seat. In this role, he united the post-war party in a much more credible and professional way, ready for the major step the party took in 1997, doubling the party's seats, only failing in Falmouth and Camborne. A lot of the organisational and policy work behind this success was down to Teverson's own teambuilding skills, as chair of the Team for Cornwall.

Conclusion

These are not all the politicians that could have been selected as part of this personality aspect of Cornish politics. However, apart from those that will appear later they are the most electorally or personally significant for the Liberals.

What might seem strange to the casual observer is the apparent modern precondition to being a Liberal Democrat candidate of being local. Although many had local contacts they were not, in general, born in the area they represented and this perhaps tells us a great deal about the importance of personality politics in Cornwall. Political heavyweights like Donald MacLean and Walter Runciman came to Cornwall because they could win there. They identified that Cornwall's electoral landscape was somehow different from other areas of the country that pre-disposed it to voting for the party. This predisposition may have been fostered by the likes of Isaac Foot and Francis Acland with their dogged support for Liberalism, but their arrival was based on their view that they could perpetuate their political careers in Cornwall rather than continue to be beaten in others areas of the country that were abandoning the Liberals for the new duopoly in British politics.

When the party re-emerged in the 1960s personalities were essential to make the Liberals different from the slow disintegration of the two party system which has been occurring over the preceding fifty years. The persistence of Liberals like Foot and Acland paved the way, however rocky a way, to the successes of people like Bessell, Pardoe and Penhaligon later. However, as would seem clear these three did not depend on Methodism and inherent liberalism for their success but had grasped at community politics to deliver their success which quite clearly candidates in the 1950s, like Dingle and John Foot, had not.

Chapter 5: Campaigns - Modern Electoral History in Cornwall

The collapse of the Liberal Party in the years following the First World War, and its fall from favour with the electorate was one of the most notable aspects of British electoral politics in the twentieth century. Electoral landslides at General Elections in Britain are rarely seen, but, having elected four hundred Members of Parliament in the Liberal landslide of the 1906 election, the next half century's changes would have been unbelievable to those MPs. Within twenty years, the Liberal Party would be but a small rump in Parliament and, within forty, would be reduced to a mere half dozen seats. This collapse was partly self-inflicted and partly due to factors beyond the control of the party.

As has been said, when, eventually, the time came for a Liberal revival, the first signs of recovery would be found in Cornwall, and other parts of the Celtic Fringe and elsewhere, and would lead to the party's ultimate domination of the county by 1997. Thus identifying whether campaigns are a crucial aspect, not just of this survival, but also of the party's successes between 1997 and 2010 is an important aspect of this research.

As discussed, this research is primarily focused on the techniques and strategy used by the party to achieve that electoral domination - representing every seat at the parliamentary level. However, initially, it is important to assess the reasons for the survival of the party before the Second World War and the relative support it maintained after the war, before its eventual rebirth in the 1960s.

The questions this chapter will seek to answer, are why the party achieved such dramatic success in the 1960s and early 1970s only to see it diminish in the 1980s, despite increased national success and the significance in Cornish politics of David Penhaligon. The party in the immediate aftermath of the party merger, did not succeed in the UK context as well as might be expected. Despite underperforming nationally, the party maintained support in normally difficult elections like the 1989

and 1994 European election³⁹⁷, (partly because of the party's pro-European stance and the scale of the first-past-the-post constituencies before the change to the list system for the 1999 election,) and eventually elected one of the first two directly elected Liberal Democrat MEPs in 1994. What changed the party's fortunes and how did the party capitalise on the opportunity when the chance arose? These questions, as well as assessing the historical position of the party in Cornwall, will be essential in assessing the party's success by 2005 within Cornwall and how this can be evaluated in comparison to the 2010 election.

As the party began to decline as a national force, following the collapse of the Lloyd George led coalition in 1922, the Labour Party replaced it as the radical alternative to the established Conservative Party. Many academics and politicians see the increase in support for the Labour Party as the main reason for the terminal decline of the Liberal Party. Indeed, A.J.P. Taylor said, 'there was indeed little reason why the Liberal Party should exist.'³⁹⁸

David Dutton agrees, commenting that the 'decline of Liberalism [was] an issue of contemporary politics,' tied to the 'inexorable rise'³⁹⁹ of the Labour Party. For much of Britain there was unquestionably some truth in this. Scotland and Wales had elected, with the exception of two seats each, a Liberal to every constituency in 1906, and continued to elect a disproportionate number of Liberals for many years thereafter. Yet despite this clear enthusiasm for electing Liberals, the effect of socialism, particularly in traditionally Liberal voting urban areas, cannot be disputed as a significant reason for the collapse of Liberal support.

However, in Cornwall, Labour did not elect its first Member of Parliament until 1945, despite some evidence of electoral advance before this. In fact, Labour has only ever elected four MPs in the county, all in the industrial heart of Cornwall,⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁷ Morgan R., *The Times Guide to the European Elections 1994* (London, 1995)

³⁹⁸ Taylor A.J.P., *English History 1914-1945* (Oxford, 1975), p.281

³⁹⁹ Dutton D., *A History of the Liberal Party* (Basingstoke, 2004), p.37

⁴⁰⁰ St Austell is also an industrial part of Cornwall but because of its geographical location within the Truro constituency this has limited the prospects of Labour success

Falmouth and Camborne.⁴⁰¹ As a result, it is important to assess the advance of Labour as an electoral force to understand why this did not happen in Cornwall and why, as a potential consequence, the Liberals maintained support in the county. This failure to penetrate Cornwall has been argued by Payton that, 'the Liberal Party's ability in the years before 1939 to protect itself as both a plausible radical alternative to the Conservatives and as the "Cornish party" meant that it was well-placed to assume the mantle of anti-metropolitanism in the period after 1945.'⁴⁰² Other parts of the so-called Celtic Fringe became the life-support that the Liberals needed to survive, with only six out of the twenty-three seats the party held between 1945-64, being outside the fringe.⁴⁰³ Bearing in mind no Liberal was elected in Cornwall between 1950 and 1964, 'most of the party's most promising prospects were also to be found in the Celtic fringe.'⁴⁰⁴

Another, perhaps more revealing, argument, discussed by scholars including Roy Douglas, has been the view that the Liberal Party lost its political credibility, by its own 'shortcomings.'⁴⁰⁵ Trevor Wilson describes the Liberal Party's decline thus; 'at one moment he was up and walking and the next he was flat on his back, never to rise again.'⁴⁰⁶

The party's internal squabbles, constant infighting and many electoral contests between Liberal candidates of different persuasions, must have contributed to public disenchantment with the party, as 'these bitter divisions spilled over into the country.'⁴⁰⁷ Moreover, having effectively three different splinters during the 1920s and 1930s cannot have helped the electoral fortunes of the party. Although the party did manage to elect all five MPs for Cornwall in the 1929 General Election, despite

⁴⁰¹ Evelyn King (Penryn and Falmouth 1945-50), Harold Hayman (Falmouth and Camborne 1950-66), John Dunwoody (Falmouth and Camborne 1966-70) and Candy Atherton (Falmouth and Camborne 1997-2005)

⁴⁰² Payton P., 'Labour Failure and Liberal Tenacity; Radical politics and Cornish Political Culture, 1880-1939', in *Cornish Studies 2* (ed. P. Payton) (Exeter, 1994) p.83

⁴⁰³ Egan M., *Coming into Focus – The Transformation of the Liberal Party 1945-64* (Saarbrücken, 2009) p.12

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid

⁴⁰⁵ Douglas R., *Liberals - The History of the Liberal and Liberal Democrat Parties* (London, 2005), p.ix

⁴⁰⁶ Wilson T., *The Downfall of the Liberal Party 1914-1935* (New York, 1968)

⁴⁰⁷ Searle G. R., *The Liberal Party, Triumph and Disintegration, 1886-1929* (Basingstoke, 1992), p.144

having seen many contests between Asquithian Liberals and Lloyd George's backers.

These intra-party squabbles would require significant assessment, to see how they had an impact on the credibility and popularity of the Liberals, and why, in Cornwall, the party appears to have had relative success in shrugging off internal conflict and fending off the electoral disaster seen elsewhere, although there was clearly antagonism between the Asquithian and Lloyd George wings of the party.

Another of the main aspects of this research is to assess whether the party somehow did things differently in Cornwall, compared to the rest of the country, particularly in relation to campaign techniques, giving it an electoral advantage when it came to contesting the county at election time. A further aspect of this part of the research is to see if the candidates, and personalities attracted to the party in Cornwall, gave them another advantage that was not available to them in other parts of the country.

There can be no doubt that the party possessed some formidable and nationally recognised figures. It is important to assess the significance of these figures, and why and how, they became Liberalism's leaders in Cornwall, rather than other parts of the country.

Perhaps the most important thing to assess will be the situation of the Conservative Party in Cornwall. Although much of the blame for the Liberal Party's decline undoubtedly lay with the Liberals themselves, and with the emergence of the Labour Party as a popular electoral movement, the success of the Conservative Party in Cornwall is equally important.

Many now look at the West Country in general, and Cornwall in particular, as being bastions of Liberal Democracy, and previously of Liberalism.⁴⁰⁸ However, Cornwall was, for many years, a relative stronghold of the Conservative Party. Despite what many consider to be a radical tradition in the county, with very little effective

⁴⁰⁸ Tregidga, G., *The Liberal Party in the South West*, (Exeter, 2000)

opposition between the 1930s and the 1960s, the Conservatives had almost unrivalled success in Cornwall, as it did in many other rural areas.

There are several key issues that have, during the pre-war period contributed towards the comparative success, and survival, of the Liberal Party as an electoral force in Cornwall. Firstly, throughout this entire period the Liberals contested every seat, in one form or another, at every election. This was in stark contrast to the new party of the left, the Labour Party. The failure of the Labour Party to properly contest seats, and, de facto, to allow the Liberals a free run at certain seats, has to be seen as a vital aspect to their continuing survival and political credibility in the county. Secondly, the Cornish Liberal Party, mainly due to the failure of the party elsewhere in Britain, was able to attract significant personalities to represent the Liberal cause in the county giving the party a national character, and credibility. Thirdly, the brand of Cornish Liberalism, being agricultural, Gladstonian and bearing the Methodist mantle still had resonance with the local electorate, in a way that it had lost its attraction for much of the rest of the country, who had turned to a more radical choice. These factors would all play a role in the party's fortunes in Cornwall, following the Second World War, but the role of campaigning would also begin to have a greater importance in rescuing the party from the electoral trough they were about to enter.

Overview of the General Elections 1945-2005

The inter-war period had seen the gradual, if not catastrophic, decline of the Liberal Party in Cornwall. The party in the county had shown significant residual robustness against the creeping growth of the Labour Party as was seen in much of urban Britain. Despite this tenacity to survive, the Liberal's parliamentary representation dwindled to just one Member of Parliament in Cornwall by the outbreak of the Second World War and they only retained this one seat, North Cornwall, at the election in 1945.

1945 was the lowest ebb for the Liberal Party thus far, reducing the party to just twelve seats across the country, despite being at the forefront of the reforms that had been set out during the war and were to be implemented following it. The party's

national relevance was at an all-time low, with just a few MPs hanging on in remote parts of the country. This nadir was compounded in 1950 with the party falling to just nine MPs, losing North Cornwall in the process - partly through the defection to Labour of Tom Horabin, but also through the increasing national tide against the party as a whole. With no Liberals representing the county in Parliament, this period risked seeing the final demise of the party as a credible force within Cornwall.

With no MPs, and the influence of the Foots in East Cornwall waning as both John and Dingle failed to capitalise on their father's electoral legacy, as was discussed in the chapter on personalities, the party went into a dormant state, as Tregidga describes it.⁴⁰⁹ Even in this period, however, the party retained a relatively high level of support in Cornwall compared to the national average. But, despite this continued localised core of support it was not enough to deliver the party success during the 1950s at all, with continued failures in the 1955 and 1959 elections. The party, although continuing as an organisation, was, in many ways, a barrier to concerted opposition to the Conservative domination of rural Britain, leaving Labour unable to find an electoral dialogue with rural areas like Cornwall. The pre-First World War two-party system eventually returned, with the only difference being the replacement of the Liberal Party by the Labour Party as one of the two contestants. Although Labour did have early electoral success, in terms of significant levels of support in 1918, in West Cornwall; it never broke through into second place in East Cornwall and this failure maintained Liberal relevance, if not victory.

Support for the Liberal Party was still apparent though in the greater West Country in the 1950s which helped to maintain a level of self-belief as well as public credibility. With Mark Bonham-Carter's by-election success in Torrington in 1958 and Jeremy Thorpe's general election victory in North Devon in 1959 the party showed signs of life, but the level of its support in Cornwall was still not delivering any seats.

The Orpington by-election in 1962 showed a move away from rural areas as the party's only potential territory. However, when the party in Cornwall eventually made a general election breakthrough it came in Bodmin, with Peter Bessell in 1964. By 1964, the party had recovered compared to its lowest point of six MPs and less than 3% of the national share of the vote - winning nine seats and over 11% of the

⁴⁰⁹ Tregidga, G., *The Liberal Party in the South West* (Exeter, 2000)

national vote share. Nonetheless, the party was still not significantly more successful than it was in the immediate post-war period. It showed signs of life in UK-wide politics, but hardly relevance. It was essentially still a party of the remote regions of the country, with Orpington being the exception.

Despite increased national support throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the party failed to make significant gains across the country, always realising only a fraction of its national support. In Cornwall, however, the party emerged from its worst period to elect two MPs in the 1966 election, Bessell and John Pardoe in North Cornwall. Although in hindsight, the party in the 1960s seemed nationally weak, if improving, this was actually the best position the party would achieve in Cornwall for the next 26 years, electing no more than two MPs again until 1992. Pardoe and Bessell were doing something, through the organisation and campaigning in their constituencies, that seems to have resonated more with the electorate than it would have appeared to have done during the 1980s. This was a period when the party was achieving greater national success and credibility, which did not seem to be entirely reflected in Cornwall.

The party fell back to just one MP in the 1970 election, losing Bodmin to the Conservatives. From 1974 to 1979 the party once again won two seats with John Pardoe retaining North Cornwall, Paul Tyler narrowly losing Bodmin and David Penhaligon gaining Truro. There were now three seats where the party could win in Cornwall. This was a sign of progress for the party in contrast to the depression of the 1950s, but nonetheless it was to be short-lived. The optimism and support that was generated from West Country successes like Mark Bonham Carter's win in Torrington in 1958 'the first by-election gain for the party since March 1929',⁴¹⁰ which gave the party a defined focus according to Tregidga, with a 'commitment to a narrow front and the vital factor of credibility...in the far South West.'⁴¹¹ Thorpe's North Devon gain in 1959 and Bessell's Bodmin win in 1964 added to this credibility but eventually they were both undermined by the scandals that embroiled them. The Liberal revival that saw by-election successes across the UK in the early 1970s and the best post-war result nationally in February 1974 was undermined by the time of

⁴¹⁰ Walter D., *The Strange Rebirth of Liberal England* (London, 2003) p.19

⁴¹¹ Tregidga, G., *The Liberal Party in the South West* (Exeter, 2000) p.194

the 1979 election where the party faced the double impact of the fallout of the Thorpe scandal, particularly in the West, and the effects of the incoming Conservative government. All the Liberal MPs, save David Penhaligon, were defeated in the West of England.

Although the party, when it formed the Alliance with the SDP, seemed to gain an increased national relevance in the 1983 and 1987 election, it did not gain seats. This may seem especially surprising in areas like Cornwall, where the party was expected to make gains on a national swing. However, it did not, and the Conservatives were re-elected to government with landslide majorities in both elections.

Only in 1992 would the party break out of its most recent stronghold of Truro to regain North Cornwall, after a thirteen year interval. In many ways, despite the impressive swing that Paul Tyler achieved North Cornwall, the victory can hardly be seen as the most surprising success for the party - with a former MP as the candidate and it having been Liberal as recently as 1979. The party nationally was still recovering from the debacle that surrounded the merger of the Liberal Party and the SDP, but with targeting and indigenous credibility the party returned to a position of relative success in 1992.

The Labour landslide of 1997 gave the Liberal Democrats a new relevance to the electorate in Cornwall as a whole, which the party had not received since the inter-war period. With Labour not being an apparently credible option in all but the Falmouth and Camborne constituency the Liberal Democrats fought to find an anti-Conservative coalition in Cornwall, as well as those opposed to the Conservative government. By winning both South East Cornwall and St. Ives, the party returned to its best position both nationally and in Cornwall since the 1920s. By 2005 the party achieved a monopoly of the Cornish seats for the first time since 1929. Cornwall delivering a success not equalled anywhere else in the UK.

The 1945 General Election

Entering the 1945 election as a party which had been part of the wartime coalition government must have seemed like a position of moderate strength to leading Liberals. The party had shown it was still capable of being a party of government and

some of its leading figures had been leading the move away from a wartime economy to build a more effective social welfare and health service in the post-war period. Led by leading thinkers like William Beveridge, Liberal MP for Berwick-upon-Tweed, the party was at the centre of the radical thinking that would shape the national political debate thereafter.⁴¹²

As such, having shaped this wartime debate for the improvement of living conditions to combat the 'Five Giant Evils',⁴¹³ the party must have felt deflated when the results of the election came in.⁴¹⁴ The party slumped, from even its pre-war nadir, to just twelve members of parliament, despite increasing its share of the vote across the UK from 6.7% to 9.0% (though this had more to do with the fact that the party had been gifted several seats in the 1935 election by dint of them being uncontested as part of the national government). Even Archibald Sinclair, the leader of the party, lost his seat, coming third in a close contest.

Tom Horabin, Member of Parliament for North Cornwall, had benefited in the 1939 by-election by the Labour Party deciding not to contest the seat in favour of him, as part of the Popular Front.⁴¹⁵ Yet 'the outbreak of war and the resultant party truce side-lined the debate on the popular front, although some Liberals who sympathised with this course of action (including Horabin and [Richard] Acland) continued their quest to construct an anti-Conservative arrangement for the next general election through the Liberal Action Group, later known as Radical Action.'⁴¹⁶⁴¹⁷ The Liberal Party successfully defended North Cornwall, with Tom Horabin, but his continuing shift to the left would see him leave the Liberal Party later in that parliament to join the Labour Party. Horabin 'feared that lack of money would force a reunion with the Liberal Nationals and that without a radical centre the Liberal Party would die.'⁴¹⁸ His enthusiasm for a popular front against the Conservatives in the run up to the 1945 election, led him to urge 'Lloyd George that Radical Action would deliver local deals

⁴¹² Beveridge W., *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Social Insurance and Allied Services*, HM Government Stationery Office (1942)

⁴¹³ Ibid

⁴¹⁴ Thorpe A., *Parties at War: Political Organisation in the Second World War* (Oxford, 2009)

⁴¹⁵ An agreement amongst left-wing politicians not to contest each other's seats against a Conservative opponent

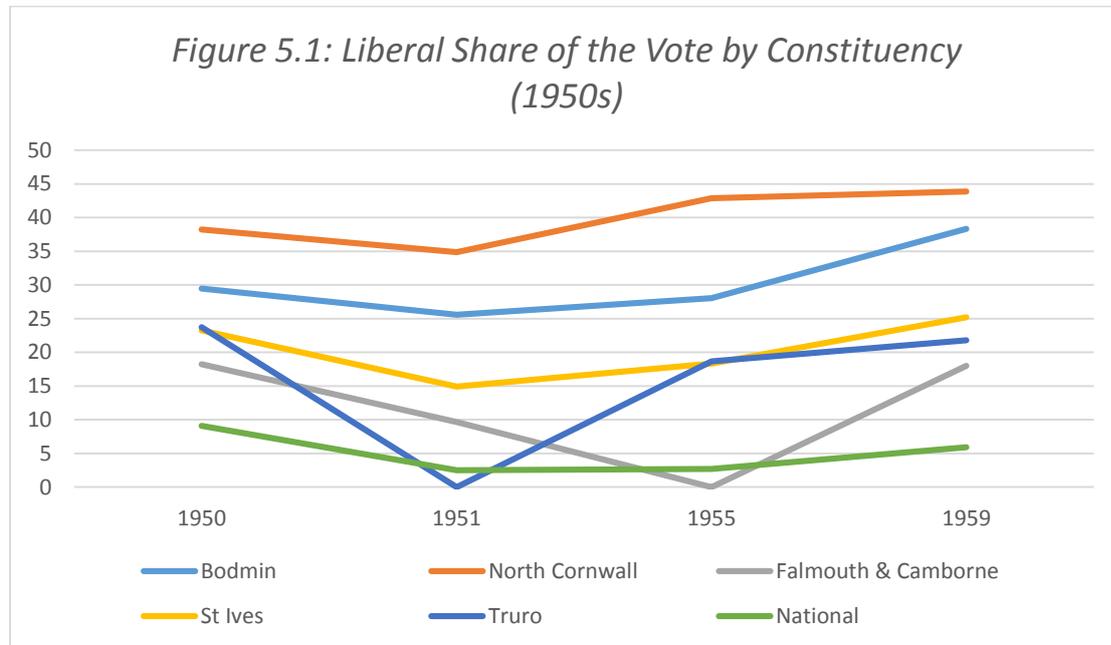
⁴¹⁶ Joyce P., 'The Liberal Party and the Popular Front' *Liberal History Journal* 28 (ed. Brack D.) (2000)

⁴¹⁷ The truce was entirely electoral in nature meaning that by-elections would remain uncontested by others parties others than the incumbent.

⁴¹⁸ Reynolds J. and Hunter I., 'Liberal Class Warrior' *Liberal History Journal* 28 (ed. Brack D.) (2000)

with Labour (based on the model in the North Cornwall constituency) and that this course of action would see at least fifty Liberal MPs elected who could hold the balance of power and force fundamental change.⁴¹⁹

The 1950s (General Elections 1950, 1951, 1955 and 1959)

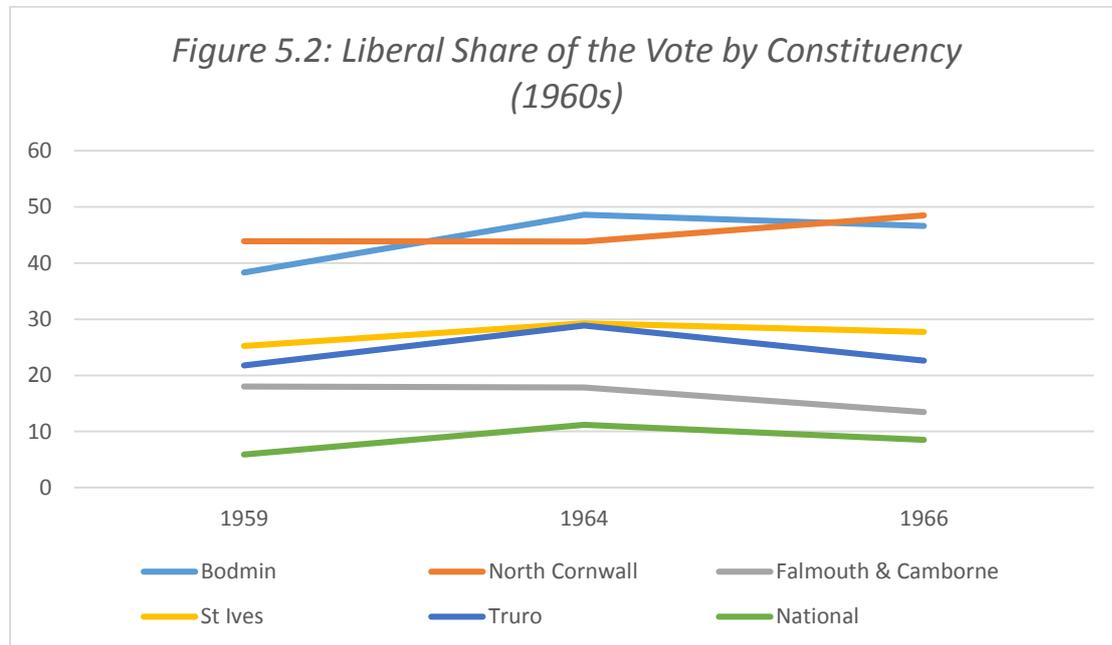


The elections of the 1950s failed to deliver the Liberal Party any success whatsoever in Cornwall. Although the party maintained a respectable position in North Cornwall and Bodmin, the party was third in Truro and Labour maintained success in Falmouth and Camborne - making it actually the second party of Cornish politics in the 1950s. What is clear from figure 5.1 is that the Liberal Party retained its greatest strength in the two most easterly constituencies in Cornwall, whilst the party failed to contest Truro in 1951 and Falmouth and Camborne in 1955 it still maintained a significant level of support to put even these seats, when they were contested, significantly above the national share of the vote for the party. This slightly flatters Cornwall as the Liberals failed to contest many seats during this period, being reduced to just 109 candidates in 1951, compared to 306 in 1945 and 475 in 1950. North Cornwall still delivered over 40% of the vote for the Liberals in this period, and only because of an almost complete absence from the political scene of the Labour Party, did the Liberal Party fail to regain it in the 1950s. Similarly the Bodmin

⁴¹⁹ Reynolds J. and Hunter I., 'Liberal Class Warrior' *Liberal History Journal* 28 (ed. Brack D.) (2000)

constituency remained a genuine possibility for the Liberals to elect a Member of Parliament.

The 1960s (General Elections 1964 and 1966)



Unlike

the 1950s, the 1960s saw significant progress for the Liberals in Cornwall and, to some extent, across the country. Cornwall elected its first post-war MP in Bodmin in 1964 with Peter Bessell and this was soon followed by the election of John Pardoe, in North Cornwall, in 1966. As can be seen by figure 5.2 which clearly shows that the support the party was receiving in east Cornwall continued to be significantly higher than west Cornwall. Both east Cornwall seats polled over 40% for the party, whereas none of the seats in west Cornwall achieved more than 30%.

There was a distinct difference in the fortunes of the party in different parts of the county. Even though west Cornwall did poorly the seats still achieved significantly more support for the party than other parts of Britain. Bessell's win in 1964 was both locally and nationally significant because it depended on several modern ideas that he brought to the constituency. 'His organisational skills were deployed to create an effective political machine in East Cornwall, while his success in identifying with local interests marked the transition between traditional Liberalism and the new community politics that was to develop in the 1970s.'⁴²⁰ His campaigning was

⁴²⁰ Tregidga G., "Bodmin Man": Peter Bessell and Cornish Politics in the 1950s and 1960s', *Cornish Studies Eight*, (ed. Payton P.) (Exeter, 2000), p.161

significantly more vigorous than might have usually been expected at the time, in particular his active attempts to squeeze the Labour vote were novel in Cornwall.⁴²¹



Figure 5.3: Peter Bessell's campaign literature used graphic design to illustrate the closing of the gap between the Conservatives and the Liberals and emphasised the incapacity of Labour to win. This chart, in the 1964 election, predicted a Liberal victory in Bodmin. (This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons)

LSE Election Papers, Coll Misc 0401/3/2X

By 1964 it would not be entirely accurate to describe this as community politics, as Tregidga identifies, - but a localised agenda, appealing to local identity and centre-periphery argument did form part of Bessell's campaign, which also ran the political gamut through to more internationalist policies, including opposition to Britain's membership of the Common Market.⁴²² In his election literature he argued that 'England enjoys the highest standard of living in her history but the prosperity of England has not come to Cornwall.'⁴²³ This juxtaposition between England and Cornwall is notable and suggests a nationalistic tone to his campaign.

Pardoe also used the 'Cornish card' as part of his campaign to win in 1966, but again he still focused on national policies rather than the more localised agenda that would emerge as part of the community politics philosophy that the party was about to develop. Their successes were significant fillips for the party both locally and nationally. Perhaps most significantly, the party saw a change in attitudes towards the use of national resources to support local constituencies with their general election campaign. However modestly, 'the national party had targeted resources

⁴²¹ LSE Election Papers, Coll Misc 0370/1/33J

⁴²² Rasmussen J., *The Liberal Party – a study of retrenchment and revival* (London, 1965) p.282

⁴²³ LSE Election Papers, Coll Misc 0401/3/2X

into a handful of constituencies, with the proviso that money should be spent sensibly, and yield tangible benefits, such as increased party membership. Targeting (known as 'special aid') was a factor in [1964 successes] and also helped develop...North Cornwall and Aberdeenshire West which were to be Liberal gains in 1966.⁴²⁴

The 1970s (General Elections 1970, 1974 and 1979)

Following the serious setback that the Liberals received in the 1970 election, losing Bodmin, the elections of the 1970s saw the Liberals becoming increasingly successful, if only minimally, in their struggle to re-establish themselves as a national political party. This electoral relevance coincided with the party's adoption of community politics as a strategy at the party conference in 1970, and 'although community politics was not invented in 1970, that year's assembly marked a turning point in the history of the Liberal Party.'⁴²⁵ As Jo Grimond testified 'every ten years or so a Liberal revival is announced'⁴²⁶ and the success of the February 1974 election propelled them to the verge of government as Jeremy Thorpe was wooed by Edward Heath in an attempt to hold on to office. The party performed poorly on both of the occasions that the Conservatives came into office in 1970 and 1979, though arguably better than might have been expected,⁴²⁷ and their support does seem weakest when the Conservatives do well nationally. However, as the main beneficiaries in February 1974 of the swing against the Conservatives, at least in Cornwall, the party did achieve some success. Most notably the gaining of Truro in October of 1974, by the 'merry Cornishman'⁴²⁸ David Penhaligon, and its subsequent defence in 1979, against the clear trend shown in other Cornish constituencies. This does suggest that this seat had surpassed the achievements in North Cornwall and Bodmin and must have been based on a foundation of campaign activity as well as, or instead of, personality.

⁴²⁴ Ingham R & Brack D., *Peace, Reform and Liberation – a History of Liberal Politics 1679-2011* (London, 2011), p.254

⁴²⁵ Ibid p.263

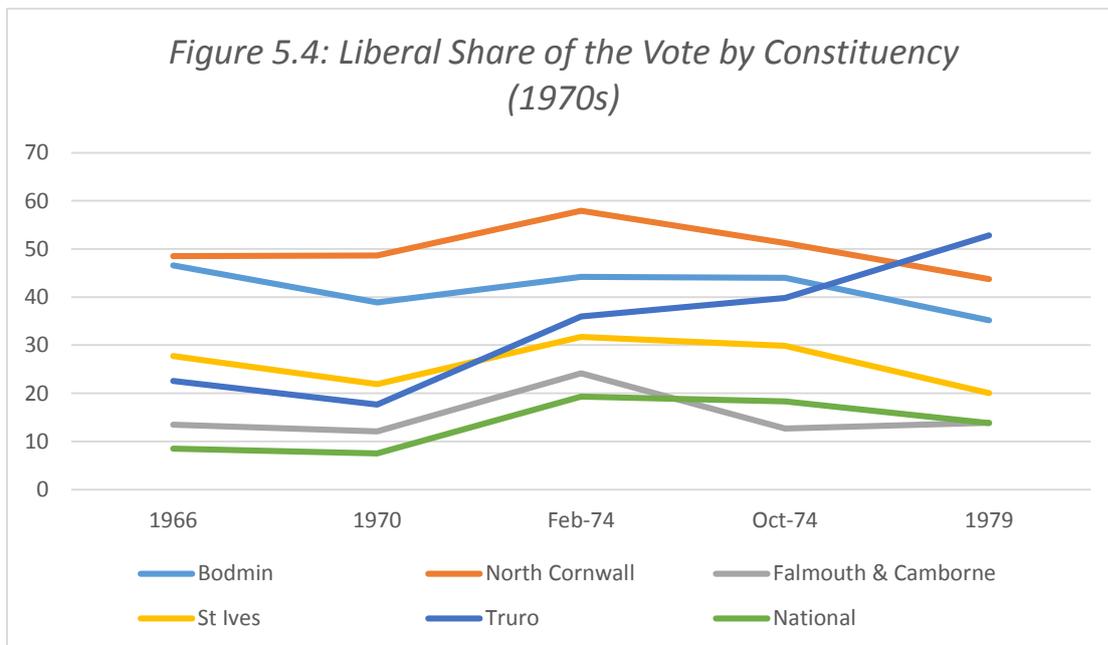
⁴²⁶ Grimond Papers, Box 7/1 Guardian Article 13/5/76

⁴²⁷ The Party lost Bodmin in 1970 but retained North Cornwall and in 1979 David Penhaligon defended Truro whilst North Cornwall was lost by John Pardoe

⁴²⁸ Grimond J., *Memoirs* (London, 1979) p.236

Paul Tyler's loss of Bodmin in 1970, narrow victory in February 1974, and then defeat in the October election of the same year, does seem to follow the national fortunes of the party and he attributes his failure in 1970 to Bessell's 'constant interference...and his cult of personality'⁴²⁹ getting in the way of his campaign, his success in 1974 to 'a bottom up campaign built around the local branches'⁴³⁰ and his defeat in October 1974 to 'the drift over the summer by the party nationally...and I was in London and Robert Hicks⁴³¹ was getting organised.'⁴³²

The comparative successes of 1974 (winning three of the seats in Cornwall at various points), supported by an embryonic national targeting strategy,⁴³³ were to be undermined by the success of the incoming Conservative government in 1979 which combined with the residual effects of the Thorpe scandal on the party.



What is notable from the elections of the 1970s is the change in fortunes in the Truro constituency for the Liberals. The seat has always been part of the group of Cornish seats, following the war, which had consistently polled below thirty percent of the vote, compared to North Cornwall and Bodmin that consistently polled over forty percent. The change of fortunes for the party in Truro stands out, and is partly

⁴²⁹ Interview with Lord Tyler, 28th January 2011

⁴³⁰ Ibid

⁴³¹ The Conservative MP for Bodmin 1970-Feb 1974 and Oct 1974 to 1997

⁴³² Interview with Lord Tyler, 28th January 2011

⁴³³ David Steel Papers, A,2,5

attributable⁴³⁴ to the use of the new campaigning techniques that party had developed elsewhere in the country.

Assessing the election literature of the parties from 1974 in all these seats does suggest that David Penhaligon's campaign was based on local issues and the centre-periphery argument, but it is also clear that the sheer volume of literature was noticeably higher in Truro than any other Cornish seat, for the Liberals, or for any party. What also stands out from Penhaligon's literature in the 1979 election is how his candidacy was often portrayed as being the MP *for Cornwall*, not just the Truro constituency, in which he needed 'more support in the fight for Cornwall.'⁴³⁵ As Annette Egerton said, 'people thought it was probably better that they had a grassroots campaigner as their MP.'⁴³⁶ Although Egerton assesses that Penhaligon's success was partly due to 'his Cornish accent'⁴³⁷ it was also because he 'knocked on all the doors...and would stand up against the China Clay industry to get better conditions for the clay villages.'⁴³⁸ The party's constant restating of the message that Labour could not win Truro also indicates that the party was squeezing Labour support actively, to get Labour supporters to vote tactically. Even though the Liberals had been beaten by Labour in Truro for much of the period since the war. Egerton's impression of the 1979 of the divergent fortunes of Penhaligon's increased majority and Pardoe's loss in North Cornwall was attributed to the small majority that Penhaligon had from 1974 compared to the larger majority that Pardoe had.

⁴³⁴ Interview Dame Annette Egerton (formerly Penhaligon), July 2010

⁴³⁵ LSE Election Papers, Coll Misc 0712/11BB

⁴³⁶ Interview Dame Annette Egerton (formerly Penhaligon), July 2010

⁴³⁷ Ibid

⁴³⁸ Ibid

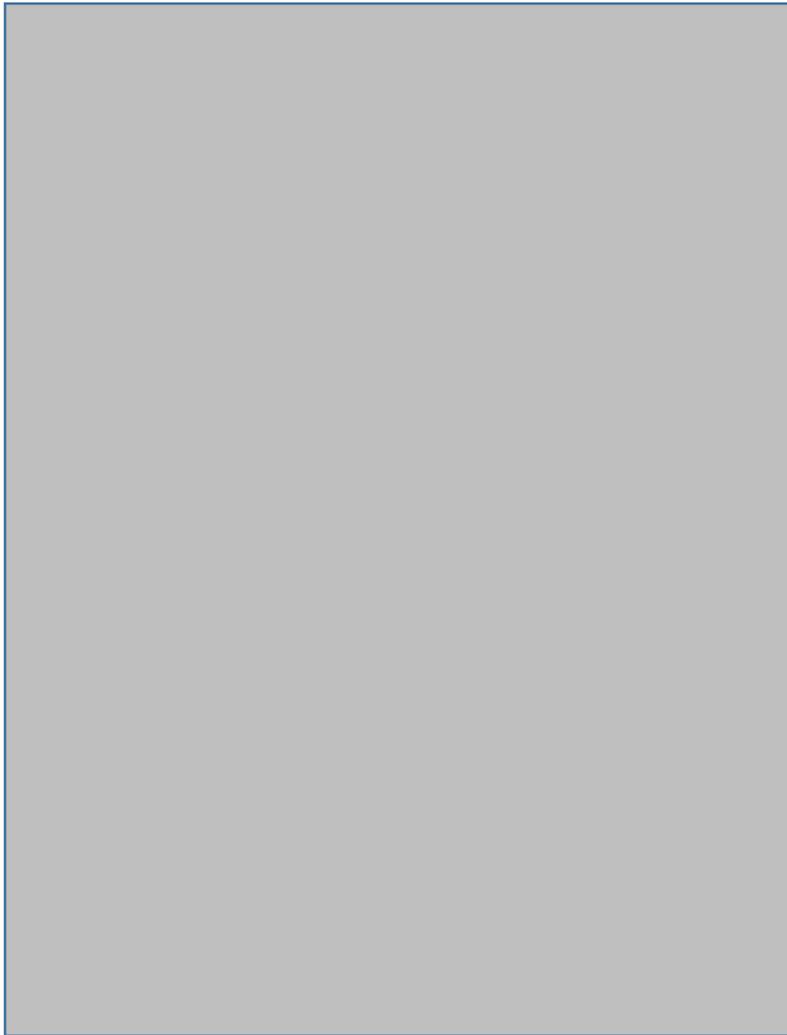


Figure 5.5: This 1979 leaflet for David Penhaligon focuses on entirely local issues and emphasises the closeness of the contest between Penhaligon and the Conservative. (This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons.)

LSE Election Papers,
Coll Misc 0712/11BB

It was safer for Liberals to vote against Pardoe than against Penhaligon. She also attributes some of the loss to Pardoe's support for Jeremy Thorpe during the scandal, whereas, Egerton says, in Truro, 'we distanced ourselves.'⁴³⁹ However, Pardoe, according to Walter, believed 'he lost because of a sense of let-down after he had failed to be elected leader in 1976.'⁴⁴⁰ Looking at the election literature that Pardoe produced in 1979 it is also easy to see that he almost identified the national battle between Callaghan and Thatcher, which goes against the logical local argument that Labour were not an option in North Cornwall.

⁴³⁹ Interview Dame Annette Egerton (formerly Penhaligon), July 2010Ibid

⁴⁴⁰ Walter D., *The Strange Rebirth of Liberal England* (2003) p.77

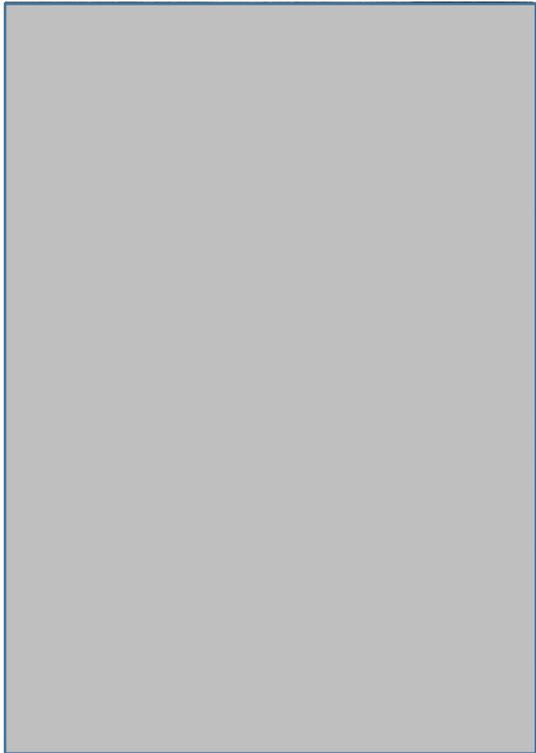


Figure 5.6: This poster from North Cornwall in 1979 shows the 'real fight is for Britain' between Callaghan and Thatcher: it is open to question if the public saw Pardoe as an equal contestant in this apparently two way battle. (This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons.)

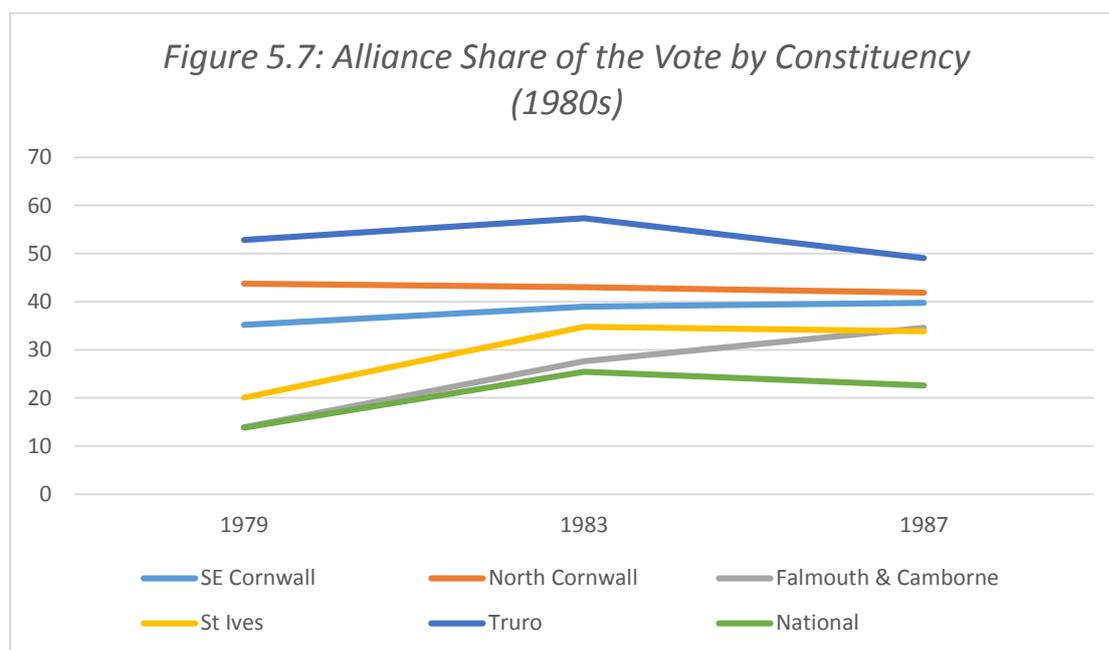
LSE Election Papers, Coll Misc 0712/11E

It would be incorrect to assert that Penhaligon's victory in Truro was solely due to his use of the community politics techniques, which he employed and which other seats were slower to acquire. However, according to Egerton, there does seem to be evidence that it was a significant portion of his success, combined with other factors that benefitted the Liberals in Cornwall. Although his personality does seem to have been a major factor, the means by which his character was promoted by the party's campaign techniques does seem to have been important. As, historically, the party was always below thirty percent in Truro before 1974 this success should not be attributed to the political culture in Cornwall as much as might have been in North Cornwall and Bodmin.

The 1980s (General Elections 1983 and 1987)

The two General Elections in the 1980s, and the failure to increase the number of seats for the party, disguises the ebbs and flows of Liberal, then Alliance, support during this important decade for the parties in the UK and in Cornwall. Following the loss of Bodmin in 1974 and North Cornwall in 1979 it was difficult to see the party progressing much beyond its immediate post-war position, even with such a notable Cornish champion as David Penhaligon, as the party's soul representative.

The Liberals' alliance with the SDP is an important factor in the increased relevance of the Liberal Party during this period, and needs some assessment. The two parties combined their strength to fight both the 1983 and 1987 elections together, by dividing seats. In Cornwall this division also took place, in an area that still had much higher levels of Liberal support than in other areas. This division of target seats saw the SDP contest St. Ives and Falmouth and Camborne at both elections with the Liberals left to contest the three remaining seats. This merits some attention to see whether this division of responsibility and potentially winnable seats helped either, both or neither of the two allied parties. Superficially, this seems not have helped either of the two parties, as throughout the decade the electorate returned only one Liberal from Cornwall to Westminster – David Penhaligon, then Matthew Taylor. One other event had a significant effect on the Liberal Party in Cornwall, even if it did not have an apparent impact on the parties' chances, and that was the death of David Penhaligon and the consequent by-election.



The Liberal Alliance with the Social Democrats

The Social Democratic Party, born from the centrist and more right wing members of the Labour Party, following the leftward swing within the Labour Party which saw the election of Michael Foot as leader of the Labour Party in 1980, was designed, in its infancy, to replace the Labour Party as a progressive left of centre alternative to Margaret Thatcher's Conservatives.

As such, the Alliance was probably an electorally sensible decision by the two parties - as one was essentially urban; the SDP, and the other essentially rural; the Liberal Party. With this in mind, the party's divided seats in Cornwall as well as in the rest of the UK. In Cornwall, the Liberal Party contested Truro, North Cornwall and South East Cornwall, as the three seats they had most recently won. The SDP contested Falmouth and Camborne and St. Ives, which on paper were much less winnable. In Cornwall the Liberals had apparently by far the better end of the deal but the SDP also had seats that were within the realms of credibility to win in both elections. The relationship between the two parties was anything but harmonious, 'with persistent reports of skirmishes between [their] respective "awkward squads,"'⁴⁴¹ in Cornwall. Despite the national image of the SDP being a type of new politics locally, not only were relations with the Liberals strained, but relations within the SDP itself were difficult, with a great deal of 'internecine criticism,'⁴⁴² and 'personality conflicts between the original leading activists'⁴⁴³ in the West Cornwall area party of the SDP. This was clearly not a good state of affairs in a target area for the party, with poor relations with their Alliance partners and within the organisation itself.

Although this is notable and arguably a local microcosm of the problems the parties had nationally in its relations with the Liberals and within the national leadership of the SDP, it does not explain why the party, with its Liberal allies, failed to make significant progress in electoral terms during this period. Reducing the majority in St. Ives in 1983 and Falmouth and Camborne in 1987 may have seemed like respectable results - but in neither case did it result in a victory for the party. Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the Liberal/SDP Alliance advances in west Cornwall, in St Ives and Falmouth and Camborne, were achieved by SDP candidates in both cases. This might suggest that the SDP appealed to a section of the electorate that the Liberals could not. Falmouth and Camborne had recently been a seat in which the Liberals habitually came third with Labour and the Conservatives being the main protagonists. The Liberals barely advanced in Truro,

⁴⁴¹ Albert Sloman Library. Essex University, SDP Papers, Cornwall Area Party Papers, Letter from Paul Tyler to John Lyttle, SDP Director of Publicity, 20th August 1981

⁴⁴² Ibid, Cornwall Area Party Papers, Letter from Fred Barrett, West Cornwall SDP, to Bernard Doyle, SDP Chief Executive, 16th January 1982

⁴⁴³ Ibid, Cornwall Area Party Papers, Report on the SDP's relations with the Liberal Party in Cornwall

North Cornwall and South East Cornwall, but the Alliance benefited from a party that was, at least in appearance, more left of centre than the traditional Cornish Liberals, with former Labour cabinet ministers leading it. This could suggest that either the party campaigned differently, though its national failure in both 1983 and 1987 might suggest otherwise, or that the electorate of west Cornwall, especially Falmouth and Camborne (having elected Labour since the war) might well have tapped support that the Liberals could not. It failed to deliver victory but caused the seats to be much more marginal as the bulk of the two parties merged following the apparent defeat of the 1987 election.

Although the merged parties faced a significant electoral defeat in the 1989 European elections across the UK, polling just six percent of the vote, losing many deposits in the process, the newly formed Social and Liberal Democrats still polled in excess of thirty percent of the vote in the Cornwall and Plymouth European parliamentary constituency in that year, suggesting that the party locally could still rely on substantial levels of support even when the party was performing badly nationally.

The 1990s (General Elections 1992 and 1997)

Unlike the 1980s, the two general elections of the 1990s marked a period of significant advance for the renamed Liberal Democrats. The 1992 election showed little improvement for the party nationally compared to the results the Alliance achieved in 1987. The party, following merger, had suffered its worst result for since the 1950s in the 1989 European Election - polling just 986,292 votes (6.2% of the vote).

Chris, now Lord, Rennard, the party's Director of Campaigns designed a strategy for 1992 which was 'to apply systematically community politics-type campaigning...built on the back of a long background period of intensive campaigning, with the candidate presented as the local advocate.'⁴⁴⁴ In 1992 this strategy achieved modest results, all in the greater South West,⁴⁴⁵ but by 1997 the strategy expanded dramatically from '£120,000 [in 1992] out of the party's campaign expenditure of £3

⁴⁴⁴ Ingham R & Brack D., *Peace, Reform and Liberation – a History of Liberal Politics 1679-2011* (London, 2011), p.318

⁴⁴⁵ The Liberal Democrats gained four seats: North Cornwall, North Devon, Bath and Cheltenham

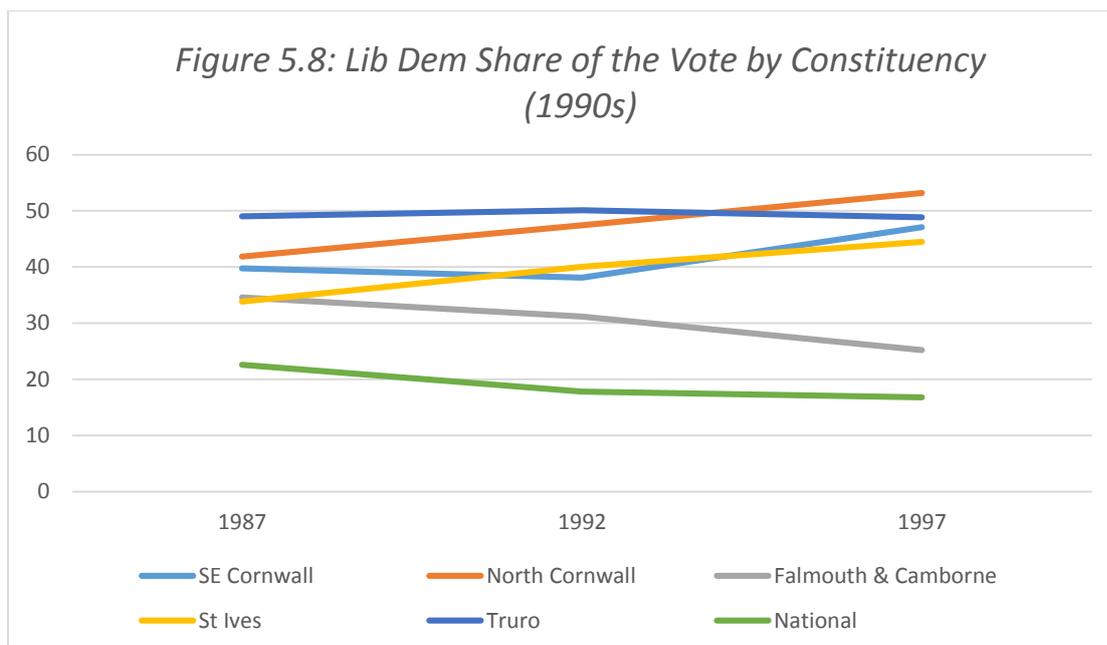
million...on target seats; by 2005, this had grown to £2 million out of a total of £4.5 million.⁴⁴⁶ A dramatic increase in the support for targeting based on a strategy of winning more seats not achieving more votes across the country in general. As Jasper Gerard asserts, this was ‘controversial at time with one senior figure telling Rennard this was “underhand and dishonest.”⁴⁴⁷ However, perhaps with some insight he also adds that, ‘a limitation of the Rennard strategy was that it led to intellectual fuzziness with Lib Dem candidates accused of jumping on local bandwagons that didn’t always resonate with national themes.’⁴⁴⁸ Of course the evidence of the surveys in this research does suggest that local issues resonate more with Liberal Democrat voters so this alleged fuzziness may have been key to their increased success.

In the 1990s, the national party began a more aggressive form of targeting potentially winnable seats, and this was to deliver the party limited gains in 1992 and then substantial ones in 1997, giving the party its best UK, and Cornish, performance since 1929. The two elections in this decade, which sandwiched the victory in Cornwall and West Plymouth for the Liberal Democrats in 1994, was a period which saw the party move away from being a peripheral player in UK-wide politics to a genuine third party. By the end of the decade the party would represent four of the five Cornish constituencies in a period of decline followed by electoral disaster for the Conservatives in 1997.

⁴⁴⁶ Ingham R & Brack D., *Peace, Reform and Liberation – a History of Liberal Politics 1679-2011* (London, 2011), pp.318-319

⁴⁴⁷ Gerrard J., *The Clegg Coup – Britain’s First Coalition Government since Lloyd George*, (2011) p.242

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid



The 1992 General Election

Looking at the two elections in more detail, the election of 1992 was quite similar, if not worse, to previous UK-wide false dawns for the Liberal Democrats. They had built up a relatively successful run of form in mid-term by-elections⁴⁴⁹ and a campaign that seemed to be having an effect. With so many second place seats left to it from the 1987 Alliance campaign, the party attempted to target several seats to gradually increase its parliamentary representation. However, the party failed to capitalise on the merger of the two parties which ultimately resulted in a net decline in seats, compared to the result the Alliance achieved in 1987. It was a failure for the party, if not entirely surprising, considering the party's internal divisions and continuing antipathy with David Owen's continuing SDP, which lasted until it was wound up in 1990, despite the two remaining SDP MPs, Rosie Barnes and John Cartwright contesting Greenwich and Woolwich respectively in 1992, both failing narrowly to retain their seats despite no longer having a party to represent.

The Liberal Democrats across the UK fared disappointingly when considering the pre-election media was focused on there being hung a parliament, with Labour, under Neil Kinnock, leading in the polls. Notwithstanding the pre-election hyperbole, Kinnock's Labour Party failed to win in these marginal constituencies and John Major's government was returned with a small but working majority. With a weaker, if

⁴⁴⁹ The Liberal Democrats had gained Eastbourne, Ribble Valley and Kincardine and Deeside

ultimately successful, Conservative government, some seats at the periphery became more open to electoral attack than the Thatcher years when the Conservatives won both elections in the 1980s with parliamentary majorities in excess of 100 seats. In this situation, the Liberal Democrats were able to successfully insinuate (more accurately re-insinuate) themselves into a position of electability in their target areas. The four seats the party gained from the Conservatives in 1992 were Bath, Cheltenham, North Cornwall and North Devon. Each had long histories of supporting, and sometimes electing Liberals. The party was not fundamentally trying to redraw the electoral map, but reassert itself in areas with residual levels of support from previous years and growing representation in local government. Each of these seats had historic, local and current reasons for the party to target them.⁴⁵⁰ This represented the party's targeting policy very much in its infancy in 1992, which would be developed by 1997 into a larger scale operation targeting fifty seats. In 1992 the number was more in the order of ten seats.⁴⁵¹

As has been stated earlier this strategy, pioneered by Ashdown's then campaigning lieutenant, Chris Rennard, saw the party devote time, money and human resources to trying to win specific seats. Other seats, which would have received assistance in the past, usually in the form of modest financial assistance, would no longer receive any help. Anything that could be done to move the party away from almost permanently electing twenty or so MPs became party strategy.

North Cornwall was one of those seats being targeted, as was Falmouth and Camborne. These two seats had very different recent histories.

North Cornwall had a long, if interrupted, history of electing Liberal MPs throughout the twentieth century. It was the last seat to elect a Liberal following the Second World War and had been one of the two Cornish seats the party had won in the revival of the 1960s.

Liberal Democrats in North Cornwall had selected Cornwall's veteran candidate, Paul Tyler, who, as has been discussed earlier, had previously represented the

⁴⁵⁰ North Cornwall and North Devon had been held by the party as recently as 1979 by John Pardoe and Jeremy Thorpe respectively. Bath was the highly marginal seat of Chris Patten, the then Conservative Party Chairman and Cheltenham Conservatives had selected John Taylor, a black barrister from London, whose selection had divided opinion in the local Conservative Association

⁴⁵¹ Interview with Willie Rennie MSP, October 2012

Bodmin constituency briefly in 1974. The town of Bodmin was now contained in North Cornwall so Tyler had strong local credentials, and had recently contested the 1989 European election in Cornwall, unsuccessfully. In trying to evaluate Tyler's success, and the 6.5% swing the party achieved in gaining North Cornwall, it is important to assess the various factors which allowed this. Previous national campaigns had been predicated on achieving a national swing for the party and winning seats as a consequence. There was no national swing to the Liberal Democrats in 1992, indeed quite the opposite; the party received a negative swing in comparison to the two major parties, with Labour increasing its national share by 3.6% and Conservatives losing just 0.3% of their support from 1987. The Liberal Democrats fared worse in terms of national share losing 4.8% of their support, and they also lost 6 seats in Parliament, compared to the Alliance's performance in 1987. These losses were partly offset by the party's targeting policy, of which North Cornwall was the prime example.

The party's campaign focused on several key areas, combining national policy issues and placing them in a local context. Nationally the party focused on its flagship policies of 'more bobbies on the beat and a better NHS'.⁴⁵² However, the messages in North Cornwall appear quite general on some election literature and seem to be at an embryonic level compared to the more focused level that is seen in 1997 election literature in Cornwall. Tyler's personal local credentials were highlighted as was the relevance of the Liberal Democrats in the local context as the only credible alternative to the Conservatives in the county. The literature that Tyler issued also focused on the apparent disconnection between London and Cornwall, stating, 'politicians up in London simply don't understand the problems faced by people here.'⁴⁵³ This attempt to create a cleavage between local voters and the perceived separation with Westminster politics is a recurring theme in local campaigning in Cornwall, and one which presumably had credibility in the minds of local voters. For example Neale, the sitting Conservative MP, was quoted on Liberal

⁴⁵² LSE Election Papers, General Election 1992/3/46d

⁴⁵³ Ibid

Democrat literature under the headline “Problems? What Problems”⁴⁵⁴ ‘as saying, ‘over the last decade, life in Cornwall has changed dramatically and for the better.’⁴⁵⁵

Above all, Tyler’s literature focused on the closeness of the contest between the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives - attempting to squeeze local Labour support, by repeating the message that, ‘in the last 100 years, Labour has never won North Cornwall.’⁴⁵⁶ Although the messaging identifies local and national issues that might engage local voters, the factor that most stands out from the campaign is the sheer volume of leaflets and flyers that the party produced and delivered during the campaign. The messages may cause the cleavages that the party was seeking to capitalise on, but the number of leaflets allowed the party, and its local candidate, Tyler, to be in the minds of the local electorate, offsetting the volume of other election media that the voters would have received from the nationwide election campaign.

This capacity to deliver an intensive local campaign fits into the Liberal Democrat campaign philosophy in which , given that ‘research has suggested that only 20% of the population will read literature that goes through their letterbox...the message must be repeated to be remembered – think how often TV advertisers pay for time to repeat the same message.’⁴⁵⁷ As Labour campaign managers put it, ‘[We] know that their campaigning activities are nationally led, orchestrated and supported, but they have a capacity to target their efforts in their key areas and on key campaigns. The production and distribution of their Focus newsletter works to a national schedule, it is not left to the individual parties. The content is determined nationally, with space for local input. They are also able to move workers to their areas of most need.’⁴⁵⁸ This national involvement, orchestrated by Chris Rennard and locally delivered by Tyler and his constituency agent, Willie Rennie, had built the party back to the position it had lost in 1979.

On the other hand, Falmouth and Camborne had not seen the success that the party might have anticipated, bearing in mind the progress the SDP Alliance candidate

⁴⁵⁴ LSE Election Papers, General Election 1992/3/46d

⁴⁵⁵ *Cornish Guardian* 19th March 1992

⁴⁵⁶ LSE Election Papers, General Election 1992/3/46d

⁴⁵⁷ Ault J. & Stephenson H., *The Liberal Democrat Campaign Manual* (Hebden Bridge, 2000), p.31

⁴⁵⁸ Kinnock Papers, KNNK 3/4/1/6 General Election Planning group (Discussion of the SLD) September 5th 1991

achieved in 1983 and 1987. There are many factors which might explain this; a new candidate for the Liberal Democrats, a swing towards Labour nationally, or a less intensive campaign locally that failed to resonate with the local electorate. One of the factors that needs greater investigation is whether the Liberal Democrats fail to achieve traction with local voters in circumstances where they are not the only contestant which is a credible alternative to the incumbent party; Falmouth and Camborne being the only seat in Cornwall where Labour has levels of support above 25% on a regular basis, in the post-war period. This credibility removes one of the important tools the Liberal Democrats had as being the only alternative to remove an incumbent Conservative. This credibility gap does not exist in the rest of Cornwall, even if the Liberal Democrats are not seen as an alternative government like the Labour Party is. When the Liberal Democrats can create local and national relevance it seems that they are able to achieve more in affecting local voting patterns.⁴⁵⁹

The party failed to make any progress in its other traditionally strong seat in Cornwall, South East Cornwall, losing ground to Robert Hicks compared to 1987, potentially underestimating the importance of incumbency, which was in line with the national swing against the party. Liberal Democrats in St. Ives however made substantial progress, under the new candidature of Andrew George.

The 6.5% swing achieved by Tyler in North Cornwall became the benchmark by which the party targeted seats *nationally* at the subsequent election in 1997.⁴⁶⁰ All the five seats in Cornwall, came within that range, although South East Cornwall was at the extreme end of this range, requiring a 6.45% to be gained.

The 1997 General Election

The changes that had taken place in terms of both the perceived economic competence of the sitting Conservative government and the detoxification of the Labour Party to be renewed as New Labour, under the leadership of Tony Blair, are the national context into which Cornwall entered the 1997 election. However, voting Labour in Cornwall still remained a redundant option in all but Falmouth and Camborne for removing a Conservative government. As a result of the national unpopularity of the Conservative government, the Liberal Democrats had again been

⁴⁵⁹ Russell A. & Fieldhouse E., *Neither left nor right? The Liberal Democrats and the electorate* (2005)

⁴⁶⁰ Interview with Lord Tyler, January 2011

successful in winning a series of spectacular by-election gains,⁴⁶¹ as it had done in previous parliaments. However, so had Labour.⁴⁶² With Tony Blair as leader, the Labour Party appeared to be the most credible Government in waiting since the 1970s.⁴⁶³ The Liberal Democrats, as a consequence, were in danger of being squeezed by the two main parties. However, ‘the key to Liberal Democrat success in winning an increased number of seats was the “Key Seats Initiative” – which channelled the party’s resources into selected constituencies at the expense of obtaining a higher national share of the vote.’⁴⁶⁴

In Cornwall, with the exception of Falmouth and Camborne, there was little credibility to the argument that Labour was going to win seats from the Conservatives locally, and, as such, the Liberal Democrats sought to capitalise on this apparent disjunction between the aspiration of voters to remove the incumbent Conservative and elect a Labour government. The only vehicle open to the Cornish voter to achieve at least one of these objectives was, they argued, through the Liberal Democrats, with the exception of Falmouth and Camborne.

As Whiteley, Seyd and Billinghamurst concede, ‘the thesis that much of the Liberal Democrat electoral success can be explained in terms of local campaigning is controversial,⁴⁶⁵ since a number of writers deny the relevance of such campaigns in influencing voting behaviour in a general election.’⁴⁶⁶ Despite Anthony King’s view that ‘all the evidence suggests that the campaign was largely irrelevant,’⁴⁶⁷ all the three remaining Conservative seats in Cornwall were targets for the Liberal Democrats in 1997. However, the notion and practice of targeting might prove difficult to achieve because this involved a movement of personnel as well as financial resources to support constituency campaigns, but nonetheless they were subject to ‘ruthless targeting,’ by the party.⁴⁶⁸ Usually, especially in the context of a

⁴⁶¹ Newbury, Christchurch, Eastleigh and Littleborough and Saddleworth

⁴⁶² Dudley West, Staffordshire South East and Wirral South

⁴⁶³ Wickham-Jones M., ‘Signaling Credibility: Electoral Strategy and New Labour in Britain’, *Political Science Quarterly* (2005)

⁴⁶⁴ Russell A. and Fieldhouse E., *Neither left nor right? – The Liberal Democrats and the electorate* (Manchester, 2005), p.199

⁴⁶⁵ Butler D. & Kavanagh D., *The British General Election of 1997* (Basingstoke, 1997)

⁴⁶⁶ Whiteley P., Seyd P. and Billinghamurst A., *Third Force Politics – Liberal Democrats at the Grassroots* (Oxford, 2006), p.115

⁴⁶⁷ King A., *New Labour Triumphs: Britain at the Polls* (Chatham, 1998),p.179

⁴⁶⁸ Ingham R & Brack D., *Peace, Reform and Liberation – a History of Liberal Politics 1679-2011* (London, 2011),p.322

by-election, activists and other resources could be drawn from outside to support the local campaign operation. This would prove difficult in the far South West as most seats were targeted in the region, not just in Cornwall. Only more Labour leaning areas like Plymouth and Exeter were left untargeted by the party. However, as will be argued in subsequent chapters, there is an increasing amount of academic opinion that constituency campaigning does have a major impact locally, and importantly it does seem to in Cornwall as well.

External support, from the national Liberal Democrats, came in terms of staff and finance on an unprecedented scale. Each target seat, through a scheme of matched funding received a full-time agent and other staff were placed as Target Seats Officers across key regions. Devon and Cornwall had the successful agent from North Cornwall in 1992, Willie Rennie, as its target seats officer, supported by a press team led by Neil Trafford.⁴⁶⁹

This team of almost twenty campaign staff were a backbone which the party had never had before to form and motivate the campaign in Cornwall.

St. Ives and Falmouth and Camborne were, based on the swing required to win, the most likely gains for the party, with South East Cornwall only just being targeted as it was at the upper limit of the party's optimistic targeting policy of the range up to and including the swing achieved in 1992 in North Cornwall - 6.45%. With Robin Teverson having been successful in winning the Cornwall and West Plymouth European parliamentary seat, Colin Breed was selected as the party's candidate for South East Cornwall, joining the two incumbent candidates Andrew George in St. Ives and Terrye Jones (now Teverson) in Falmouth and Camborne.

With the worst result for generations for the Conservatives across the UK at this election, some have seen the success the party achieved in Cornwall in 1997, winning four of the five seats, as being a natural part of the swing in politics. With Labour as a minor player in Cornish politics, the natural response was to vote Liberal Democrat to defeat the John Major government. This is difficult to deny as being one of the motivations that local voters would have had. As Tregidga says, 'this success was linked to a variety of local factors, ranging from the traditional strength of the

⁴⁶⁹ Interview with Willie Rennie MSP, October 2012

party to the way in which the above-average vote given to the Referendum party presumably helped to push Conservative support below 30 per cent in three of the five constituencies.⁴⁷⁰ Whilst this might have been the case in St. Ives, where the Referendum Party came fourth with 6.9% and in Falmouth and Camborne with 6.6% it is not the case in South East Cornwall which the Referendum Party did not contest, and the Liberal Democrats achieved the largest swing of any seat in Cornwall. This would seem to suggest that the Liberal Democrats would have done even better if they had been the only recipient of protesting voters against the Conservative government. If, as Crewe and King argue, campaigning is not significant in the outcome of elections, then one simple question needs to be answered: if campaigning is not significant in local campaigns how is it possible for a party that loses votes nationally (as the Liberal Democrats did in 1997 compared to 1992), to gain seats. Indeed David Butler goes further arguing, 'the 1997 election does not appear to support claims made that local campaigning can make a difference.'⁴⁷¹

It is possible that voters choose the most likely party or candidate to beat an incumbent independently, or through the national media. However, 1997 in Cornwall would seem to suggest that local factors or campaigning are important in shaping this outcome. Tregidga argues that, 'the local agenda of the Liberal Democrats reflected the specific concerns of the Cornish voters...which had the highest concentration of unemployment on a county basis and a sense of remoteness from both national and regional centres of power.'⁴⁷² To assess if this is something inherent in the psyche of the Cornish voter is difficult to evaluate, but assessing whether the Liberal Democrats were aware of it is possible through the literature the Liberal Democrats produced for the election.

Two things are very clear from the literature the party produced in 1997. Firstly, the squeeze messages to Labour voters reminding them that Labour were incapable of winning the election locally, despite being dominant UK-wide. Secondly, the localisation of the Liberal Democrats and juxtaposing this to their Conservative opponents, embodied in the slogan, 'only local man Colin Breed can beat the

⁴⁷⁰ Tregidga, G., *The Liberal Party in the South West*, (Exeter, 2000), p.222-223

⁴⁷¹ Butler D. & Kavanagh D., *The British General Election of 1997* (Basingstoke, 1997) p.312

⁴⁷² Tregidga, G., *The Liberal Party in the South West*, (Exeter, 2000), p.223

Conservative from London.⁴⁷³ As well as a focus on local issues such as schools and hospitals, a slight hint of tradition is also clear in the literature. On the 'Good Morning'⁴⁷⁴ leaflet in South East Cornwall it is not the photo of Colin Breed that appears but that of Paul Tyler, with a quotation urging local people to support Colin Breed. Tyler had higher public recognition in South East Cornwall than Breed at the time,⁴⁷⁵ having been the local MP and a local political fixture for the past 30 years - making him an historic advocate of liberalism, and someone who proved voting Liberal locally was not a wasted vote.

One other factor, must have made the chances of local Liberal Democrats much greater in South East Cornwall than for many year, and that was the retirement of Robert Hicks as the local MP. Again the impact of this can be very difficult to evaluate, but as the surveys later in the thesis explain, sitting MPs are often much more popular than their party, especially after such a length of incumbency. The Liberal Democrat campaign in South East Cornwall even hints at this attempting to soften the blow for local Conservatives by representing Breed almost as a local Conservative, rather than his Conservative opponent by describing him as, 'the best choice to take over from Robert Hicks MP.'⁴⁷⁶

David Harris, the MP for St. Ives, also decided to retire in 1997 so the effects of incumbency were also less evident there. Andrew George only having to overturn a small majority of 1,645, with a national and local swing meant that his victory was not a surprise, and his literature was essentially similar to that of Breed. However, Falmouth and Camborne was a much more complicated matter, as the Labour Party were an entirely credible contestant - having achieved a respectable third place in 1992 with 29.2% of the vote just over 4,000 votes behind the winner themselves. The seat had as recently as 1970 been represented by a Labour MP. The party could not be dismissed as a regional irrelevance in this seat as they could be treated in the rest of Cornwall. Labour *could* win here. Although the party selected a former Islington Councillor as their candidate, with limited local credentials, Labour also employed a targeting strategy, similar to that of the Liberal Democrats across the

⁴⁷³ LSE Election Papers, General Election 1992/3/39

⁴⁷⁴ A leaflet delivered by Liberal Democrats before the opening of polls on polling day to increase general turnout and convince undecided voters to support the Liberal Democrats

⁴⁷⁵ Interview with Willie Rennie MSP, October 2012

⁴⁷⁶ LSE Election Papers, General Election 1992/3/39

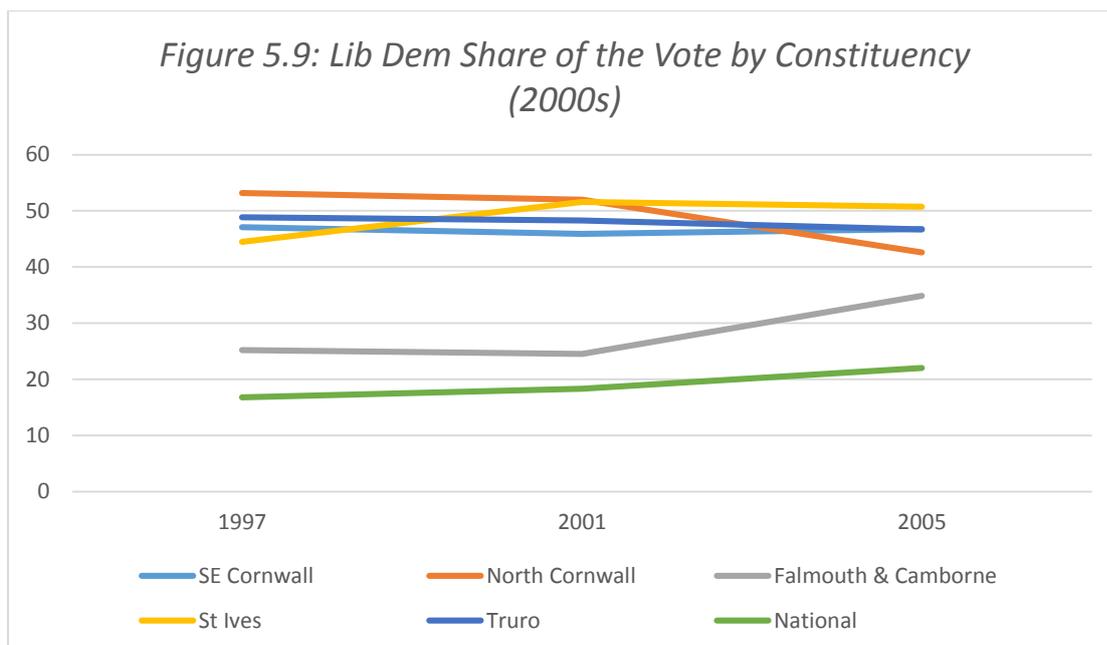
rest of the country, but Labour's in the South West was highly selective in a way that the Liberal Democrats were targeting everywhere in Cornwall, dissipating their resources. Because the Labour Party had only limited chances for advancement, such as in Bristol, Exeter, Plymouth and Falmouth and Camborne, they could focus their physical, as well as financial, resources on Falmouth and Camborne. For the Liberal Democrats, Falmouth and Camborne, became a contest that was subject to a classic targeted Liberal Democrat campaign by another party, one which also had national credibility, which the Liberal Democrats comparatively lacked. Voting Labour in Falmouth and Camborne would not only achieve a removal of a Conservative MP, but also contribute to the next government, something the Liberal Democrats found difficult to argue with authority.

Although the Liberal Democrats were extremely successful in 1997 by winning four of the five seats, their failure to win Falmouth and Camborne showed the long-term frailty of their position. Labour could win in Cornwall, as it had done sporadically at preceding general elections. But, it also indicated the limitations of local campaigning. Ultimately some voters, however remote from London, and however antagonistic to a government, want to vote for parties that have a chance of national power especially when they are better placed to defeat the incumbent member of the governing party.

Until 2010, this has been a distant dream, or an arithmetic anomaly, for the Liberal Democrats. Consequently they too are subject to forces that they cannot control in Cornish voters - that, for many of them, the Liberal Democrats are simply a vehicle of opposition to central government not an end in themselves. This split role that the party held in 1997, being both the vehicle of protest and the repository of localism are vital to continued electoral success for the party. They did not win in Falmouth and Camborne because they did not achieve both of these objects.

The 2000s (General Elections 2001 and 2005)

As the Liberal Democrats had now returned to their pre-war levels of success in Cornwall, being the dominant party and, with Labour's victory in Falmouth and Camborne removed the Conservatives from the Cornish electoral map, their campaigns in 2001 and 2005 would prove to be their electoral zenith.

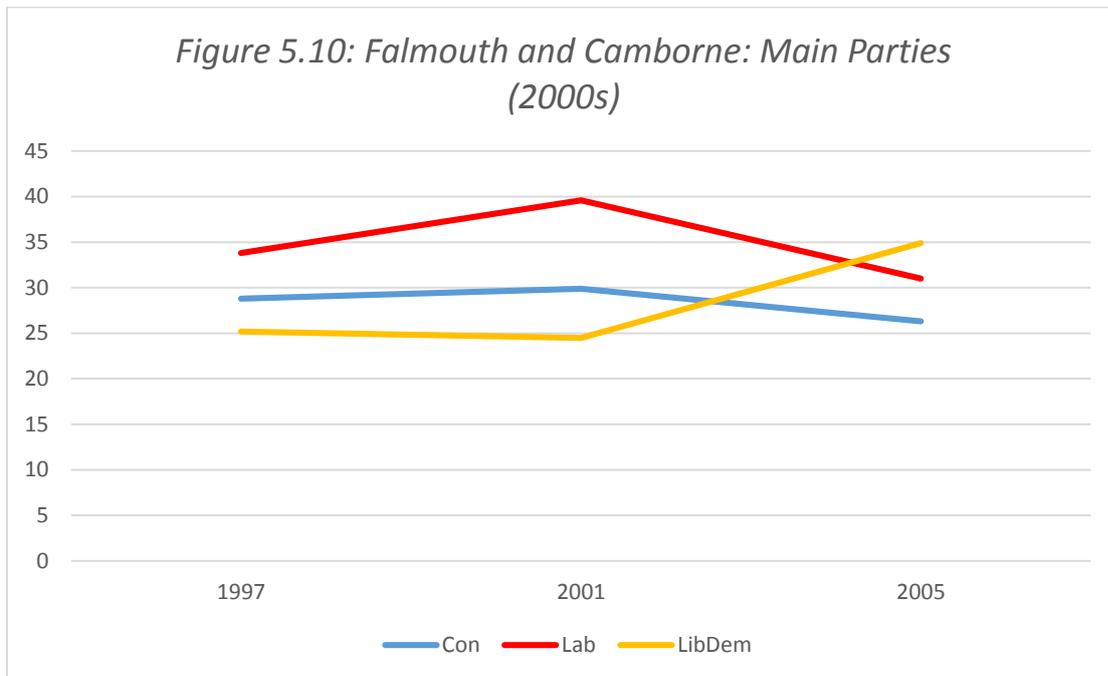


2001, which saw almost no change nationally, with the Liberal Democrats being the main beneficiary: gaining a net six seats, compared to just one for the Conservatives across the entire country. The election, which was famously delayed due to a significant outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in rural Britain, saw no substantial change in Cornwall either. As can be seen from figure 5.9 the situation in the four Liberal Democrat held seats virtually did not change in that election, with the exception of St. Ives delivering a larger majority the other held seats tended to have slightly reduced majorities primarily driven by a lower turnout in the election. What is a persistent factor in Falmouth and Camborne is that the Liberal Democrats consistently finished third in one of the country's few three way marginal seats.

The 2001 election was significant by its lack of change across the country, suggesting that the electorate was essentially content with the political situation and the Liberal Democrats in Cornwall were beneficiaries of this lack of change. With Tony Blair's New Labour still popular it did not receive a reaction from rural Britain, even amidst one of the most significant rural crises for generations. Labour even benefitted in Falmouth and Camborne where the party achieved a relatively healthy increased majority of 4,527.

However, the 2005 general election was to see the Liberal Democrats make a clean sweep of all the five seats in Cornwall coming from third place, in Falmouth and

Camborne, to win by 1,886 votes. The result was part of a significant swing to the Liberal Democrats in some Labour areas as the Labour government won nationally by a majority of 66, still very comfortable but the worst the party had received since 1997. The Liberal Democrats raised their number of seats nationally to 62, gaining several from Labour as the Conservatives who also failed to make substantial progress from the failures of 1997 and 2001.



2005 was to see two new Liberal Democrat MPs in Cornwall: Dan Rogerson successfully replaced Paul Tyler in North Cornwall and Julia Goldsworthy gained Falmouth and Camborne for the party. The result in Falmouth and Camborne broke the post-war record for the party in Cornwall winning all five seats and placing Cornwall firmly at the forefront of Liberal Democrat strongholds in the country. Julia Goldsworthy's election removed Labour, as well as the Conservatives, from the Cornish electoral map, as the Liberal Democrats also gained control, for the first time, of Cornwall County Council.

The party's campaign in Falmouth and Camborne combined a local candidate in Julia Goldsworthy and a localised campaign, which emphasised her local roots.⁴⁷⁷ However, the party was also the major recipient of disaffected Labour voters in 2005

⁴⁷⁷ <http://www.totalpolitics.com/print/328877/a-guide-to-midterm-leafletting.shtml> (Last viewed 03/11/12)

because of the impact on Labour support of the military invasion of Iraq. One of the fascinating aspects of the election was the movement away from a very localised agenda, which had been the foundation of so much success for the party in the post-war period, to becoming a party that had a specific niche in the national debate over the Iraq War. Charles Kennedy, as the only party leader of a UK-wide party that opposed the war, he and the party were personified as the anti-war party.⁴⁷⁸ This was a major benefit in terms of media but also in terms of differentiating the party from Labour, which they had been perceived to be closer to following the abandonment of equidistance, as recently as 1997.⁴⁷⁹ Like many of her new colleagues in the parliamentary party Goldsworthy arrived 'in the Commons believing they owed their electoral success to Charles Kennedy, to his opposition to the Iraq war, his campaigning skills and his relaxed style with the voters.'⁴⁸⁰

Despite winning all the seats in Cornwall in 2005 the party, at least by some internal critics, was perceived to have underperformed. Despite an opposition Conservative Party that remained unpopular, compared to the heights of the 1980s and 1990s, and a Labour government under Tony Blair, who was blamed for the military intervention in Iraq, the party still only elected 62 MPs, at a time when it both campaigned locally and had resonance on a national media level. This might have been perceived to be a perfect electoral storm for the party, led by a popular leader, in which an even more substantial number of Liberal Democrats might have been elected. This critique must have led the party, at least to some extent, to debate the issue of going beyond the strategy of Rennardist targeting and attempt to increase the party's national share of the vote in 2010 to bring more seats into play. This was impossible in Cornwall as the Liberal Democrats had become the established party by holding all six seats in parliament and winning Cornwall County Council on the same day, with an overall majority.

However, by the time of the 2010 general election Charles Kennedy had been replaced by Menzies Campbell and then Nick Clegg as leader and the Prime

⁴⁷⁸ Hurst G., *Charles Kennedy – A Tragic Flaw* (London, 2006) pp145-169

⁴⁷⁹ Suttie A. & Rennard C. et.al., *2005 General Election Management Team Report – Liberal Democrats* (2005)

⁴⁸⁰ Hurst G., *Charles Kennedy – A Tragic Flaw* (London, 2006) p.226

Minister had been replaced by Gordon Brown. The Conservatives also had a new leader in David Cameron. It was to be the first general election since 1979 that none of the party leaders had fought a previous general election as leader. Chris Rennard had been replaced as Chief Executive of the Liberal Democrats by 2009 and the campaigns department of the party had been taken over by Hilary Stephenson,⁴⁸¹ in 2004. Victor of a series of elections Stephenson is the equal campaigner of Rennard, if less of a public figure, but his replacement at the top of the organisation by Chris Fox and his removal from the 2010 election team, replaced by former Saatchi and Saatchi executive, John Sharkey, made the party more conscious of national messages and campaigns, rather than retaining its strongest links with community politics. Whether right or wrong this change naturally deployed a different set of attitudes towards campaigning from before and the surveys that were conducted between 2008 and 2010 show evidence of a party changing its electoral strategy to fit the circumstances of the next election. One that most expected Labour to lose and in which the Liberal Democrats were in genuine contention to form a large enough group in parliament to force the first hung parliament for almost forty years.

⁴⁸¹ Ault J. & Stephenson H., *The Liberal Democrat Campaign Manual* (Hebden Bridge, 2000),

PART TWO



**In 2005 the Liberal Democrats returned to total dominance in Cornwall for the first time since 1929
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Chapter 6: Evaluating the importance of local politicians, politics and campaigning compared to national factors before the 2010 General Election

One of the key objectives of this research thesis is to discover, using empirical evidence, the impact of the Liberal Democrats' own campaign techniques on their electoral performance in Cornwall and comparing this to other parts of Britain. This also needs to be set in the context of whether these techniques are disproportionately beneficial to the party in Cornwall, in comparison to other areas – particularly those in other parts of the Celtic Fringe and the South West. This will be important to determine if there are specific reasons for the Liberal Democrat electoral pre-eminence in Cornwall in recent years. Evidence might also be gained to explain the party's survival in the region during the Liberals' dormancy in the 1930s, its apparent death in the 1940s and 1950s and electoral resurrection in the 1960s. That said, this survival might also be identified as being one of the reasons for the party's success in Cornwall in recent times. These later questions will be difficult to prove through any evidence collected in the recent past so the original surveying conducted as part of this thesis will be essential in assessing the most recent Westminster electoral experience of the Liberal Democrats in Cornwall.

Background to the Constituency Surveys

There is a great deal of academic,⁴⁸² political and journalistic⁴⁸³ discussion as to the impact of local candidates and their campaign activity, and has been for many years.⁴⁸⁴ This debate has always seemed a little irrelevant in relation to two-party political election contests between Labour and the Conservatives. This seemed especially the case when the Liberal Party, in any of its various guises, was an electoral afterthought in the period between the 1940s and 1970s.

⁴⁸² Butler D, 'Reflections on British Elections and their Study', *Annual Review of Political Science*, (1998) pp.458-459 and Denver D. and Hands D., *Modern Constituency Electioneering* (London, 1997)

⁴⁸³ *The Guardian*, 13th January 2011

⁴⁸⁴ Rasmussen J.S., *The Liberal Party: a study of retrenchment and revival* (London, 1965) pp. 209-234 and Tregidga G., *The Liberal Party in South-West Britain since 1918* (Exeter, 2000)

This two-party model was dented slightly with the national success of the Liberal Party in the February 1974 election, where the party secured 19% of the national popular vote, but still only ended the election with 14 seats. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the party and the Alliance scored well in the national polls, in comparison to previous elections, but despite this never broke out of the comparative obscurity of more than a couple of dozen seats, despite almost achieving second place, in terms of votes, in the 1983 election UK-wide.

It can be argued that if Crewe was correct when he stated that; 'had there been no campaign and no Millbank, Labour would have still won by a mile. The election was decided long before the campaign by events in the first half of the 1992 Parliament,'⁴⁸⁵ and that equally Butler's argument that 'grassroots campaigning made only a small contribution to Labour's triumph'⁴⁸⁶ in 1997, the Liberal Democrats would, presumably, not indulge in community politics.

This is backed up by Curtice and Steed in their analysis of the 1997 election where they say the evidence 'does not appear to support claims made that local campaigning can make a difference in respect of other parties' performances too. The Labour party targeted 90, mostly marginal Conservative constituencies...yet... the performance in these constituencies was very similar to that in other Conservative/Labour contests.'⁴⁸⁷ This is perhaps a surprise to community politicians and Cornish Liberals who once selected Steed as their candidate in the 1970 election for Truro.⁴⁸⁸ But, nonetheless, there is a working assumption amongst some academics (such as Crewe, Butler and Steed) that local campaigning has little or no significant impact on the outcome of elections, especially when seen in the context of approximately 650 contests with 650 different local stories, which is extremely complicated to try and understand and explain in broad terms.

This attitude may be best described by David Butler, speaking on the February 1974 election night programme when he said; 'local campaigns have no more effect than

⁴⁸⁵ Crewe I., *New Statesman* 12 December (1997)

⁴⁸⁶ Butler D, 'Reflections on British Elections and their Study', *Annual Review of Political Science*, (1998) p.458

⁴⁸⁷ Butler D. & Kavanagh D., *The British General Election of 1997* (Basingstoke, 1997) p.312

⁴⁸⁸ Penhaligon A., *Penhaligon* (London, 1989) pp.59-60

500 votes either way.⁴⁸⁹ Butler attributed this remark to a Labour agent he had once discussed the issue with. However, it seems irrational to predict the impact of national swing on the third party on the basis of analysis which sees the Liberal Democrats and the Liberal Party through the same prism as the two main parties who have overwhelming national media presence to the detriment of the smaller parties. The Liberal Democrats were not actually significantly better off in terms of national share of the vote in 2010 than they were at the time of Jeremy Thorpe's February 1974 election campaign yet they have four times as many MPs in Parliament. Something other than national swing must be affecting this, to the party's electoral advantage, in those seats where the party is contesting the election seriously. Indeed some academics recognise this, notably Denver and Hands in their study of the 1992 election where they say, 'this study of constituency campaigning in the 1992 general election has shown very clearly, we would suggest, that the easy generalisation made in many academic studies – that, in modern conditions, local campaigning is merely a ritual, a small and insignificant side show to the main event – is seriously misleading.'⁴⁹⁰

Whiteley, Seyd and Billinghamurst in *Third Force Politics* attempted to end the debate as to whether constituency campaigning did have an impact when they found that campaigning benefited some parties more than others. They discovered that, 'The Conservative vote in 1997 was only marginally influenced by campaign variables.'⁴⁹¹ However, they also argue that, based on computer modelling, 'in the case of the Liberal Democrats, campaigning was crucial to determining whether or not they were to benefit from the demise of the Conservative government,⁴⁹² and 'the same point can be made, but to a lesser extent about Labour.'⁴⁹³ Crucially the computer model, used by Whiteley, Seyd and Billinghamurst 'suggests that if the Liberal Democrats had campaigned at twice their actual rate, the party would have won sixty-nine seats instead of the forty-six seats they actually won. Perhaps even more striking, the simulations show that if they had done no campaigning at all, they would have won

⁴⁸⁹ Butler D., BBC Election Night Special 28 February/1 March (1974)

⁴⁹⁰ Denver D. and Hands G., *Modern Constituency Electioneering*, (London, 1997), p.305

⁴⁹¹ Whiteley P., Seyd P., & Billinghamurst A., *Third Force Politics – Liberal Democrats at the Grassroots* (Oxford, 2006) p.134

⁴⁹² Ibid

⁴⁹³ Ibid

a total of only three seats.⁴⁹⁴ More recently Denver and Hands have followed up their work arguing that, 'additional resources and effort were clearly brought to bear by...the Liberal Democrats in their targeted seats: campaigns were much stronger and more intense in marginal seats than in those which were safe of hopeless prospects.'⁴⁹⁵

This research project has decided not to use the British Election Study as a comparison to the surveys conducted as one of the primary objectives of this research is to evaluate the intensity of a local party campaign and the BES, whilst a valuable resource for this research, does not, and never has, asked about the level of a local campaign and as such serves mainly as a useful background source.

The underlying question is to what extent, if at all, constituency based campaigning can have on the outcome on an election, and vitally whether because of the nature of the Liberal Democrats, their techniques, their candidates or their community politics ethos this is more important for them than it is for other parties. This was the premise behind the surveys that were conducted and, particularly with reference to the Cornish paradigm, whether this was even more important in that context. If there is no direct electoral benefit it raises the question as to why they indulge in it.. To achieve this comparison it would be important to assess seats that were both in Cornwall and outside and held by the Liberal Democrats, and not.

Constituencies which were surveyed

A number of constituencies were chosen to try to identify the levels of Liberal Democrat success, in Cornwall and elsewhere, with an assessment being made of where Liberal Democrats have comparative electoral success.

All the constituencies were chosen based on the revised boundaries to be contested in the 2010 general election and any constituency predicted result figures for 2005 figures are those that are the notional results produced by notable psephologists

⁴⁹⁴ Whiteley P., Seyd P., & Billinghamurst A., *Third Force Politics – Liberal Democrats at the Grassroots* (Oxford, 2006) p.134

⁴⁹⁵ Farrell D. and Schmitt-Beck R., *Do Political Campaigns Matter?* (Abingdon, 2002), p.112

Rallings and Thrasher.⁴⁹⁶ They are not, by their very nature, entirely accurate, but provide a sound and equal foundation upon which to base any conclusions from the constituency surveys that have been conducted. This was also the way in which the political parties were organising themselves during the surveying and any campaign activity that was being conducted was done on these new boundaries. Candidates that had been selected were increasingly organising themselves along these new constituency boundaries and the surveys most accurately represent the levels of activity of the parties and the relative popularity of candidates and Parliamentarians.

In Cornwall; St. Austell and Newquay, South East Cornwall, Truro and Falmouth and Camborne and Redruth were surveyed. All of the new six Cornish seats were not chosen, partly through lack of time, access to data, cost and also the prediction that neither of the other seats, North Cornwall and St. Ives, would be swing seats at the election. Outside Cornwall, a number of seats were chosen as comparisons, and although this process was never going to provide exact comparators, the seats were selected to provide a reasonable basis for empirical comparison. These nine seats were Torridge and West Devon; Ross, Skye and Lochaber; Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey; Westmorland and Lonsdale; Penrith and The Border; Ceredigion; Chippenham; Dunfermline and West Fife and North East Fife.

Each of these constituencies was chosen for a number of reasons that align them with Cornish seats, whether in relative geographical terms, like Devon in the immediate South West; Chippenham in the greater south west region; or in demographic and comparative geographical terms like Ceredigion, Westmorland and Lonsdale and Penrith and The Border. Another factor that was considered was the nature of significant personalities in the larger rural constituencies, which explains the selection of Ross, Skye and Lochaber (represented by Charles Kennedy) and North East Fife (represented by Sir Menzies Campbell.) Although the concept of 'The Celtic Fringe' is often used to describe seats in the remote West of Britain there has never been substantial empirical evidence that these seats behave in a similar way to each other and gauging this comparison with Cornwall, and other parts of

⁴⁹⁶ Rallings C and Thrasher M., *British Electoral Facts* (London, 2009)

Britain, may also cast light on whether Cornwall, and Cornish voters, behave differently at elections than other parts of the country.

Finally, with the knowledge that Labour had lost Falmouth and Camborne to the Liberal Democrats in 2005 it made sense to identify another rural area to compare to this and the only other available seat with a similar voting pattern as this seat was Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey - also gained off Labour, by the Liberal Democrats, in 2005.

Map of Constituencies

Telephone Surveyed

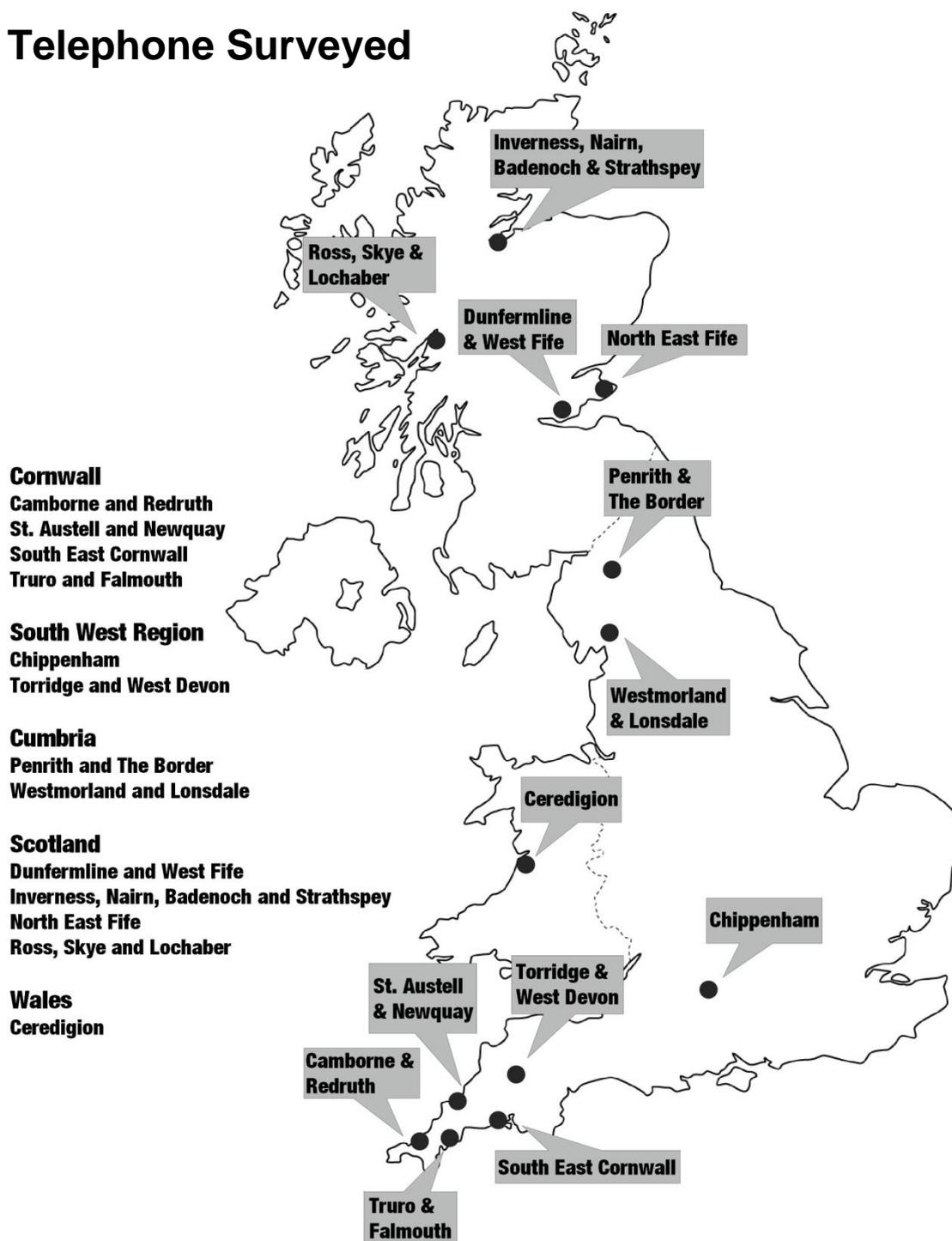


Figure 6.1: Map of the constituencies being telephone surveyed

Methodology

Thirteen constituency opinion surveys were conducted over a period of twenty-two months from May 2008 to April 2010. Six of these were then resurveyed in the three

months following the 2010 election. They were all conducted by telephone based on a random geographical sample of each of the parliamentary constituencies.

Telephone surveying took place between the hours of 10am and 8pm Monday to Friday.

In the first instance, surveys of approximately 250 to 300 respondents were anticipated. The first two surveys conducted, St. Austell and Newquay and Chippenham, showed that this sample size was not required to illicit geographically accurate information, as no significant variance was detected beyond a sample of approximately 200, compared to one sample of 300.⁴⁹⁷ This was also an important factor in deciding the number of surveys that could be delivered with the financial and human resources available to this research group. Essentially there had to be a number at which the evidence did not suggest higher quality information was being acquired whilst limiting the number of surveys, across more constituencies, which could be undertaken. Thus thirteen surveys with an average of approximately 200 respondents was deemed preferable to fewer surveys with more respondents. As a consequence, later surveys were conducted on a sample on this basis, this also gave greater capacity to conduct more surveys in other constituencies. A full breakdown of the sample sizes can be found in Appendix B on page 346.

Respondents were blind tagged⁴⁹⁸ to ensure that the geographic makeup of each constituency was sampled as accurately as possible, ensuring that polling districts had a mathematically proportionate chance of being polled, even when these were extremely small, especially in large geographic constituencies.

A provisional ratio of percentage population in each polling district, based on data from the Office of National Statistics, was prepared in advance of each survey and if, at the end of the first trawl of calling, there was any significant deviation from this anticipated ratio a small rebalancing was undertaken to ensure that an even geographic spread was maintained, this was never more than a few percent in any

⁴⁹⁷ With sample sizes of 200-300 there are potentially quite high margins of error (up to +/-10% in the smallest surveys) and some of the more narrow results might be subject to this.

⁴⁹⁸ Survey respondents were given a coding which was linked to their polling number and telephone area code. This allowed for a sample to be identified as being geographically accurate whilst maintaining the anonymity of the respondent.

case, and, as such, was only done on a relatively limited basis in three surveys: most notably where an elderly population tended to skew the data in the direction of older voters due to their preponderance and availability during the times of polling. This methodology would give the most accurate result possible based on the differing socio-economic, age and population differences between the various constituencies. It would also enable more rural areas to have an equal chance of being represented in the research surrounding the extent of campaign effectiveness being delivered by the political parties.

If, following the completion of a sample of 200, there was significant deviation from anticipated age and sex profiles of a constituency this was weighted, where necessary to bring these statistics in line with demographic figures found from the 2001 Census for each of the constituencies being considered. Although this has led to more accurate voting intentions in each seat it was not used, or necessary to be used, to assess the geographic spread of campaign activity or the significance of specific types of campaigning or issues because this was more accurately discovered without any readjustment.

A standard telephone survey, based on a ComRes⁴⁹⁹ opinion poll of twenty major categories was prepared asking respondents questions concerning topics ranging from national to local personalities, previous voting behaviour and future voting intentions, with a number of questions designed to identify the levels and intensity of Liberal Democrat campaign activity. This was then compared to the other parties. The surveys also tested the relative importance of national and local issues in voting behaviour and what voters saw as being important qualities in their local Member of Parliament. These fitted around the core objectives of the thesis to assess the comparative importance of 'Campaigns, Culture and Character.'

All these issues, a full list of which is attached in appendices C and D, were designed to elicit responses concerning the importance of: local issues and personalities over national ones; local issues over national ones; the impact of Liberal Democrat campaigning; the individuals that the party tries to elect and any

⁴⁹⁹ A leading UK polling company – www.comres.co.uk

comparisons that can be discovered from these individual polls and their comparisons within Cornwall, between different parts of the country and indeed between the different ways the parties campaign.

Constituency Profiles

Before assessing the particular constituencies that were polled, it is important to understand some of the local factors which might complicate evaluations based on direct comparisons. Not all constituencies have the same levels of Liberal Democrat support, even in an area as self-contained as Cornwall. Furthermore, Welsh and Scottish constituencies have the added involvement and potential complication of active Nationalist parties. However, in many cases, their similarity can be seen geographically, electorally and arguably ethnically, if one attaches credibility to the concept of the 'Celtic Fringe' phenomena.

St. Austell and Newquay (June/July 2008)

This constituency, focused around the Clay District of Cornwall was, perceived by some to be one of the most marginal of the seats that the Liberal Democrats held in Cornwall.⁵⁰⁰ Parts of the seat have been held by Matthew Taylor, Colin Breed and Dan Rogerson on the previous constituency boundaries. Of the new constituencies in Cornwall it was the most radically different from the previous five seats⁵⁰¹, whilst other seats still retained some coherence in the East and West of the county.

At the time of surveying, the selected Liberal Democrat Prospective Parliamentary Candidate (PPC), Stephen Gilbert, was only newly in place and the party organisation had become relatively inactive - with sitting Liberal Democrat MPs for the area as far back, in some cases, as the 1980s. The area had been completely represented by Liberal Democrats since 1997.

⁵⁰⁰ *The Guardian*, 6th April 2010 (Rallings and Thrasher)

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid*

Rallings and Thrasher,⁵⁰² however, did not agree with the widely held⁵⁰³ view that this was highly marginal and in fact assessed the 2005 notional majority as being 5,723 (12.44%) with a Liberal Democrat share of the vote of 47.3%, Conservative 34.8%, Labour 13.8% and UKIP 4.1%. As part of their research for predicting the notional results for the previous election, they also identified a 95.48% change in boundaries,⁵⁰⁴ which by any mathematical calculation is at the extreme end of the changes being made. This is the sixth seat that has been created in Cornwall to create six from five. Despite this, it is in many ways a constituency that has greater coherence than it did previously - mirroring the now-defunct Restormel council and, as such, was a unit that electors could associate with.

This constituency was surveyed again following the 2010 election.

South East Cornwall (June/July 2008)

South East Cornwall, on paper the second safest seat in Cornwall on the new boundaries,⁵⁰⁵ was entirely contained within the old seat with the same name. The seat has an interesting electoral history having been briefly held by Isaac Foot before the Second World War, recaptured by Peter Bessell in 1964 at the vanguard of the Liberal revival, and then held between the two 1974 elections by Paul Tyler by just 9 votes. After twenty three years held by Robert Hicks, Colin Breed regained it for the Liberal Democrats in 1997 with a large swing.

The seat was at the extremes of the swings the party achieved in 1997 and at the time could be reasonably assumed to be safe, on paper. However, campaigning has always been significantly higher in this seat than others in Cornwall. Campaign expenditure by the Liberal Democrats in recent years had been very high, and contributed significantly to the party winning the now defunct Caradon District Council from no overall control in 2007. This was the first time in its history it had

⁵⁰² Press Association <http://election.pressassociation/constituencies.html>

⁵⁰³ *Liberal Democrat News* September 12th 2008

⁵⁰⁴ This means that the constituency has very little comparison to its previous nature, being made up of three different seats, namely parts of Truro and St. Austell, North Cornwall and South East Cornwall

⁵⁰⁵ Press Association <http://election.pressassociation/constituencies.html>

been under political control, and this advance was against the larger swing both in Cornwall and the UK more generally towards the Conservatives.

Documents from the Electoral Commission indicate that in this seat,⁵⁰⁶ Liberal Democrats were significantly outspending not only all the other Liberal Democrat campaigns in the other constituencies assessed here through polling, but also the much-vaunted 'Ashcroft money'⁵⁰⁷ being used by the Conservatives to target Labour and Liberal Democrat constituencies at the 2010 election. It was only one of two Liberal Democrat campaigns to do so before the election, the other being Westmorland and Lonsdale, which was also surveyed. Spending in South East Cornwall dropped significantly after a high point in 2007.

Importantly, in the period when the poll was conducted, Colin Breed had recently formally announced his intention to retire and the new Liberal Democrat PPC had only just been selected. According to Rallings and Thrasher,⁵⁰⁸ the seat entered the 2010 election with a Liberal Democrats notional majority of 5000, which was arguably well within the margin of defensibility at the election.

This constituency was surveyed again following the 2010 election.

Truro and Falmouth (May/June 2009)

Having elected a Liberal MP for over thirty-five years, Truro was considered a stronghold for the Liberal Party and subsequently for the Liberal Democrats. Represented by David Penhaligon from October 1974 until his death in 1986, followed by Matthew Taylor until his retirement in 2010. This seat, although notionally at risk, was subject to significant boundary changes, taking in the more Conservative and Labour area of Falmouth and losing the more historically Liberal Democrat areas of St. Austell.

⁵⁰⁶ www.electoralcommission.org.uk (Last viewed 31/05/13)

⁵⁰⁷ *The Independent* February 27, 2010

⁵⁰⁸ Press Association <http://election.pressassociation/constituencies.html>

Falmouth had only been represented by a Liberal Democrat MP since the 2005 general election, making the seat vulnerable to a strong Conservative challenge, where the capacity for the party to argue that Labour was not a contested also lacked potentially lacked traction. Despite this, the Liberal Democrats fielded a candidate with strong local credentials in Terrye Teverson, having previously contested parts of the seat in the 1990s.

This seat is important for the research project because it provides us with some insight into the importance of incumbency as a tool for the Liberal Democrats, and into the impact the loss of a well-known and well-liked sitting member can have on Liberal Democrat support. Of course, it does not help identify the ways in which the party achieves its electoral goals when they do not have the benefits of incumbency.

Camborne and Redruth (June/July 2009)

The seat which comprised the bulk of Falmouth and Camborne was reconstituted into a more favourable seat for the Liberal Democrats and Labour following the boundary changes centred around the more historically working class areas of West Cornwall, which give the constituency its new name.

With the exception of Hayle, which it gained from St. Ives constituency, this seat was entirely represented by sitting first term member, Julia Goldsworthy. Although Goldsworthy had had a number of high profile issues of her parliamentary expenses⁵⁰⁹ this seemed to be having more of an effect in Falmouth than in this new seat which she was continuing to campaign in.⁵¹⁰ In this seat, the Liberal Democrats had the benefit of incumbency on their side, but only for the briefest electoral cycle. This seat tells us something about the importance of incumbency over a longer period and shows that it appears to be incremental over a succession of elections suggesting that campaigning is still important when a new MP is effectively on probation with the electorate.

⁵⁰⁹ *Daily Telegraph* May 13, 2009

⁵¹⁰ Interview with Dan Rogerson MP, November 2011

Torrige and West Devon (July/August 2009)

Torrige and West Devon is a seat that is very similar to the seats in Cornwall, particularly in the East of the county. It is large and rural with market towns like Tavistock and Bideford as its core. It even has the traditions of tin mining and Stannery, like its Cornish neighbours.. Gained by John Burnett for the Liberal Democrats in 1997 technically from the Conservatives,⁵¹¹ after briefly being represented by Mark Bonham-Carter following the Torrington By-election in the 1950s the seat is an excellent comparison for the Cornish constituencies as, of all the seats being assessed, it is, geographically, the closest in comparison. Unlike Cornwall, however, this seat reverted to the Conservatives in 2005 following the retirement of sitting MP, John Burnett. In 2005, the Liberal Democrats selected a senior national figure, David Walter, their former national press director, to replace Burnett, going against their habit of selecting candidates with strong, local credentials. In 2010 they fielded a young local candidate and his campaign is an interesting insight into the way in which, once this 'local' mantle had been ceded to the opposition party, it is difficult for the Liberal Democrats to regain it.

The surveys conducted also give an interesting comparison for a first term Conservative MP and it is important to assess whether Liberal Democrats build up more personal levels of support over their first term in Parliament than their competitors.

Chippenham (May/June 2008)

Chippenham offered an interesting comparator for other seats being polled during this research. It was a seat identified in the greater South West region as both being targeted to win by the Liberal Democrats at the 2010 election and, in theory, being notionally a Liberal Democrat seat on the new boundaries.

⁵¹¹ The sitting Conservative MP for Torrige and West Devon, Emma Nicholson, had defected to the Liberal Democrats in 1995

Based around the Wiltshire market town of Chippenham itself, along with Bradford on Avon and Melksham, the boundary changes were extremely beneficial to the Liberal Democrats. When it appears in this geographic form as a suburban seat, Chippenham has regularly, been a potential target seat for the Liberal Party or Liberal Democrats. Indeed it is one of those that the Liberal Party, in the 1960s and 1970s, targeted. It was also spoken of as being a seat that the party would target when John Pardoe lost North Cornwall in 1979 and consequently was potentially looking for another seat to win thereafter. Described as, 'one of the marginals which has persistently failed to fall to the Liberals, despite several near misses.'⁵¹²

However, it would prove to be an interesting seat for the party to target, as the electorate had no experience of being represented by the Liberal Democrats other than at council level. The new constituency was represented by three separate Conservative MPs. Nonetheless, like York Outer, this was a seat that had been deemed notionally Liberal Democrat by Rallings and Thrasher and was an interesting test for Liberal Democrat campaigning which is intrinsically oppositionist in its nature.

These are the six seats that were selected for survey in the South West. However, this research project is also attempting to assess whether the voting patterns of Cornish voters, the impact of local campaigning and Cornish politicians, are different from other areas of the country. Therefore, it is important to identify other seats where these phenomena may also be at play with the electorate. These are seats across the UK where the party has had electoral success in the recent past, as well as seats where the party has not been successful; this will help assess whether there is a clear split between areas with Liberal Democrat activity and those with little or none.

Ceredigion (October/November 2008)

Set on the West coast of Wales, based around the county of Cardiganshire (the Welsh being Ceredigion) its main town is the university town of Aberystwyth. Other

⁵¹² *The Guardian* December 28, 1982, p.2

main population centres are another university town, Lampeter, Aberaeron and Newquay. It is rural and coastal and focused around these significant, if not large, market towns. This seat has a chequered political history and is in many ways worthy of a research project of its own. As far back as the 1920s, this was a seat that the party fought amongst itself over, between Asquith's Liberals and Lloyd George's Liberals. Unlike Cornwall, Lloyd George's influence was, perhaps unsurprisingly, more influential here and his branch of the party won this localised contest, in a majority Welsh speaking constituency.

It had remained faithful to the Liberals through much of the twentieth century and in more recent times the seat fell back to Liberal Geraint Howells, from the Labour Party in February 1974, and was held by him until the election of 1992. The seat was then won by Cynog Dafis, a local farmer, standing on a joint Plaid Cymru/Green Party platform. This appeared to herald a permanent switch to the other third force party in Wales, Plaid Cymru, and this was only reinforced by the National Assembly seat electing a Plaid Cymru AM, Elin Jones, ever since its creation in 1999.

Dafis decided to spark a by-election in 2000, due to finding the commitments of simultaneously being a Westminster Constituency MP for Ceredigion and an Assembly Member for the Mid and West Wales Region, (which geographically covered almost two-thirds of Wales) to be too great. He successfully handed the seat on to his Plaid Cymru successor, Simon Thomas, against an English, non-Welsh speaking candidate for the Liberal Democrats, Mark Williams, who even lived in the neighbouring constituency. However, somewhat against the run of electoral form, Williams won the seat for the Liberal Democrats in 2005 with a wafer thin majority, and was re-elected in 2010 with a majority amongst the largest for the Liberal Democrats anywhere in the UK.

Westmorland and Lonsdale (September/October 2008)

Based around the market town of the Kendal and South Lakes of Cumbria, including Windermere and Grasmere, the seat goes as far west as the Lyth Valley and south to Arnside, Milnthorpe and Grange-over-Sands. The constituency is very dependent

on tourism for its economy, and has some light industry in Kendal but is essentially rural in nature.

The seat had been a Conservative stronghold for many years since the Liberal landslide of 1906, electing Michael Jopling in the 1980s and 1990s with majorities in excess of 15,000, the seat was passed over to Tim Collins in 1997. A high flying Conservative he became a front bencher and was Shadow Secretary for Education under Michael Howard in the run up to the election of 2005.

The Liberal Democrats ran a very vigorous campaign in the 2001 election, but the seat was deeply affected by the Foot and Mouth epidemic that badly affected this part of the country. This helped the Conservatives mount effective defences in many rural seats during that election. It appeared that Tim Collins had achieved local success and popularity that was potentially impregnable. In 1992 the Conservative majority stood at 16,436, in 1997 it was 4,521, in 2001 it dropped again, but only slightly, to 3,147.

Against the electoral tide in 2005, Tim Farron, a local councillor, who had fought the seat for the party in 2001, spectacularly seized the seat with a wafer thin majority, achieving only one of three gains off the Conservatives for the party at that election. It was the only success of the Liberal Democrats 'decapitation strategy'⁵¹³ at that election.

With a national swing to the Conservatives going into the 2010 election, it was a high priority target seat for the Conservatives and like several seats in Cornwall, one into which the party was pouring massive resources; so-called 'Ashcroft money', as mentioned earlier. However, this was the only seat in the UK in which the Liberal Democrats outspent the Ashcroft funding, (with the exception of South East Cornwall from 2006-2007). Against the predictions of many pundits, Farron held the seat with a majority of 12,000; a startling and impressive trend-bucking result. This has long

⁵¹³ *The Independent* May 7, 2005 (The decapitation strategy aimed at unseating high-profile shadow cabinet members who the Liberal Democrats felt the party could defeat in 2005. They included Oliver Letwin (West Dorset), David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) and Michael Howard (Folkestone and Hythe) as well as Tim Collins in Westmorland and Lonsdale.

been seen by the Liberal Democrats themselves as one of their best organised constituency parties. It has been seen as the benchmark by which to set campaigning activity for rural constituencies like it. As such, it is an excellent control seat with which to compare Cornish Liberal Democrat activity.

Although this seat, and Penrith and the Border, are not historically considered part of the Celtic Fringe, they fit the context of this concept rather well, and although research in the past has suggested Cumbria and Cumberland is not,⁵¹⁴ the evidence of this research suggests that Westmorland and Lonsdale acts similarly to other seats in the Celtic Fringe, and therefore make excellent comparisons for the Cornish seats being assessed.

This constituency was surveyed again following the 2010 election.

Penrith and the Border (March/April 2010)

Not a seat high on the list of targets for the Liberal Democrats, this is a safe Conservative seat, neighbouring Westmorland and Lonsdale in Cumbria. It is large and rural with several market towns, again like those in Cornwall. A seat held by the Conservative Party, with a large majority it has some pockets of Liberal Democrat activity, but no more than the smallest of Liberal Democrat local parties. With the sitting Conservative MP, David Maclean, retiring this seat gave an indication of whether an incumbent Tory standing down has more or less impact on the outcome for that party that it does for the Liberal Democrats. The seat has only really flirted with centrist politics once in recent times, when, on the ennoblement of Willie Whitelaw in 1983, the ensuing by-election almost elected a Liberal candidate, but this was at the height of the SDP/Liberal Alliance's popularity and has never been replicated.

It is also a seat where effectively limited campaign impact by the Liberal Democrats can be assessed as a base level, compared to the other parties therein, but also to

⁵¹⁴ Egan M., *Coming into Focus The Transformation of the Liberal Party 1945-64* (Saarbrücken, 2009), p.12

other seats across the country. The Liberal Democrats polled 12,830 votes in 2010 with 28.5% of the share of the vote, comfortably beaten by 11,241 by the new Conservative MP, Rory Stewart.

This constituency was surveyed again following the 2010 election.

Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey (Jan/Feb 2009)

This seat, in the Highlands of Scotland, was chosen as a comparison to Camborne and Redruth, being the only other rural seat the Liberal Democrats gained off Labour in 2005. Based on the periphery of Inverness this is an enormous constituency geographically. Despite this, it has, in its various guises been electing a Labour MP since the mid-1990s. Inverness was one of the scenes of the first Liberal revival in the 1950s, when at the 1954 by-election the party showed evidence of electoral popularity, when the Conservatives were in mid-term.

Electing Russell Johnston, in the 1964 General Election, it returned him as an MP until 1992, with, intriguingly the lowest share of the vote ever to elect any MP in that year, just 26%.

Only in 2005, with some boundary changes were the Liberal Democrats able to retake the seat, with Danny Alexander. Although not a perfect comparison for Camborne and Redruth it gives an indication of the way the party campaigns successfully against its other main opponent outside Cornwall in rural areas.

This, like the other seats in Scotland and Wales, offers another insight into the importance of candidates and campaigning as all of them offer several local personalities and parties to assess, as each of them also has either an AM or an MSP, in this case. Fergus Ewing, son of Winnie Ewing, who represented the Highlands and Islands in the European Parliament for many years, represents part of this constituency and the neighbouring, Ross, Skye and Lochaber, and he makes an interesting study as to the impact, and possible importance, of personality politics.

Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Feb/Mar 2009)

As one of the key tests of this research is to evaluate the impact of significant personalities, the one in the next door constituency, Charles Kennedy, would make an excellent comparison. As a former leader of the party, this was a chance to see if his personal pre-eminence within the media and as a long serving MP, being elected as far back as 1983, had any greater impact on the party's popularity than other candidates or sitting MPs.

Another enormous rural and maritime seat on the west coast of Scotland the seat includes tracts of wilderness in the most sparsely populated part of the United Kingdom. Doorstep campaigning is by definition much more difficult in a constituency like this than in urban or suburban areas, or even more compact rural areas like in Cornwall. If personality politics exists it seems sensible to anticipate this is where it might be discovered, rather than the pump-priming effect of door to door campaigning, so characterised by community politics.

Based around the town of Fort William this seat was also represented partly by Fergus Ewing in the Scottish Parliament.

Dunfermline and West Fife (Nov/Dec 2008)

Although Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey was the only large rural seat the party gained off Labour in 2005, the Liberal Democrats also gained this seat in the February by-election of 2006. Although by-elections are notoriously fickle and not particularly good indicators as to electoral form this constituency was picked, partly for its having been held by the Labour Party, but also because of the relatively high levels of local campaigning that the Liberal Democrats were achieving.

Although based around the main hub of Dunfermline a great deal of the constituency is made up of rural areas in Fife, west of Dunfermline. This is a former mining area and historically a very safe Labour stronghold and thus offers another good comparison with the former mining area in Cornwall - Camborne and Redruth. Despite its Labour tradition the by-election victory in 2006 indicated a notable shift to

the Liberal Democrats, and with the party successfully winning the Dunfermline West constituency in the 2007 Scottish Parliamentary elections the seat was a key target for the party to hold at the 2010 General Election.

Despite being a national target the party was soundly defeated at the 2010 election and one of the key tests of the poll conducted in this seat do show the limitations of campaigning whether in the face of a national swing or a 'regional' swing as was seen in Scotland towards Labour in 2010, but also in assuming that tactical voting only favours the Liberal Democrats in electoral contests.

This constituency was surveyed again following the 2010 election.

North East Fife (Feb/Mar 2010)

North East Fife has been held by Sir Menzies Campbell since 1987, when he was elected as a Liberal MP. It is based around the towns of Cupar and St. Andrews in the far North East of Fife, down to the industrial town of Leven on the South coast of the Kingdom of Fife. This seat has both a long tradition of strongly returning Campbell, not just on the back of his own personal popularity, being a well-known Scottish personality, having won Commonwealth gold medals for Scotland and competed in the Olympics for Great Britain, but also on local community campaigning. Having been elected in 1987 this is the seat most likely to have similar levels of personal popularity as the safest seat in Cornwall for the Liberal Democrats before the 2010 election, electing Matthew Taylor.

Just as North Cornwall was the national benchmark by which seats were measured for targeting by the Liberal Democrats in 1992 for the 1997 election this was the seat that the party measured targeting by for the 1992 election based on the 1987 results. They were both the biggest swings to the party in those election years.

As well as Menzies Campbell, this seat has a co-terminus Scottish Parliamentary seat, by the same name, with an MSP who represented the seat from 1999 until 2011, their comparative popularity and the importance of personality in the electoral process.

This constituency was surveyed again following the 2010 election.

The Importance of Personality Politics – a test of ‘Character’

Having identified the seats that were to be surveyed, for this research, several issues, around the focus of ‘Campaigns, Culture and Character,’ can be discussed. One of the key areas that has been discussed by some academics,⁵¹⁵ pundits and politicians themselves is the importance of the ‘personality’ within the political arena, and whether in an area, like Cornwall, this has any greater impact than it might in other areas. Because of the apparently tighter knit nature of communities like Cornwall, with an arguably greater self-awareness, one of the key questions that needed to be addressed was whether this was in fact the case.⁵¹⁶

Obviously comparing like with like is almost impossible with candidates who have risen to prominence over different lengths of time and have greater involvement in their communities. But, with the suggestion being that big political ‘Cornish’ personalities, like David Penhaligon, Peter Bessell, Paul Tyler, Matthew Taylor or formerly Isaac Foot may have attracted support beyond the general reach of the Liberal Party to its cause, this concept has to be tested and as such some of the surveys duly did this.

Each constituency had a series of questions which specifically asked about the popularity of their local politicians as well as national politicians. Constituents were also tested as to their support for any of the political parties and as such, although direct comparisons with other constituencies cannot be made, a differential level of popularity for candidates and Members of Parliament could be discovered and evaluated.

Even this calculation was skewed by the nature of the polling being on the basis of the new constituency boundaries. Nonetheless it still showed some interesting

⁵¹⁵ Rallings C. & Thrasher M., ‘Personality Politics and protest voting: The first elections to the Greater London Authority’, *Journal of Parliamentary Affairs* (Oxford, 2000)

⁵¹⁶ Lord Tyler Interview 01/02/11

conclusions, indicating that personalities would appear to have more importance to voters in Cornwall and other rural areas than those in urban and suburban areas.

Across Cornwall there was evidence that politicians regularly out-performed their party in terms of popularity. However, there appears to be little evidence to suggest that this is a unique phenomenon compared to other parts of the Celtic fringe. According to Egan, 'the Liberals' traditional appeal to the Celtic fringe was an important explanation of the Party's survival, but other more complex and ultimately more significant factors were at work.'⁵¹⁷ Sommer argued that, 'the presence of people like... the Rt. Hon. Isaac Foot,⁵¹⁸ had an important role in the party's survival, as 'his reputation proved to be a real asset for the party throughout the far west.'⁵¹⁹ Having discovered that the sitting parliamentarians were invariably more popular than their party it was also important to discover whether there was any noticeable difference between the popularity of the politician within the party's own supporters. Invariably, the result discovered was that, for sitting politicians, their support and that for the party were almost equal amongst party supporters. The increase in popularity invariably came from supporters of other parties who, although they had a positive impression of the politicians concerned, did not appear to intend to change their voting behaviour as a consequence.

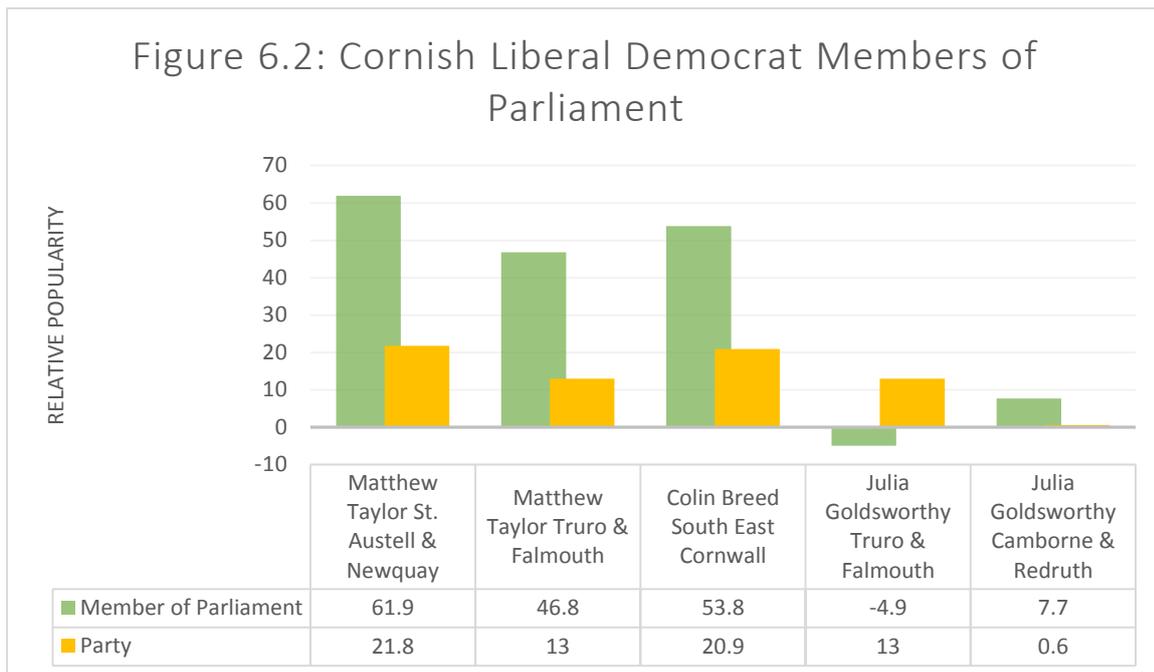
There would appear to be evidence that Liberal Democrat candidates do not merely represent, but embody, their party within the constituency in the eyes of the local voters, which is logical, given that that is the objective of the party's campaign strategy. They even enhance the party as they achieve greater popularity than the party itself.

⁵¹⁷ Egan M., *Coming into Focus – The Transformation of the Liberal Party 1945-64* (Saabruken, 2009), p.13

⁵¹⁸ Sommer R., 'The Organisation of the Liberal Party 1936-60', Unpublished PhD, University of London, (1962) pp.2-3

⁵¹⁹ Tregidga G., *The Liberal Party in South West Britain since 1918* (Exeter, 2000) p.31

Figure 6.2: Cornish Liberal Democrat Members of Parliament



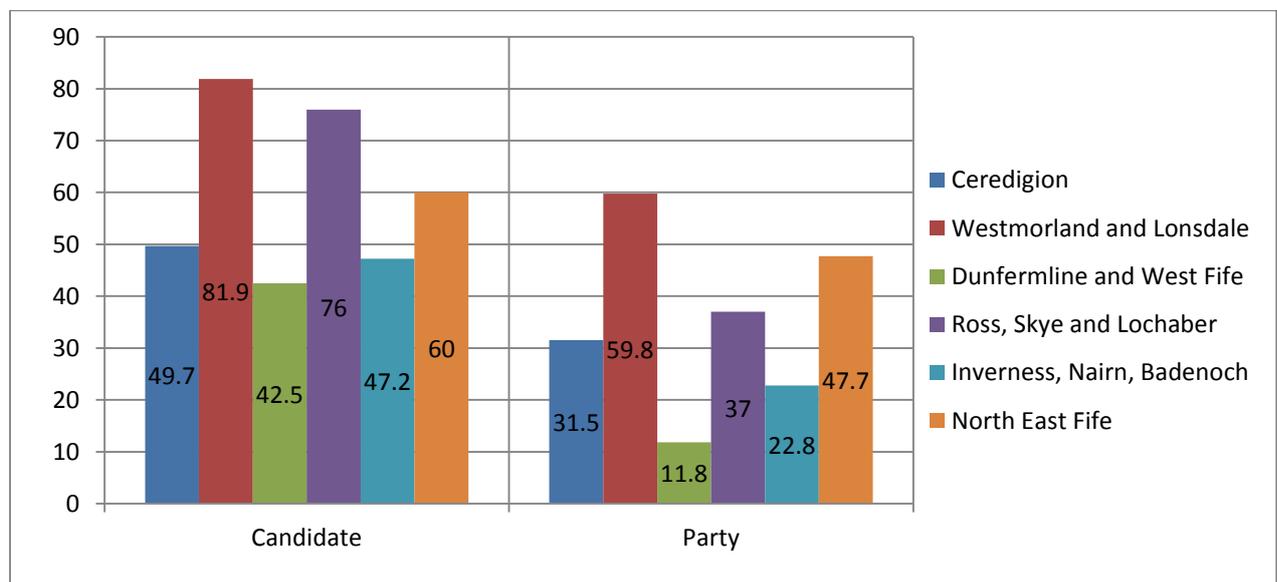
There appears to be relative uniformity in terms of the differential favourability that established politicians have achieved over their party amongst all voters, in terms of personal popularity. Although Matthew Taylor was not the Member of Parliament for St. Austell and Newquay or Truro and Falmouth, representing approximately 50% of both, he had a positive differential favourability⁵²⁰ of 40.1% over his party in St. Austell and Newquay and a 33.8% differential in Truro and Falmouth. Colin Breed had a 32.9% differential in South East Cornwall and Julia Goldsworthy had a differential of 7.1% in Redruth and Camborne. (This survey was conducted sometime after the expenses scandal and Goldsworthy's popularity appeared to have recovered from the survey conducted in Truro and Falmouth.) In the case of Truro and Falmouth Goldsworthy, who represented only about 25% of the constituency appeared to be much less popular than her party. Though this may have a great deal to do with the fact that the surveying was conducted, in this case, at the height of the expenses scandal, this had an impact through the national and local media on her popularity.

⁵²⁰ A series of questions were asked that identified a politician's favourability/unfavourability with voters. One was also taken for the parties and the difference is herein described as 'differential favourability'.

By the time the scandal had become less resonant with the public her popularity in Redruth and Camborne, which was polled six months later, showed a level of popularity that was more in line with that of the other Liberal Democrat politicians mentioned, even if the narrowness of the lead is still indicative that her popularity was either less established than Taylor and Breed, or the only one to have received a dent from the scandal, as neither of the other two particularly were. However, this may be based on her also representing a great deal more of this constituency and also that she was a first term Member of Parliament.

One can even speculate that with greater incumbency; Matthew Taylor having been an MP since 1987 there appears to be a gradual improvement in personal popularity compared to Colin Breed who was elected ten years later in 1997. There could be many factors affecting this outcome but both seats show a greater level of popularity for Matthew Taylor compared to Colin Breed in his South East Cornwall seat. More data needs to be assessed before this assertion can be justified.

Figure 6.3: Other sitting MPs compared to party



For the five other Liberal Democrat-held Westminster constituencies there appears to be a consistent pattern appearing. Liberal Democrat MPs are consistently more popular than their party.

The politicians named above, with the exception of Charles Kennedy, who was elected in 1983, and Menzies Campbell in 1987, were all elected relatively recently. Mark Williams, Tim Farron and Danny Alexander were all elected at the same General Election in 2005, respectively gaining from Plaid Cymru, Conservatives and Labour. Willie Rennie was elected at a by-election in February 2006, gaining his seat from Labour.

As such we should expect them not to be in line with Cornwall if Cornwall shows a greater cleavage towards personality politics than other Liberal Democrat seats or other areas of the country.

Liberal Democrats first elected in 2005/06 seem to have a fairly equal level of personal differential favourability, whether in Cornwall or elsewhere. Mark Williams (18.2%), Tim Farron (22.1%), Willie Rennie (30.7%), Danny Alexander (24.4%) and Julia Goldsworthy (7.1%) in Redruth and Camborne all suggest that they are popular in comparison with their party.

Politicians of longer standing seem to have a modest improvement over a longer tenure as Matthew Taylor in St. Austell and Newquay (40.1%) and Charles Kennedy (37%) would seem to suggest, though Menzies Campbell is lower (12.3), but still very popular over all. But, Matthew Taylor in Truro and Falmouth (33.8%) and Colin Breed (32.9%) seem to be very similar to the results achieved by newly elected Liberal Democrat MPs and would suggest that, although they received enhanced local popularity, this is not something that necessarily enhances their electoral prospects. The negative rating of Julia Goldsworthy in Truro and Falmouth would seem to suggest that this popularity, especially in a newly elected Member of Parliament, may also be ephemeral.

There is, of course, nothing to suggest that this personal popularity is the factor that led to their first election. This can only be assessed by the comparative popularity of those candidates who have been selected for seats but were, at the time, untested by the electorate.

Figure 6.4: Selected Cornish Prospective Parliamentary Candidates

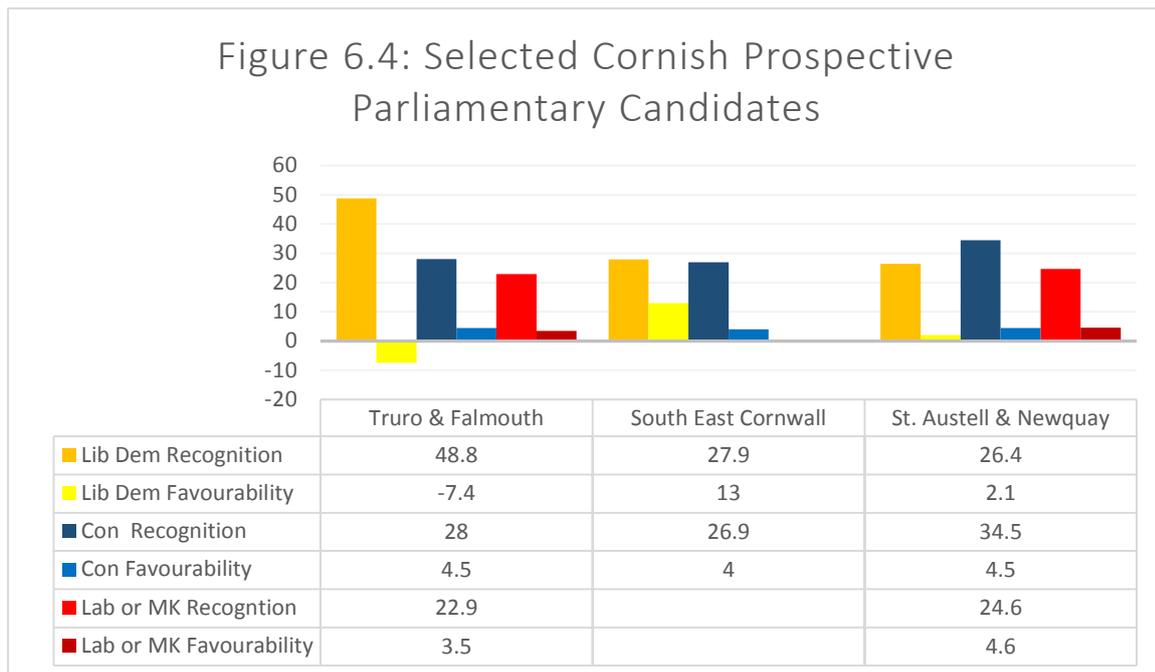


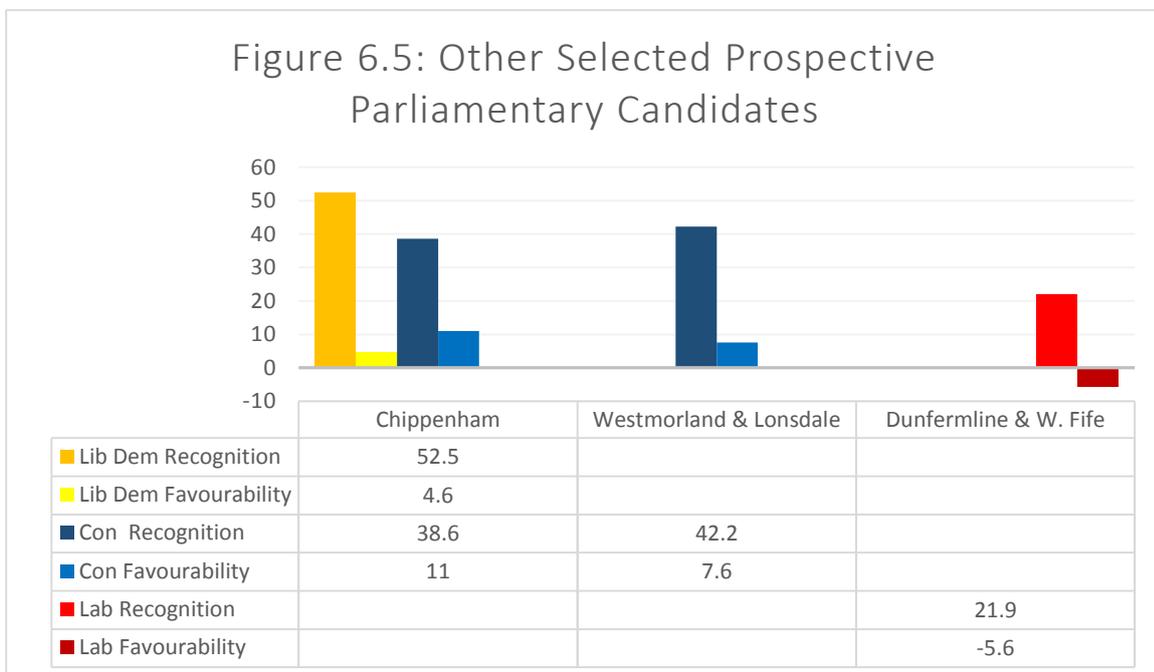
Figure 6.4 would appear to suggest that candidates in a pre-election period do not benefit significantly from their notoriety. The best known candidate, Terrye Teverson, in Truro and Falmouth with 48.8% of the population recognising her name⁵²¹ her personal popularity differential is in fact -7.4%, it appears she was a drag on the Liberal Democrat vote in her constituency. All the other candidates across Cornwall, from whatever party, are in a range of 22.9% public awareness to 34.5% for Caroline Righton in St. Austell and Newquay. All have net favourability amongst voters between 2.1% (Stephen Gilbert in St. Austell and Newquay) and 4.6% (Dick Cole the Mebyon Kernow candidate in the same seat). None of these people, with the exception of Dick Cole is more popular than their party. This last piece of information is in many ways the most significant. Dick Cole, through relatively well known and relatively popular for a local unelected Prospective Parliamentary Candidate, had no credible chance of being elected in this constituency, at the 2005 election the party received 3,552 votes across all of Cornwall, polling 1.7% of the vote and in 2010 he eventually polled just 4.2% in this seat. Personal popularity would appear to have no direct impact on the outcome of his chances and this view can be extrapolated for

⁵²¹ Although this is her married name it is also the name of Lord Teverson, the former MEP for Cornwall and West Plymouth so this name recognition may be affected by that.

other candidates too. It would appear that only when an elected member has served a period of time can the electorate begin to personify their party in their elected representative.

Selected candidates in other parts of Britain⁵²² would also seem to have a level of local awareness but seem to fit into the same profile as do selected PPCs in Cornwall. They do not perform better than their party in terms of popularity and the party is the vehicle for their success.

Although the three main candidates who have achieved significant penetration, Hames, Emmanuel-Jones (Liberal Democrat and Conservative candidates in Chippenham) and McKeever (Conservative in Westmorland and Lonsdale) had all been selected relatively recently at the time of the relevant poll being conducted, they had achieved greater public awareness than many other PPCs and one of the key questions that needs to be answered as a consequence of this is why this might be the case in these two constituencies, Chippenham and Westmorland and Lonsdale.

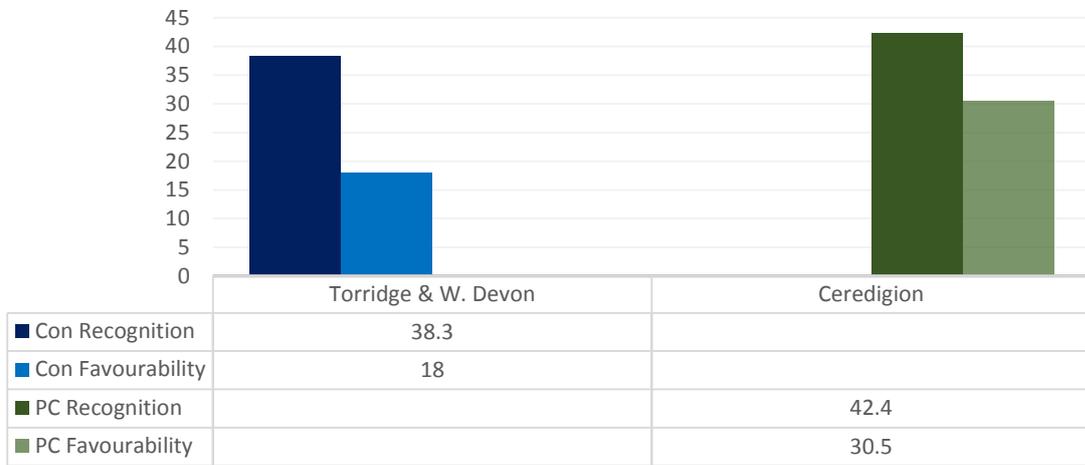


⁵²² There were many PPCs who had been selected at the time of polling but only those that had achieved a level of local awareness above 20% have been included.

However, there is also the capacity, using the surveys conducted, to assess the differential favourability of those sitting politicians from other parties to assess whether this differential is unique to the Liberal Democrats. In the case of Torridge and West Devon the sitting MP is a Conservative elected, like many of the Liberal Democrats discussed, in 2005 - gaining his seat from the Liberal Democrats. Also in the case of Ceredigion, and the four Scottish seats that have been polled there are elected politicians to the Welsh Assembly and the Scottish Parliament who, although not a direct comparison, do give some insight into this concept of differential favourability. In the case of Ceredigion, the AM represents Plaid Cymru; Ross, Skye and Lochaber was represented by a Liberal Democrat; Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey by the SNP and Dunfermline and West Fife by a Liberal Democrat. Chippenham was notionally⁵²³ represented by a Liberal Democrat though in reality it was represented by various Conservative MPs, so will not prove of great use in this regard.

⁵²³ *The Guardian*, 6th April 2010 (Rallings and Thrasher)

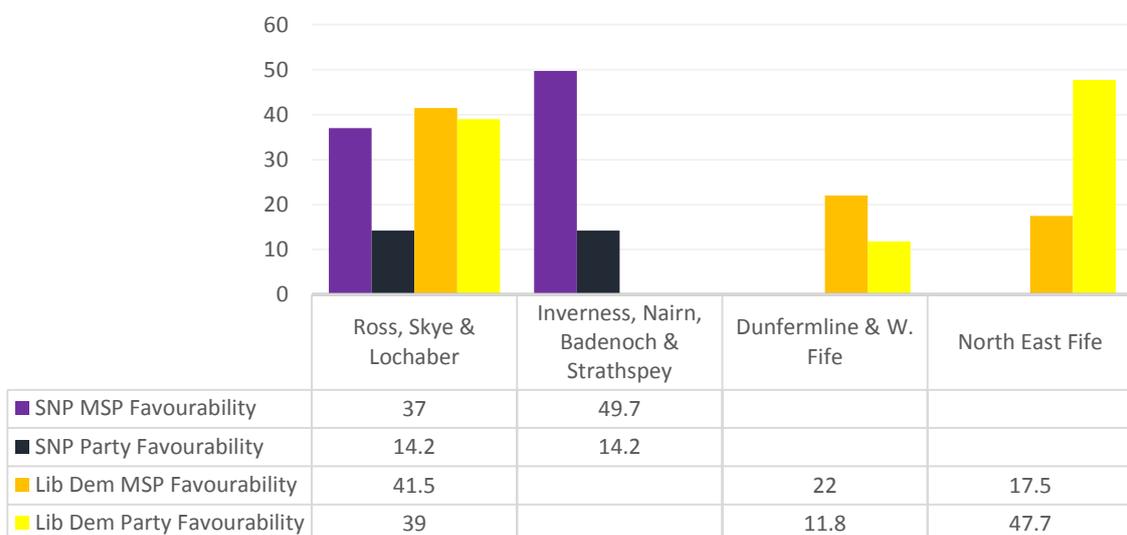
Figure 6.6: Other elected politicians from all Parties
(England & Wales)



As can be seen the popularity of local politicians from other parties would seem to suggest that this phenomena of differential favourability is neither unique to Liberal Democrats in Cornwall or for that matter Liberal Democrats in general.

Some politicians achieve greater popularity than others, but it does not seem to be a precursor to electoral success although it might be a contributory factor to successful defence when the politician has become better known locally – so-called incumbency.

Figure 6.7: Other elected polticians from all Parties
(Scotland)



With the exception of Geoffrey Cox in Torridge and West Devon all the other named politicians are either MSPs or AMs. Although Elin Jones, in Ceredigion, is now single-headed having lost her fellow Plaid Cymru representative in Westminster, the sub-UK members: Farquhar-Munro, Tolson and Smith all shared their responsibilities with a Westminster colleague of the same party. Although the personal recognition of MSPs and AMs is increasing in their constituencies they were still less well known than their Westminster colleagues. This might explain their lower approval ratings and a lower differential than others. The notable exception to this is Fergus Ewing who represents parts of the Ross, Skye and Lochaber and Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey seats in the Scottish Parliament. He did not share, at the time of surveys, his area with other SNP colleagues and is the sole SNP representative for the area having represented it since 1999. This might explain his extreme differentials, but it might be suggested that this is, in fact, a sign the 'big personality' being a factor at play. Ewing is not only a politician in his own right; he is the son of Winnie Ewing, widower of Margaret Ewing and brother of Annabelle Ewing. His popularity might well be personally deserved but there can be little doubt that the Ewing name contributes considerably, like that of Foot or Acland did in the Westcountry, to achieve levels of popularity that might fulfil this argument. Nonetheless this popularity is still in line with the leading Liberal Democrat politicians that have been discussed and as such would not seem to suggest that personality was the cause of Liberal Democrat success in Cornwall, or at least any more than any other part of the country where the party is successful.

Iain Smith, the Liberal Democrat MSP for North East Fife, was the only sitting politician to underperform his party. However, this may be more of a comment on the popularity of Sir Menzies Campbell rather than him.

The Importance of Local v National – Culture or Campaigns?

One of the key ways Liberal Democrats, and previously the Liberal Party, have attempted to improve its election prospects is by identifying local issues that matter to local people and campaign on them, attempting to capitalise on the cleavage between local interests and apparent national disinterest. As Tregidga argues Isaac Foot's 'ability to identify with radical and local interests ensured that he was able to

capture Bodmin on three separate occasions.⁵²⁴ This is, as has been discussed, now often called 'Community Politics'⁵²⁵ as shorthand it can be less localised than pavement politics and can be used to make a cleavage between a local area and Westminster, or more recently Cardiff and Holyrood, as well as more local issues.

As such, this research has attempted to identify whether Cornish voters were more prone to voting on local issues than national ones and whether they thought that local politicians mattered more than national ones compared to other parts of the country.

Because some of the constituencies polled are also urban and even suburban⁵²⁶ it might also be possible to assess whether there is any feeling of localism in rural areas above other areas.

Two specific questions, 8 and 11⁵²⁷ within the poll, were designed to elicit this cleavage to assess its importance. Question 8 looked at the main reason that people make choices in their constituencies. With five possible answers, being allowed only one response, it focused respondents on the single reason despite many saying that it was a combination of factors, which seems sensible, by restricting their options it made two things possible: to identify the specific reason people most choose their local MP and by seeing that these five reasons split into national and local factors a trend could be seen between the two main headings, with 'National, Policies and Leaders' being national and 'Candidate and Local Issues' being local.

⁵²⁴ Tregidga G., *The Liberal Party in South West Britain since 1918* (Exeter, 2000), p.31

⁵²⁵ Hain P., *Community Politics* (London, 1976)

⁵²⁶ Chippenham and Dunfermline

⁵²⁷ **Question 8** - When it comes to a General Election people decide how to cast their vote for a number of different reasons. Which of the following reasons is most important to you when deciding which party to vote for? **Question 11** - Thinking about what you want from your local MP, which of the following are most important to you?

Figure 6.8: Cornish Seats (All Voters)

	National ⁵²⁸	Policies ⁵²⁹	Leader ⁵³⁰	Candidate ⁵³¹	Local I ⁵³²
Cam/Red	18.8%	24.9%	12.7%	11.0%	23.2%
		56.4%		34.2%	
St.A/New	22%	9.9%	12%	19.4%	14.1%
		43.9%		33.5	
SEC	25.4%	17.8%	10.2%	11.2%	22.8%
		53.4%		34%	
Truro/Fal	30.3%	26.4%	8.5%	12.4%	13.4%
		65.2%		25.8%	
		54.7%		31.9%	

From the evidence in this table, the importance of local issues compared to national issues seems not to be consistent in Cornwall - with national issues, policies and leaders always being in a majority in all of the seats. To gain a true picture of the importance of local issues and candidates in the context of Cornwall, it is necessary to compare this breakdown with parts of the South West, and the UK in general, to see if this national/local cleavage is playing any role in the success of the Liberal Democrats in Cornwall.

Figure 6.9: Other Seats (All voters)

	National	Policies	Leaders	Candidate	Local I
Chippenham	32.5%	21.1%	11.8%	12.7%	12.7%
		65.4%		25.4%	
Penrith	28.8%	16.2%	10.6%	16.2%	16.7%
		65.4%		32.9%	
T&W Devon	24.8%	27.2%	12.6%	9.2%	15.5%
		64.6%		24.7%	
		65.1%		27.7%	

⁵²⁸ What each of the national political parties stand for in terms of values and priorities.

⁵²⁹ The specific detailed policies offered by each of the political parties

⁵³⁰ The leaders of the national parties and which one I think will make the best Prime Minister for the country

⁵³¹ The local candidates put forward in my constituency and I think will make the best MP

⁵³² The local issues in my constituency, and what local parties say they will do about them

Torrige and West Devon is represented by a Conservative MP and although Chippenham was technically, according to notional predictions, a Liberal Democrat constituency it was represented, at the time of the survey, by Conservative MPs. Penrith and the Border is the seat identified as the control seat where there were limited, even negligible, levels of local Liberal Democrat party campaign activity. These seats show a noticeable skew from the situation in Cornwall, showing a differential in favour of national over local issues of 40% (Chippenham), 39.9% (Torrige and West Devon) and 32.5% (Penrith and the Border) compared to 10.4% (St. Austell and Newquay), 19.4% (South East Cornwall) and 22.2% (Camborne and Redruth). Only Truro and Falmouth, at 39.4%, would seem to be in line with the Conservative seats

Figure 6.10: Other Lib Dem Seats (All Voters)

	National	Policies	Leaders	Candidate	Local I
Ceredigion	25.4%	16.9%	5.1%	27.1%	23.7%
		47.4%		50.8%	
Dunfermline	20.9%	24%	15.8%	13.8%	18.9%
		60.7%		32.7%	
Inverness	27.4%	15.7%	12.2%	16.2%	17.3%
		55.3%		33.5%	
N.E. Fife	31.0%	20.5%	6.0%	22.5%	17.5%
		57.5%		40%	
Ross, Skye	24.5%	18.5%	12.5%	21.5%	15%
		55.5%		36.5%	
Westmorland	25.1%	21.6%	10.6%	22.1%	14.1%
		57.3%		36.2%	
		55.6%		38.3%	

At first sight there appears to be a trend appearing, that the slight recalibration towards local issues being more important in Liberal Democrat seats, not just those in Cornwall. Each of the seats has a differential in favour of national issues, with the exception of Dunfermline, of between 3.4% actually in favour of local issues in Ceredigion to 21.1% in favour of national issues in Westmorland. These are broadly in line with Cornish seats, with the exception of Ceredigion which shows a positive in favour of local issues, the only seat to do so in any area surveyed. Arguably this

trend towards local issues is more noticeable in Liberal Democrat seats outside Cornwall. This skew towards local issues would seem to be attributable to the effect that the Liberal Democrats are having on their locality, and suggests that their campaigning on local issues either has greater impact in these seats or else acts as a catalyst for people to think about them as a voting option, which they might not do in the national political context. Because they are not an obviously credible choice in the context of a two-party national contest, this cleavage that they are creating for themselves through campaigning on local issues would seem to have an impact and resonance in some localities. The question now is whether they are significantly creating this cleavage through their campaigning techniques, or whether it is something they are simply tapping into.

There is evidence that Liberal Democrat seats, in Cornwall (22.8%) or elsewhere (20.1%), do have an average skew of 21.2% away from national issues more than Conservative seats (37.4%). Another way of assessing this skew is to break down the data further and look at whether different parties' voters are attracted by this local agenda more than others. One might expect that Liberal Democrat voters are more influenced by local issues and would anticipate seeing this within the figures.

Figure 6.11: Cornish Seats (Liberal Democrats)

	National	Policies	Leaders	Candidate	Local I
Cam/Red	11.8%	14.7%	11.8%	20.6%	35.3%
		38.3%		55.9%	
St.A/New	14.6%	0%	12.2%	36.6%	24.4%
		26.8%		61%	
SEC	18%	22%	6%	26%	20%
		46%		46%	
Truro/Fal	40%	12.5%	5%	25%	15%
		57.5%		40%	
		42.2%		50.7%	

The table above shows categorically that Liberal Democrat voters in Cornwall are much more motivated by local factors in elections than the average voter. In each case the gap is significant.

In Camborne and Redruth 55.9% of Liberal Democrat voters are motivated by local factors compared to 34.2% of all voters (+21.7%), St. Austell and Newquay 61% compared to 33.5% (+27.5%), South East Cornwall 46% compared to 34% (+12%) and Truro and Falmouth 40% compared to 25.8% (+14.2%). Clearly, Liberal Democrat supporters in Cornwall are more motivated by local factors than the electorate as a whole in the county, but to assess if this is a local phenomenon, in Cornwall, it needs to be seen whether this is different elsewhere.

One notable piece of information, which might actually suggest community politics is less effective in Cornwall than in other Liberal Democrat seats, can also be checked by evaluating if the split between the importance of the local candidate and that of local issues being the primary motivator for the Liberal Democrat affiliation is different. Although the process of campaigning is designed to generate electoral support, as well as empowering local communities, it is done through a process of campaigning on local issues. Therefore one might anticipate that issues would rank as more important than the local candidate compared to this balance amongst all Cornish voters. With the exception of St. Austell and Newquay, this was the case, but amongst Liberal Democrat voters, with the exception of Camborne and Redruth (where there is a bias in favour of issues 35.3% compared to 20.6%), all the other seats indicate that the candidate is more important than the issues locally. In St. Austell and Newquay, the candidate rated 36.6% compared to 24.4% for local issues, South East Cornwall 26% to 20% and Truro and Falmouth 25% to 15%. In the case of both St. Austell and Newquay and South East Cornwall it was identified as being the single most important factor for voting Liberal Democrat, which will be interesting to compare to other seats, amongst Liberal Democrat voters and those of other parties.

Figure 6.12: Other Lib Dem Seats (Lib Dem Voters)

	National	Policies	Leaders	Candidate	Local I
NE Fife	27.8%	11.4%	2.5%	40.5%	13.9%
		41.7%		54.4%	
Ceredigion	23.3%	16.7%	3.3%	26.7%	26.7%
		43.3%		53.4%	
Dunfermline	15.6%	34.4%	18.8%	15.6%	15.6%
		68.8%		31.2%	
Ross, Skye	20.7%	20.7%	12.1%	19.0%	20.7%
		53.5%		39.7%	
Inverness	14.8%	14.8%	7.4%	33.3%	22.2%
		37.0%		55.5%	
Westmorland	16.9%	15.7%	3.6%	36.1%	20.5%
		36.2%		56.6%	
		46.7%		48.5%	

If the Cornish experience of large gaps between the entire electorate and Liberal Democrat supporters was to be replicated elsewhere, then it would be a simple analysis to regard the campaigning work the Liberal Democrats conducted as the primary cause of this localised support base for the Liberal Democrats, wherever they are successful, not simply in Cornwall.

Liberal Democrat supporters in the six seats listed above are also more motivated by local electoral factors than the greater electorate in those seats. In Ceredigion, which has the only entire electorate polled as being more interested in local issues than national, had only a modest percentage more interested amongst Liberal Democrat supporters than the whole, namely 53.4% compared to 50.8% amongst all voters (+2.6%). In other seats where the entire electorate was less engaged with local factors, the gaps are comparable to those that were found in Cornwall. In Inverness local issues rated as being the motivator for 55.5% compared to 33.5% (+22.0%), Westmorland 56.6% compared to 36.2% (+20.4%) and North East Fife 54.4% compared to 40% (+14.4%). However, other seats held at the time of surveying, by the Liberal Democrats, do not show this disproportionate interest in local issues as do these four seats and those in Cornwall. Ross, Skye and Cromarty shows a marginal preference for local issues amongst Liberal Democrat supporters, 39.7%

compared to 36.5% (+3.2%) and in Dunfermline and West Fife the Liberal Democrat voters were actually less interested in local issues compared to the electorate at large - just 31.2% compared to 32.7% (-1.5%). Dunfermline is essentially an urban seat, unlike all the other seats in this Liberal Democrat part of the survey and is the only one won between the 2005 and 2010 elections at a by-election it is also worth noting that Scotland was disproportionately Labour in 2010, Dunfermline being the neighbouring seat to Gordon Brown, with the Prime Minister even being a resident of Dunfermline and West Fife. It shows one significant difference to other surveys as it indicates that voters, whether all voters or Liberal Democrats believed that the leader of the party was a significant factor in making their choice. Amongst all voters this was 15.8% and 18.8% amongst Liberal Democrat voters. Gordon Brown may well have been the cause of this, but it indicates that whether he was popular in a UK context was unimportant to the Dunfermline electorate as they registered the highest figure for the leader being the most important factor of any of the constituencies.

It is not simple to explain this apparent variance with one answer or less long term community based approach to the reasons for Liberal Democrat support in this seat. Whether because of its more urban nature than the other seats, or because of its lack of community based campaigning before the 2006 by-election victory, might suggest that the link between Liberal Democrat success and an interest in local factors is a long term reason for success rather than the shock by-election victory. This can often be based on a combination of local issues with the capacity to reject a government party without the consequences of unseating a government at a general election, because of dissatisfaction with national issues as well as community based local ones. However, it should not be ignored that whether in Cornwall or other parts of the country where the Liberal Democrats win there is still often a majority of Liberal Democrat voters who are motivated by national as well as local factors when deciding which party to support. There is certainly a greater variance between Liberal Democrat supporters and the electorate as a whole being more interested in local issues. This is, however, not unique to Cornwall. The significant variance, for example, between Truro and Falmouth's Liberal Democrat voters being much more interested in national issues compared to Camborne and Redruth's is not easily explained, but is notable. Both are seats that the Liberal Democrats lost, along with South East Cornwall in 2010. Based on the Liberal Democrats' own rationale, the

fault should lie with the campaigning in those constituencies being inadequate to deliver a successful result for the party. Along with national reasons, which matter to all voters, local factors like the popularity of the local candidate and campaign messages and issues within each constituency should, logically, deliver Liberal Democrats success where they are deemed important.

Figure 6.13: Other Seats (Liberal Democrats)

	National	Policies	Leaders	Candidate	Local I
Chippenham	27.3%	30.3%	6.1%	18.2%	15.2%
		63.7%		33.4%	
Penrith	37.5%	21.9%	9.4%	16.2%	18.8%
		68.8%		35%	
T&W Devon	37.5%	15.6%	9.4%	6.3%	28.1%
		62.5%		34.4%	
		65.0%		34.3%	

The importance of Liberal Democrat campaigning as a factor in electoral success would seem to be backed up by constituencies where the party is electorally unsuccessful. In the case of Chippenham, only gained in 2010, Torridge and West Devon, lost in 2005 and Penrith and the Border there appears to be negligible evidence that Liberal Democrat campaigning is swinging support to the party amongst its own supporters, compared to the general electorate. Chippenham (+8%), Torridge and West Devon (+9.7%) and Penrith and the Border (+2.1%) all show minor increases in evidence of the Liberal Democrats achieving some support based on local factors. This is most obvious amongst those people who had at the time most recently supported the Liberal Democrats, in Torridge and West Devon. But, noticeably, in the case of the apparently unwinnable seat of Penrith and the Border, national issues actually also have a positive differential between Liberal Democrats and the general electorate. This would suggest that they are actually voting against local factors in favour of the party they want, based on national issues, rather than being subject to local Liberal Democrat campaigning. National swing does work for the party when they have no localised campaign.

In Truro and Falmouth,⁵³³ community politics and the Liberal Democrat campaign techniques are either less important to local voters or else the message is not being delivered sufficiently through the weight of a local campaign. Similarly in Camborne and Redruth, where the local messages are evidently resonating more amongst voters, it would seem that the message is being successfully delivered by the party's campaign activity.

In South East Cornwall the message would appear to be about equal amongst Liberal Democrats, whilst being successfully delivered in St. Austell and Newquay. To assess this, we need to ask whether there is a direct link between those people who decide to support the Liberal Democrats and those that receive more Liberal Democrat literature with their community politics messages, through their letterbox. If this supposition holds true, it should be possible to assess it in other constituencies across the country. Is there a link, therefore, between the volume and regularity of literature received from Liberal Democrats? Is the consequent polarisation of public opinion to identify local factors as being their primary driver and consequently electing Liberal Democrats. Logically, is it possible to identify seats, based on this, that might be vulnerable to attack from the other parties where the Liberal Democrats are failing to win this community politics battle?

Best Placed to be Local Champions

As well as being asked which was the most important factor in determining a voting choice, the surveys also asked a more direct question as to which party they thought would best deal with local issues.⁵³⁴

⁵³³ Where, amongst Liberal Democrat voters, local issues only rated as being the primary motivator by 40% of the Liberal Democrat electorate, compared to 57.5% for national issues

⁵³⁴ 17. And thinking of the LOCAL issues that affect your own constituency which party do you think would best deal with them?

Figure 6.14: All Seats (All Voters)

	Labour	Cons	Lib Dems	Other	DK
Cam/Redruth	19.0%	24.4%	35.1%	-	21.4%
St. A/Newquay	7.8%	39.0%	28.6%	-	24.7%
S.E. Cornwall	4.0%	24.2%	43.4%	-	28.3%
Truro/Falmouth	8.0%	32.3%	30.3%	-	29.4%
N.E. Fife	10.7%	13.2%	62.4%	11.2%	2.5%
Ceredigion	8.0%	9.5%	26.0%	44.0%	12.5%
Dunfermline	26.5%	4.6%	35.2%	16.3%	16.8%
Ross, Skye	6.0%	6.5%	48.5%	21.5%	17.5%
Inverness	17.4%	9.2%	22.6%	28.7%	22.1%
Westmorland	3.5%	22.2%	65.2%	-	9.1%
Chippenham	6.5%	14.7%	45.1%	-	33.7%
Penrith	12.6%	46.1%	19.9%	-	21.5%
T&W Devon	4.4%	45.1%	25.7%	-	24.8%

Some of these results do seem to suggest the importance of localism, or community politics, as a means of increasing political credibility for the Liberal Democrats, but others do not. Four seats stand out as being extremely strong for the party in terms of their lead in regards to localism; North East Fife (+49.2%), Ross, Skye and Lochaber (+27%), Westmorland and Lonsdale (+43.0%) and Chippenham (+30.4%). Only one seat in Cornwall came close to this sort of lead, namely South East Cornwall (+19.2%). Indeed in both Torridge and West Devon and Penrith and the Border the Conservatives had similar leads to the Liberal Democrats in these four seats, perhaps this is unsurprising with seats with sitting Conservative MPs. But, three things stand out from these statistics:

- The lead that Chippenham Liberal Democrats had in terms of local effectiveness, which presumably boosted their eventual chances of victory in 2010
- The explanation as to localism's importance in Ceredigion

- Most importantly, the apparent lack of importance of local effectiveness in Cornwall (and other parts of the Celtic Fringe) for the Liberal Democrats. Before trying to explain this, it is important to distinguish between localism and campaigning activity, which will be discussed later.

Chippenham, a suburban seat in Wiltshire, which was, prior to boundary changes, split across three separate Conservative constituencies, still saw the Liberal Democrats as the most effective advocate on local issues. This, bearing in mind the apparent ambivalence of the local voters to the Liberal Democrat candidate at the time, would seem to be a vital factor for the party in an area like Chippenham, an area that has never previously been represented by the party in Westminster. This should be seen as an important factor in the eventual success the party had with Duncan Hames in 2010, building on a local government base, as is the tradition with community politics. This chimes with the base the Liberal Democrats also had in Westmorland and Lonsdale and North East Fife before the party won, and continue to have since winning these seats in Parliament.

Ceredigion has two parties which are competing for the local mantle, and in this survey Plaid Cymru has won, despite having a Liberal Democrat MP at the time, and re-electing him in 2010 with an increased majority. This seems also to be reflected in Cornwall where, with the exception of South East Cornwall, local effectiveness for the party would seem to be either less important than other parts of the country or else actually less important for the party than the Conservatives at the time. Some of this may be determined by the timing of the surveys, done as they were when the Liberal Democrats were running Cornwall County Council, and were severely beaten in June 2009, but this would not explain why Ceredigion or Inverness delivered Liberal Democrat parliamentary representation. St. Austell and Newquay (-10.4%) and Truro and Falmouth (-1.9%) both show a deficit to the Conservatives in terms of dealing with local issues for the Liberal Democrats, which means that the party is losing the argument for most effective community politicians, even though St. Austell and Newquay voters showed evidence that they were more concerned about local issues than national ones. This would seem to suggest, even if by default, that the voting behaviour in Cornwall is less dependent on Liberal Democrats being effective advocates on local issues than in other parts of the country, although areas like

Ceredigion would also seem to be in line with this behaviour.⁵³⁵ This could be evidence that Cornish voters and those in West Wales have some latent support for the party that cannot be quantified, suggesting a cultural reason. It could be proof that voting for the Liberal Democrats in these areas is not only a matter of seeing which is more important – local or national, possibly it is evidence of residual support for the party for another reason, such as Methodism, historical or regional differences, which might even be described as the effect of being in the Celtic Fringe.⁵³⁶

Liberal Democrat Campaigning and its effects

Having assessed the importance of personality as well as the significance of local and national matters to the thirteen electorates being surveyed, the next question that needs to be answered is whether the work that the Liberal Democrats, and for that matter other political parties, do, has an impact on their electoral success. Bearing in mind Curtice and Steed's argument earlier 'the 1997 election does not appear to support claims made that local campaigning can make a difference in respect of other parties performances,'⁵³⁷ this is not widely held as being important in delivering electoral success by political academics and pundits.

As has been discussed, the basis of Liberal Democrat campaigning since the Liberal Party's 1970s utilisation of community politics has been the Focus leaflet and other election literature. The premise behind the use of literature as a means to communicate with the electorate is very simple. Historically, the Liberals, SDP and Liberal Democrats as well as other minority parties have found it difficult to create a dialogue with the electorate through the media. Because the press and media is predisposed to view the electoral contest in terms of the traditional duopoly of Labour and the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats are not usually perceived as being central to the debate. As Ault and Stephenson put it, 'literature is the main part of

⁵³⁵ Although the surveys conducted did not include St. Ives and North Cornwall they were partly not conducted because the national situation before the 2010 General Election made them unlikely to be taken by the Conservatives based on the national swing predicted.

⁵³⁶ Egan M., *Coming into Focus – The Transformation of the Liberal Party 1945-64*, (Saarbrücken, 2009), pp.12-13

⁵³⁷ Butler D. & Kavanagh D., *The British General Election of 1997*, (Basingstoke, 1997), p.312

any Liberal Democrat campaign, in any circumstances. Because of the third place the party is in nationally, it does not get the same level of national media and press coverage as Labour and Conservative. As a consequence it is vital that [Liberal Democrats] get [their] messages across through [their] own newspapers, leaflets and letters.⁵³⁸

As such, the surveys asked voters whether each of the political parties communicated with their electorates through the use of campaign literature. At this point the surveys only sought to assess the level of inter-election campaigning and actively requested non-election campaigning, which might be more associated with the concept of community politics.

Figure 6.15: Cornish Seats (All Voters receiving literature from political parties)

	Labour	Cons	Lib Dems	Other	None
Cam/Redruth	2.8%	10.6%	33.3%	6.7%	48.9%
St. A/Newquay	9.1%	19.3%	46.0%	1.6%	-
S.E. Cornwall	3.5%	19.7%	53.0%	3.5%	39.4%
Truro/Falmouth	9.5%	25.5%	46.0%	5.0%	45.5%

Liberal Democrats clearly campaign, in terms of literature, on a much more active level than the other parties do in the four Cornish seats that were surveyed - but it is important to note that all of which was outside election times. Perhaps it is not surprising to see levels of Labour campaigning so low in areas where their electoral performance is so poor, but it might be in Camborne and Redruth where the party had a Member of Parliament as recently as 2005.

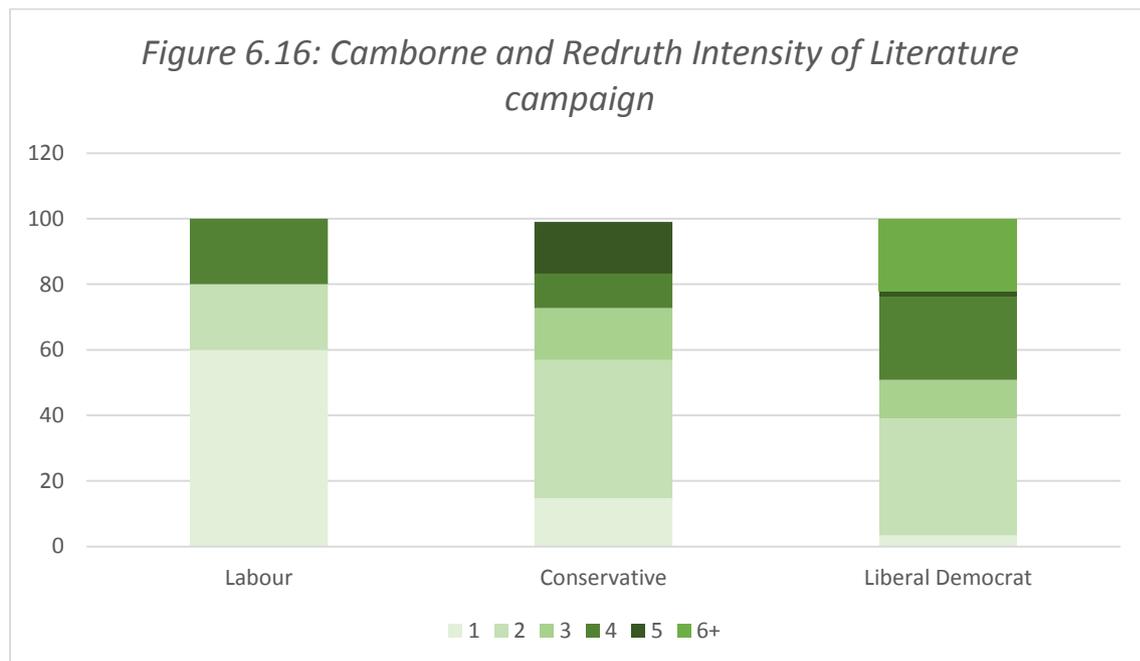
Nonetheless, the Liberal Democrats' own view that local campaigning is important to the party seems to be borne out in the activity that the party does. Ranging from 33.3% of homes receiving literature in Camborne and Redruth to 53.0% in South East Cornwall the party is reaching between 12,000 and 20,000 homes with its own unadulterated messages. However, this is not the only test of whether the party is communicating with local voters. The fact that the party does this is a sign that at

⁵³⁸ Ault J. & Stephenson H., *The Liberal Democrat Campaign Manual* (Hebden Bridge, 2000), p.31

least Cornish Liberal Democrats are following the principles of community campaigning, but the Liberal Democrat manual also explains, ‘research has suggested that only 20% of the population will read literature that goes through their letterbox...the message must be repeated to be remembered – think how often TV advertisers pay for time to repeat the same message.’⁵³⁹

Thus, if the Liberal Democrats in Cornwall are following the tenets of this campaign strategy, one should see greater numbers of voters receiving their literature more often than from the other parties.

As can be seen from the four tables that follow, the Liberal Democrats in Cornwall out perform their competitors in this part of the campaign outside election time. Of those answering the previous question they break down as follows.



⁵³⁹ Ault J. & Stephenson H., *The Liberal Democrat Campaign Manual*, (Hebden Bridge, 2000) p.31

Figure 6.17: St. Austell and Newquay Intensity of Literature campaign

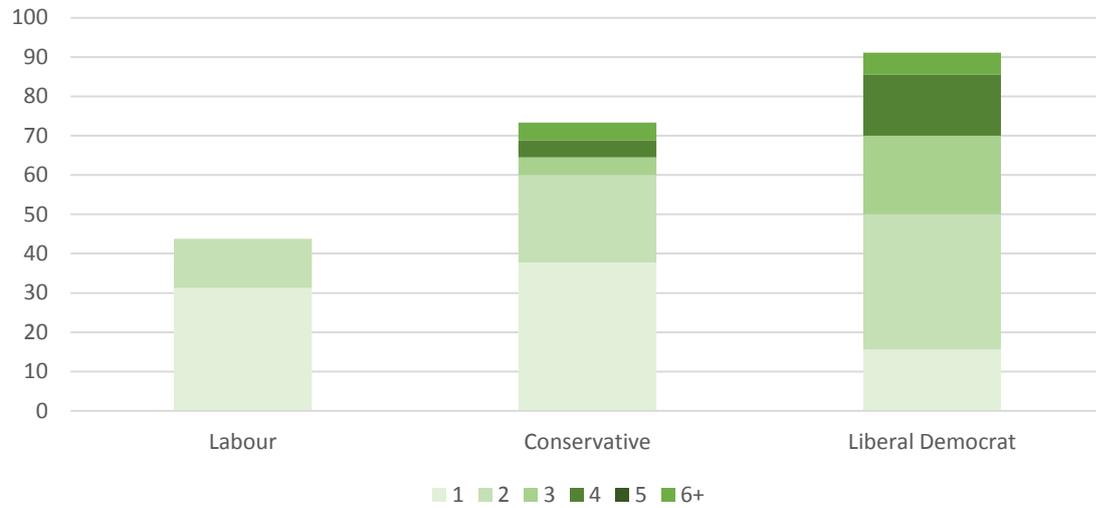


Figure 6.18: South East Cornwall Intensity of Literature campaign

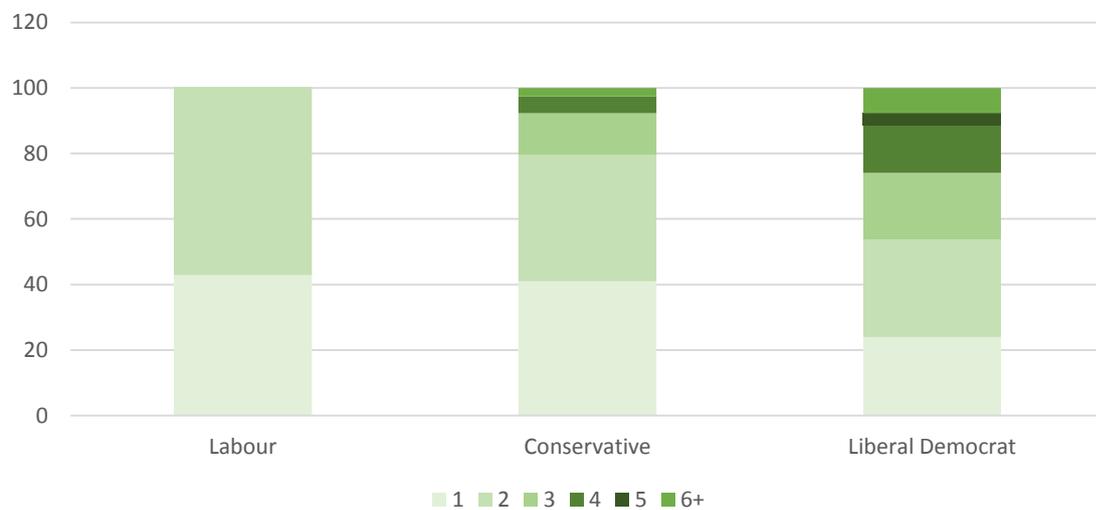
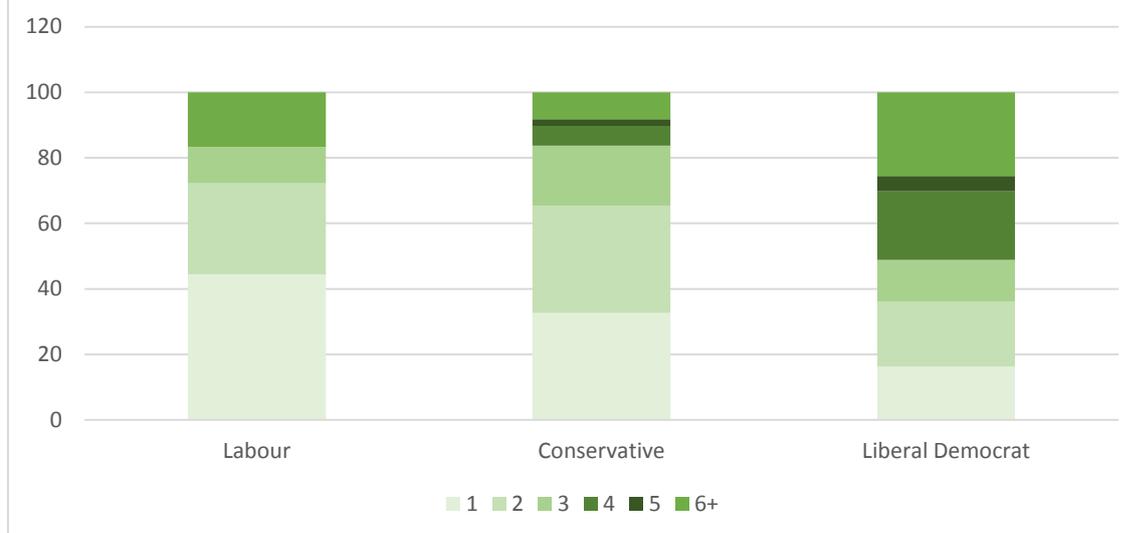


Figure 6.19: Truro and Falmouth Intensity of Literature campaign



Although the Liberal Democrats clearly out-campaign the other parties in the four Cornish constituencies surveyed, it is not only the penetration of this activity but the regularity that adds to the effectiveness. Thus seats like Camborne and Redruth would seem to be delivering more regularly to some areas, but to only a third of the constituency.

How does this level of campaigning compare to other Liberal Democrat constituencies?

Figure 6.20: Liberal Democrat Seats (All Voters receiving literature from parties)

	Labour	Cons	Lib Dems	Other	None
NE Fife	1.0%	7.0%	62.5%	2.0%	29.0%
Ceredigion	2.5%	2.5%	36.7%	24.1%	47.2%
Dunfermline	42.6%	20.5%	72.3%	27.7%	10.8%
Ross, Skye	4.0%	3.5%	38.5%	8.5%	53.5%
Inverness	7.7%	5.1%	35.2%	14.8%	48.0%
Westmorland	17.3%	70.1%	97.0%	2.5%	1.5%

In general, the level of activity in Cornwall seems to be similar to that in other seats that the Liberal Democrats hold. However, three seats stand out amongst this group – North East Fife, Dunfermline and West Fife and Westmorland and Lonsdale. These seats have extremely high levels of Liberal Democrat campaign activity, all substantially better than the best seat in Cornwall – South East Cornwall.

Interestingly both Dunfermline and Westmorland do not go unchallenged in their campaigning, with Labour delivering to 42.6% of doors in Dunfermline and the Conservatives to 70.1% of doors in Westmorland, better than nearly all Liberal Democrat organisations elsewhere. Campaigning elsewhere would essentially seem to go unchallenged, which might be an effect of incumbency or the difficulty in organising in such large constituencies, with the exception of Ceredigion, where Plaid Cymru holds the Assembly seat.

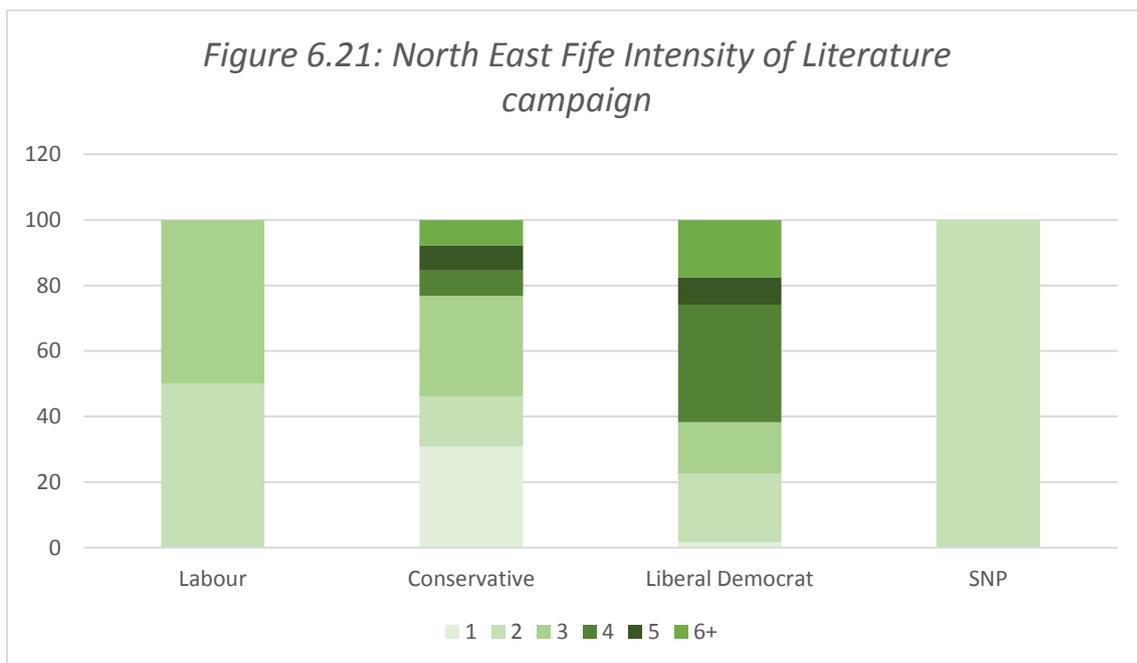


Figure 6.22: Ceredigion Intensity of Literature campaign

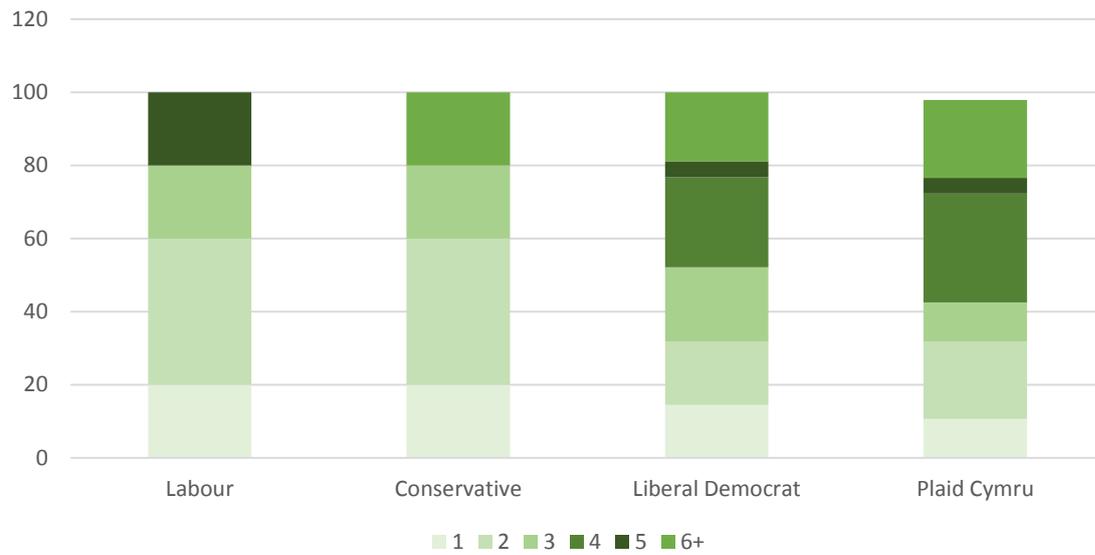


Figure 6.23: Dunfermline and West Fife Intensity of Literature campaign

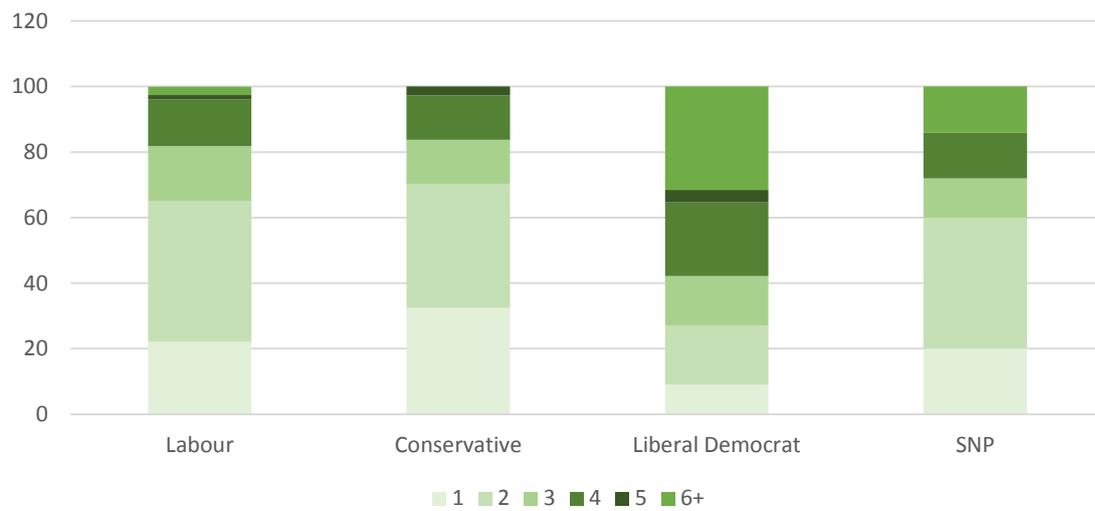


Figure 6.24: Ross, Skye and Lochaber Intensity of Literature campaign

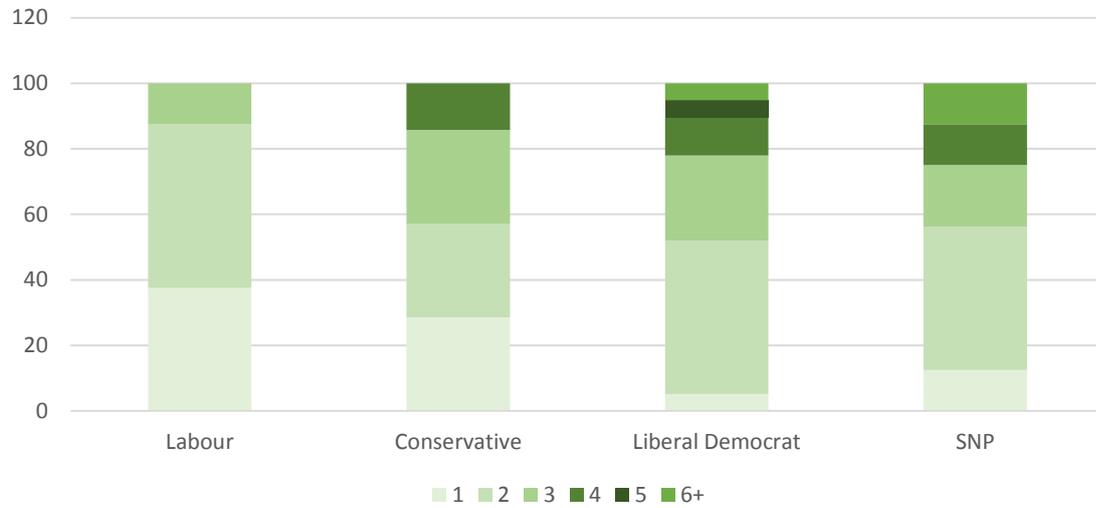


Figure 6.24: Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey Intensity of Literature campaign

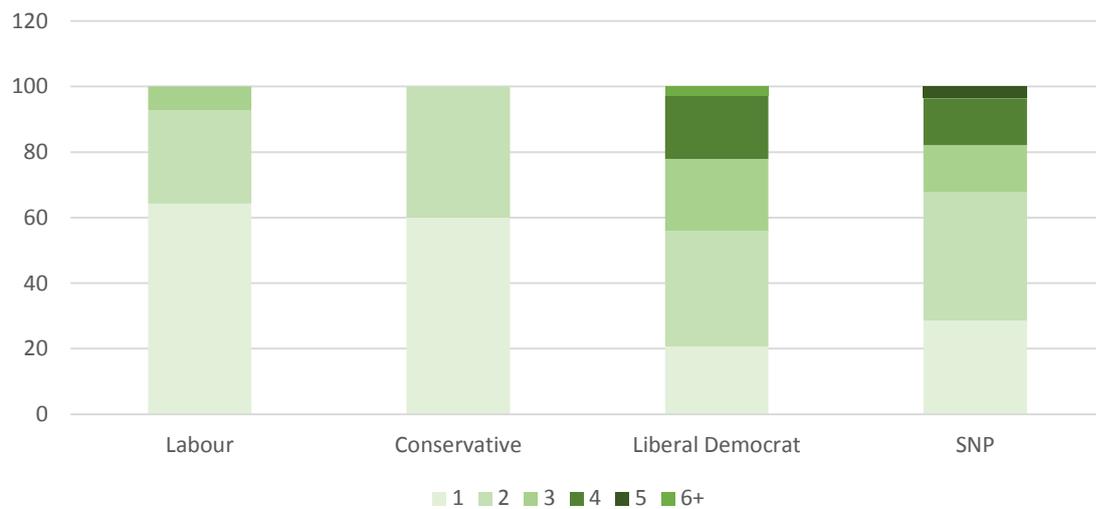
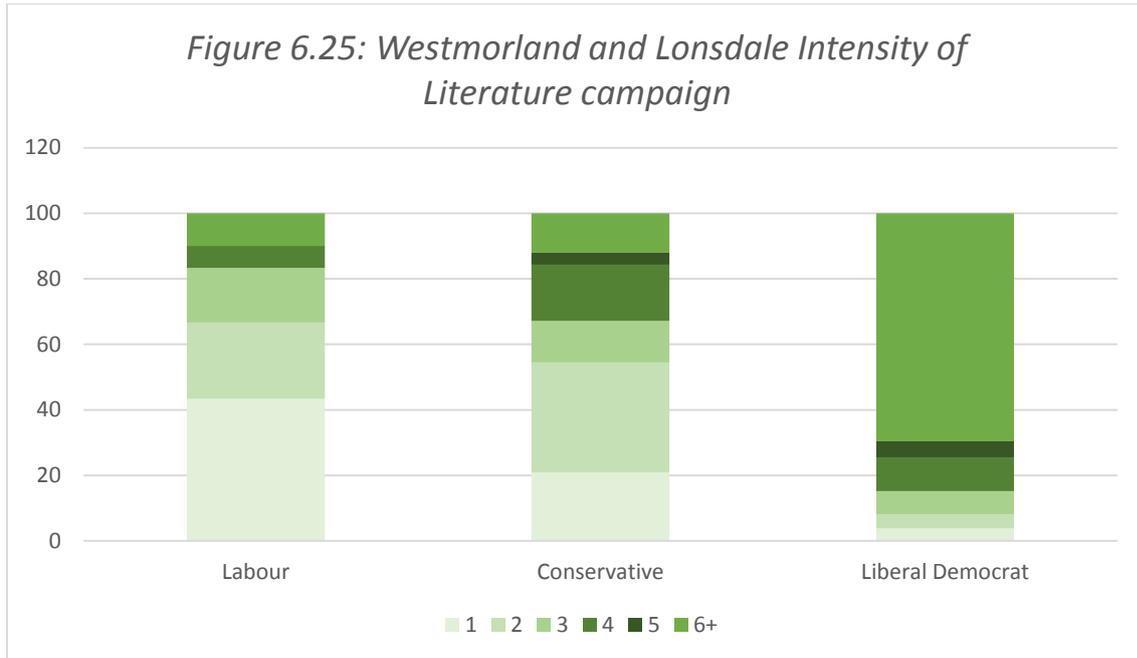


Figure 6.25: Westmorland and Lonsdale Intensity of Literature campaign



What stands out from these constituencies is the variations between seats and the levels of campaigning that the Liberal Democrats are achieving in some areas. Notably, in Westmorland and Lonsdale Liberal Democrats do not only achieve the largest hit rate of delivering to 97% of homes, but also deliver more than six pieces (or more) of literature to more than two thirds of those homes. This is unquestionably the most active constituency that was surveyed and may go some way to explaining the increased majority for Tim Farron; from 2005 to 2010, going from 267 to 12,264. However, although Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey did not have the same breadth of campaign activity as this, achieving delivery to just 35.2% of doors, when the party did get to doors, mainly in the urban areas around Inverness, it achieved delivery to two-thirds of these homes six or more times per year. This seat was also held in 2010 by the Liberal Democrats with an increased majority from 4,148 to 8,765. Some of this swing could be attributed to external factors such as national swing, but as there was a swing to the Conservatives in England and to Labour in Scotland both of these results seem to show that local activity does indeed have an effect and ‘that the easy generalisation made in many academic studies – that, in modern conditions, local campaigning is merely a ritual, a small and insignificant side show to the main event – is seriously misleading.’⁵⁴⁰

⁵⁴⁰ Denver D. and Hands D., *Modern Constituency Electioneering*, (London, 1997), p.305

Figure 6.26 Other Seats (All Voters receiving literature from political parties)

	Labour	Cons	Lib Dems	Other	None
Chippenham	7.4%	34.8%	47.8%	3.0%	34.8%
Penrith	20.8%	28.4%	35.0%	6.1%	52.8%
T&W Devon	1.0%	8.7%	18.4%	3.9%	71.8%

Perhaps the most interesting evidence from the three non-Liberal Democrat seats (at the time of polling) is the apparent dependence the party does have on literature in non-traditional areas. The party would definitely appear to be attempting to affect the result in Chippenham, with 47.8% of the electorate receiving party literature, bearing in mind it was a target seat for the party in 2010, this is hardly surprising. However, the other two seats are apparently limited in their activity. It is perhaps surprising that the party delivers to 35% of houses in Penrith and the Border, but when considering the fact that 52.8% of all homes receive no literature from any party it would seem that the parties are competing for the same voters, in the same parts of the constituency as the moderately active Labour and Conservative campaigns in the same constituency.

Most illuminating, is the result in Torridge and West Devon where the party has almost inconsequential levels of campaigning, delivering to a mere 18.4% of homes, with 71.8% of all homes in the constituency going undelivered by any of the parties. The results the party achieves in this constituency therefore do not seem to depend on party campaign activity, coming as it did within 3000 votes of victory in 2010. This would seem to make even more clear the argument that the party seems to have a core of support in the far West of England that it cannot rely on in areas like Penrith and the Border, where the party does not have the same historic links with the community as it would seem to have in West Devon and in Cornwall as discussed earlier; despite actually having higher levels of community politics.

Figure 6.27: Chippenham Intensity of Literature campaign

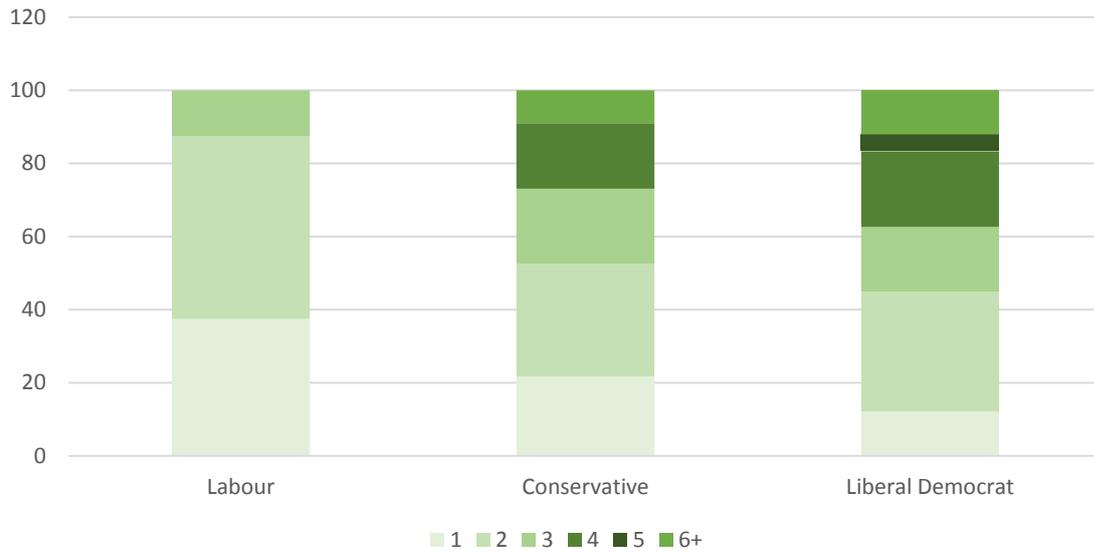


Figure 6.28: Penrith and the Border Intensity of Literature campaign

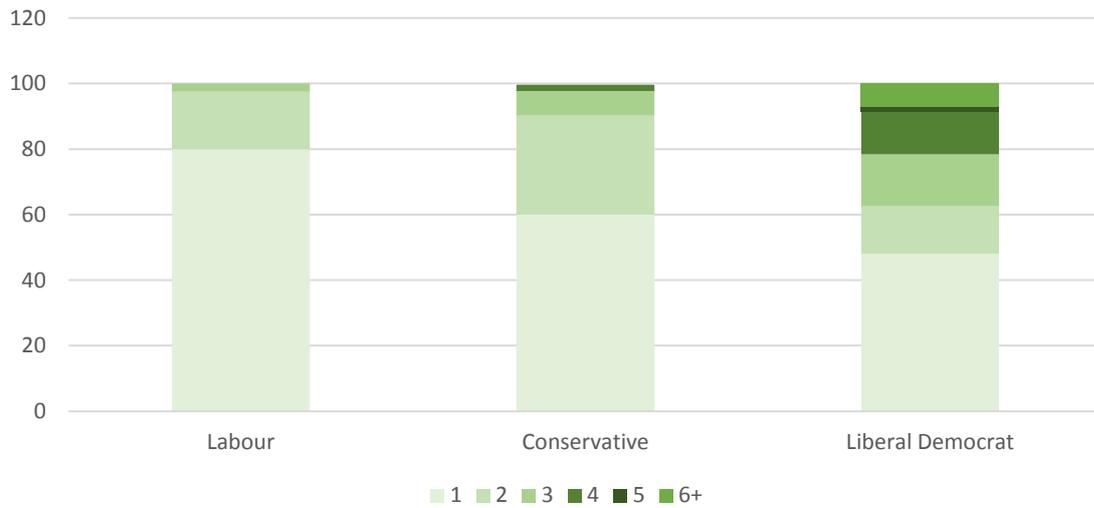
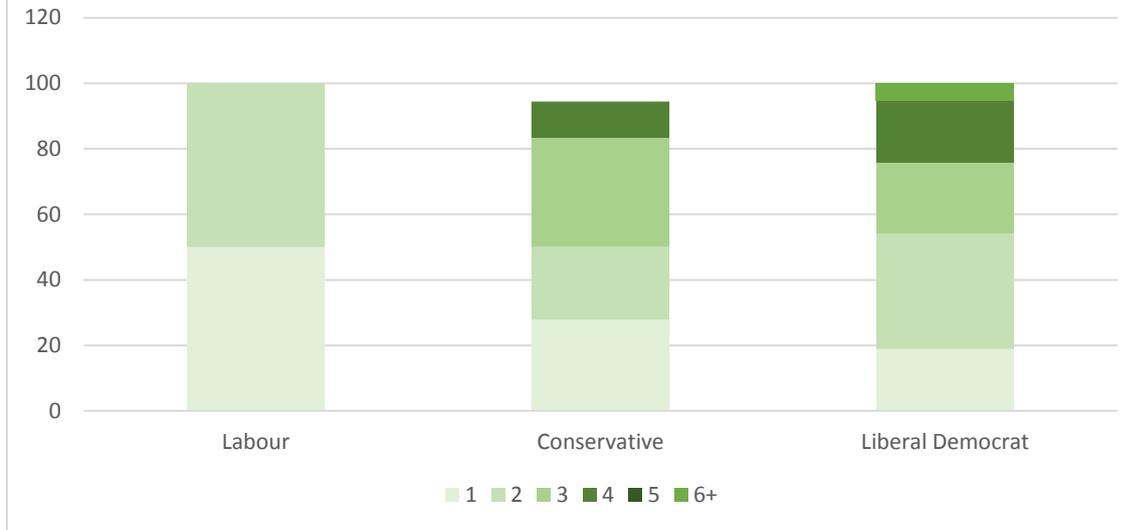


Figure 6.29: Torrridge and West Devon Intensity of Literature campaign



Of course the test of the effectiveness of literature as a means of increasing the party's support is not simply a matter of whether the party does it, but whether it changes voters' voting behaviour. This, of course, is very difficult to evaluate, but what can be tested as part of the surveys is whether voters who receive the literature are more likely to vote Liberal Democrat. The surveys can compare the difference between those that receive no leaflets, a few leaflets or the full force of the campaign the party is delivering.

Figure 6.30: All Seats (All Voters receiving Liberal Democrat literature and its benefit)

	Pop %age Lit⁵⁴¹	Pop %age Any LD Lit⁵⁴²	Differential for any literature
Cam/Redruth	33.3%	44.1%	+10.8%
St. A/Newquay	46.0%	51.3%	+5.3%
S.E. Cornwall	53.0%	64.1%	+11.1%
Truro/Falmouth	46.0%	52.5%	+6.5%
N.E. Fife	62.5%	60.8%	-1.7%
Ceredigion	36.7%	45.2%	+8.5%
Dunfermline	72.3%	96.9%	+24.6%
Ross, Skye	38.5%	43.1%	+4.6%
Inverness	35.2%	66.7%	+31.5%
Westmorland	97.0%	98.8%	+1.8%
Chippenham	47.8%	59.4%	+11.6%
Penrith	35.0%	21.9%	-13.1%
T&W Devon	18.4%	28.1%	+9.7%

This table would seem to show that where the Liberal Democrats deliver any literature they receive a premium with the voters. Penrith stands out as an exception where the lack of impact for relatively high levels of literature delivery could be attributed to a lack of credibility compared to other areas. But, as will be shown later, this is also contingent with the scale and regularity of campaigning as much as it is with the very existence of a campaign.

Other than that, with the exception of North East Fife, where the figures are marginal, the benefit the party gets from literature would seem to be in the range of +1.8% in Westmorland and Lonsdale (though it would seem unrealistic to assume that the premium could be more than 1.8% when the party is delivering to 97% of

⁵⁴¹ This percentage indicates the overall population that receives any political literature from the Liberal Democrats

⁵⁴² This percentage indicates those indicating they support the Liberal Democrats that receive any political literature from the Liberal Democrats

households) and +31.5% in Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey.

Dunfermline also scores well for the party, showing that where the Liberal Democrats campaign they do seem to affect the electorate. However, most of the seats seem to have a much lower premium for the party than might be expected and this demands the question – why? In Cornwall, for example the range of premium for the party through door to door campaigning is much lower ranging from 5.3% in St. Austell and Newquay and 11.1% in South East Cornwall. This would seem to be explained not by the mere presence of a campaign, which is what this table shows, but the scale of the campaign.

Dunfermline and West Fife (72.3%), Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey (35.2%) and Westmorland and Lonsdale (97.0%) did not uniformly have the largest breadth of campaign activity in the survey, but they did all have the greatest penetration where they did campaign. Campaign effectiveness would not seem to depend on merely the existence of a campaign, but the scale and persistence of it. 66% of those voters receiving Liberal Democrat literature in Inverness and Westmorland received six or more leaflets every year with the figure being 40% in Dunfermline, only Truro and Falmouth came anywhere close to this figure in Cornwall with 25.6% of those receiving six or more leaflets per year. However, this was on the back of campaign that delivered to 46% of homes. So to assess the impact of literature at this scale it is important to evaluate the voting behaviour of those people who do receive the full force of a Liberal Democrat campaign, i.e. receive six or more leaflets per year, outside the election period, and see if they are more likely to vote Liberal Democrat compared to the rest of the population.

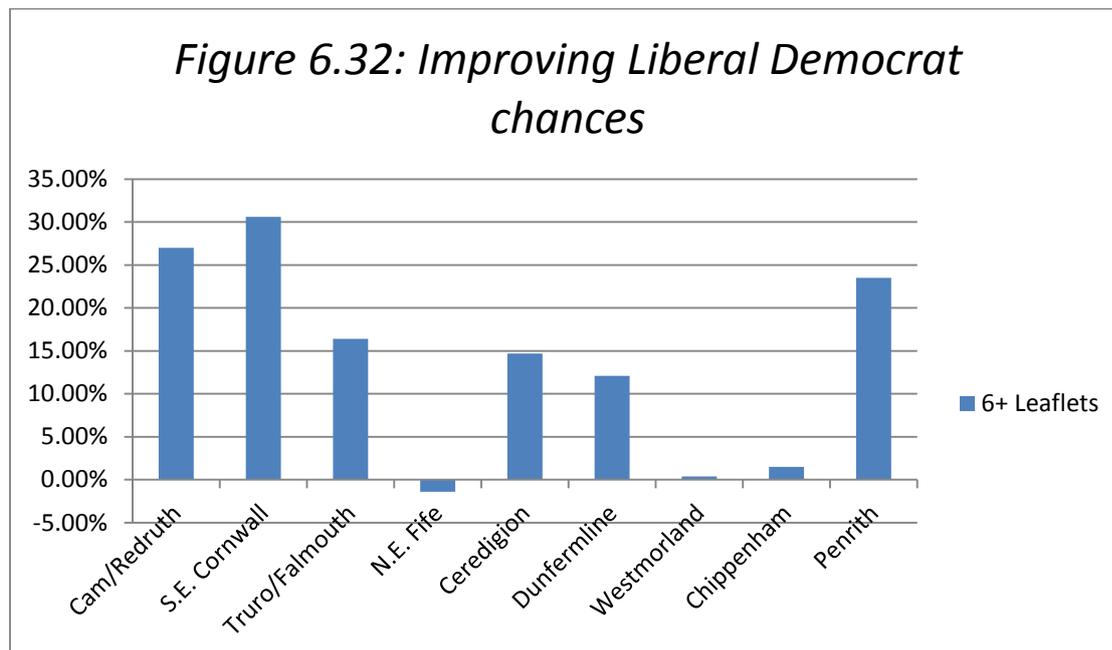
Figure 6.31: All Seats (All Voters six or more items of literature per annum)

	Pop voting LD	Pop vote LD with 6+	Differential for 6+ Leaflets
Cam/Redruth	19.2%	46.2%	+27.0%
S.E. Cornwall	19.4%	50.0%	+30.6%
Truro/Falmouth	20.0%	36.4%	+16.4%
N.E. Fife	41.4%	40.0%	-1.4%
Ceredigion	16.1%	30.8%	+14.7%
Dunfermline	16.5%	28.6%	+12.1%
Westmorland	42.8%	43.2%	+0.4%
Chippenham	13.9%	15.4%	+1.5%
Penrith	16.5%	40.0%	+23.5%

Several constituencies have been removed from this section as so few homes received six or more leaflets as to make the statistics unsatisfactorily imprecise. However, there does seem to be a link between Liberal Democrat success and the volume of the campaign they deliver.

A high-profile campaign, based on literature, can reap major benefits for the Liberal Democrats, making voters up to 50% more likely to vote for the party if they receive in excess of six leaflets per year. The issue remains that very few local constituencies seem to achieve this. However, this upgrading of the party's prospects do appear to be magnified in Cornwall, compared to areas like Westmorland and North East Fife where the volume appears to have diminishing returns for the party, because of the local domination the party would seem to have. In South East Cornwall voters are 60% more likely to vote Liberal Democrat if they receive six or more leaflets per year, with a similar number in Camborne and Redruth and approximately 45% in Truro and Falmouth. This consequently demands the question as to why the party lost all these three seats in 2010 when campaigning had such an impact on those that received this volume of activity. The answer must

simply be that this scale of campaigning was not achieved in sufficient breadth to achieve the outcome the party wanted.



Literature is a vital component in any campaign for the Liberal Democrats and as the table above shows, delivering more than six leaflets per year in all but one case increases the party’s chances of winning, with this premium being most noticeable in Cornish seats and Penrith where the campaign is least active. As the intensity of the campaign grows the benefit of six or more leaflets per year would not seem to benefit the party as much, but this is hardly surprising as the party is competing for diminishing returns and much less favourable group of people, having swung undecided voters and third, and fourth, party voters to its cause already.

Conclusion

The surveys that were conducted before the 2010 General Election across thirteen Westminster parliamentary constituencies show that Liberal Democrat campaigning can have a significant impact on the outcome for the party in some areas, despite ‘the easy generalisation made in many academic studies – that, in modern conditions, local campaigning is merely a ritual, a small and insignificant side show

to the main event.⁵⁴³ Constituency campaigning, especially when it is of a significantly high level, namely over six different items per year, gives the party a much better prospect of electoral success. This is particularly clear in Westmorland and Lonsdale where the party has an impressive electoral machine but also in Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey where the party focuses its activities in the accessible parts of Inverness and Nairn rather than the remoter parts of the constituency. In Cornwall the Liberal Democrats seemed to have an impressive electoral machine in South East Cornwall, compared to other parts of the county, and this campaigning pre-eminence is an important factor in their success in this constituency up to the 2010 election

Personality politics does seem to have some resonance in Cornwall as in other parts of the Celtic Fringe, but the surveys would seem to suggest that this importance is much more relevant after a politician has been elected than beforehand.

Incumbency, even amongst recently elected Members of Parliament, would seem to help their chances of re-election, though candidates, as yet untested by the electorate would seem to have little impact on the outcome of an election because of who they are. There was also some evidence, particularly in the case of Matthew Taylor in parts of Cornwall where he had never been elected, and Fergus Ewing in Northern Scotland, that suggested that politicians, like Isaac Foot and David Penhaligon, had a capacity to gain popularity beyond their own constituency. This was quite individual and seemed to be based on longevity, in the case of Taylor, and familial name-recognition in the case of Ewing. This is, almost entirely, speculation but when a politician like Isaac Foot had both of these reasons to be promoted above the commonplace there is perhaps a suggestion of truth in the belief that personalities maintained the Liberal Party through its dormancy from the 1930s to the late 1950s.

The importance of local factors in helping the Liberal Democrats achieve electoral success appear very clear, and are particularly evident amongst the population who actually vote for the party at elections. Even those that do not support the party generally believe, in the seats outside Scotland and Wales, that the Liberal

⁵⁴³ Denver D. and Hands G., *Modern Constituency Electioneering* (London, 1997) p.305

Democrats are best at dealing with local issues. This link, which would seem to be created by the party through its campaigning, would appear to build on their previous base of indigenous support through tradition, religion and any anti-metropolitan sentiment. The Liberal Democrats' campaigning does seem to build a coalition of traditional support and those who find, or are provided with, a reason to support the local Liberal Democrats because of their candidate or local policies, more than the other two main parties. This is less apparent however when a fourth political party comes into the political arena, in Scotland and Wales, however.

Liberal Democrats have used a combination of novel campaigning techniques, through community politics, intensity of campaign activity and persistence to generate a climate, in their most attractive prospective seats, to achieve some electoral success. This surveying was conducted and completed during the period before the 2010 election, six subsequent polls, in half of the previously surveyed seats were re-pollled in the period after the election to evaluate the impact of the actual period of the campaign itself and this will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 7 - The 2010 General Election

The election of 2010 delivered a national result that was unprecedented in post-war Britain. For the first time a Coalition government of any colour was formed, between the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats. When only a week before Conservatives and Liberal Democrats had been contesting fiercely a majority of the seats that this research was focused on, the parties had come together in an arguably unlikely alliance in government. David Cameron and Nick Clegg formed a government with Liberal Democrats sitting as cabinet ministers for the first time in the party's existence.

Despite enhanced, and favourable, media coverage focused around the sudden national prominence for their new leader, Nick Clegg, due to the innovation of the Prime Ministerial debates, - the first of which Clegg was judged to have won - the party failed to make progress.⁵⁴⁴ This catapulting of Clegg into the national political consciousness was because of the 'equal billing [which gave] Clegg an unparalleled chance to introduce himself to the public and present the case for "fairer" politics.'⁵⁴⁵ Due to his success there had been a 'growing expectation that the party would perform much better than in 2005 and at last bridge the "credibility gap" in more constituencies across the country,'⁵⁴⁶ even if, by the end of the campaign, some have argued that 'a sense of ennui surrounded reactions to the Liberal Democrats leader's performance.'⁵⁴⁷ This did lead Baines and Harris to ask whether 'the perceived marketing success and euphoria around Nick Clegg ('Cleggmania' as it came to be known) and the Liberal Democrats mean that they over-extended themselves by trying to campaign in more seats than they could handle.'⁵⁴⁸ The Liberal Democrats failed to secure more seats in parliament despite winning more votes nationally. Although this was the immediate context surrounding the leaders, by 2010, with Gordon Brown being Prime Minister, at what appeared to be the tail-

⁵⁴⁴ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/apr/16/nick-clegg-guardian-icm-poll-pm>

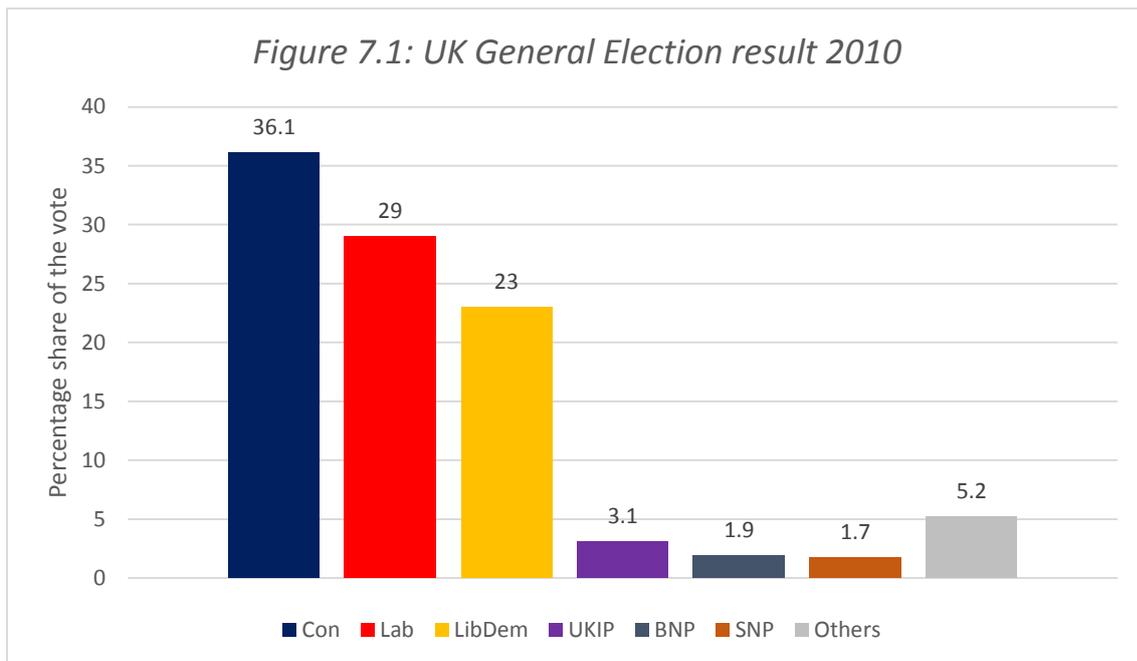
⁵⁴⁵ Jones N., *Campaign 2010 – The Making of the Prime Minister* (London, 2010), p.290

⁵⁴⁶ Cutts D., 'Yet Another False Dawn? An Examination of the Liberal Democrats' Performance in the 2010 General Election', *BJPIR: 2012 VOL 14*, (2012), p.97

⁵⁴⁷ Evans E., 'The Liberal Democrats' *Coalition Britain – The UK election of 2010*, (eds. Baldini G. & Hopkin J.) (Manchester, 2012), p.85

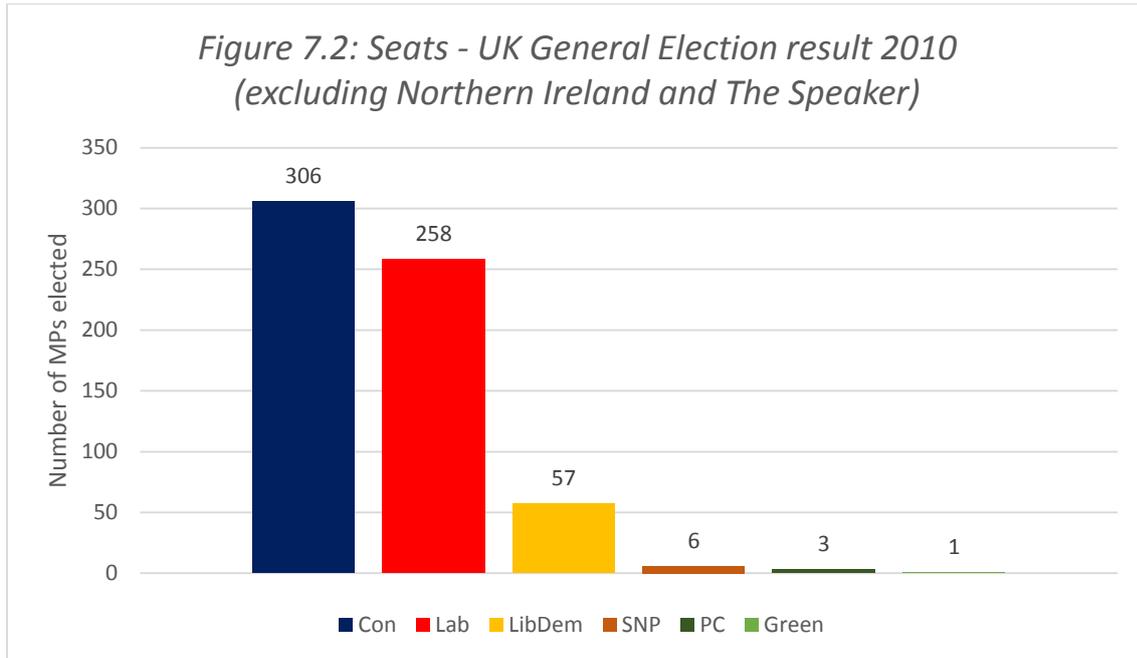
⁵⁴⁸ Baines P. & Harris P., 'Marketing in the 2010 British General Election: perspectives, prospect, and practice', *Journal of Marketing Management Vol. 27, Nos. 7–8*, (July 2011) p.654

end of the Labour government the chances of a Conservative government. This was exemplified by the events surrounding Gillan Duffy, in Rochdale, in which the then Prime Minister described a local Labour supporter as a bigot. There can also be little doubt that the selection of David Cameron in 2006 as Conservative leader had refreshed the brand for the party, but whether it was completely de-toxified was still open to question.



In comparison to 2005, the Conservatives had increased their national share of the vote by 3.7%, the Labour Party had been reduced by 6.2% and the Liberal Democrats had increased their national share of the vote by 1%. In terms of seats, these changes resulted in the narrow result that can be seen in Figure 7.2.

Figure 7.2: Seats - UK General Election result 2010
(excluding Northern Ireland and The Speaker)



The Liberal Democrats gained votes but lost seats for the first time since 1997. Nick Clegg’s campaign had managed to underachieve on this test of the party’s recent campaigning legacy. Targeting seems to have been less effective and it may be true that the party’s election team believed that “Rennardism” was not the way forward for the Party.⁵⁴⁹ The party won 57 seats, as stated above, but this number obscures the change in the party’s fortunes against Labour and the Conservatives. Despite the apparently less effective nature of their targeting compared to 2005 ‘the Liberal Democrats concentrated their limited resources on a much smaller number of seats,⁵⁵⁰ than the two main parties.

The Liberal Democrats lost 12 seats⁵⁵¹ to the Conservatives and Dunfermline and West Fife to Labour. They gained Bradford East, Brent Central, Burnley, Norwich South and Redcar from Labour and Eastbourne, Solihull⁵⁵² and Wells from the Conservatives. Of the losses the Liberal Democrats suffered three of the twelve were

⁵⁴⁹ Morrissey H., *Processes and Culture within the Liberal Democrats and Recommendations for change*, (London, 2013)

⁵⁵⁰ Johnson R., Pattie C., Cutts D. et. al., ‘Local Campaign Spending at the 2010 General Election and Its Impact: Exploring What Wider Regulation has Revealed’, *The Political Quarterly*, Vol. 82, No. 2, (April–June 2011), p.176

⁵⁵¹ Camborne and Redruth, South East Cornwall, Harrogate and Knaresborough, Hereford and South Herefordshire, Montgomeryshire, Newton Abbot, Oxford West and Abingdon, Richmond Park, Romsey and Southampton North, Truro and Falmouth, Winchester and York Outer

⁵⁵² Notionally Conservative on boundary changes but with incumbent Liberal Democrat Member of Parliament, Lorely Burt

in Cornwall (if one accepts the assumption that the Liberal Democrats held all six seats having held all five previously, before the boundary changes came into effect).

This research is not intended to evaluate the nature or policies of the Coalition but the surveys that took place following the election should be seen in this changed national political context. It had been possible with the pre-election surveys to conduct them over a long period of time but with the post-election surveys it was decided that a maximum period following the election of three months could be allowed before voters began to actively change their political allegiances or more importantly, for research purposes, that they would forget the local election campaign in their constituency and how they had been affected by it. To balance this timescale, capacity and to deliver a balanced sample, six seats were identified for the purposes of re-surveying: St. Austell and Newquay, South East Cornwall, Westmorland and Lonsdale, Penrith and the Border, Dunfermline and West Fife and North East Fife.

Since the 2010 election a number of studies have been published discussing the campaign.⁵⁵³ These do, perhaps unsurprisingly focus on the rather larger issues that affect the election, such as national policy and national leaders. Logically, as befits general works on evaluating elections they do rather conform to the view that elections are won nationally. However, there is increasing evidence, even though much of the debate is still focused around the Prime Ministerial debates that Kavanagh and Cowley do note its increasing importance. They say, 'there has been growing evidence in recent elections that local candidates and local campaigning are more important than was traditionally assumed,' however they go on to say that, 'paradoxically the local campaign is becoming more centralised than ever.'⁵⁵⁴ They also see another paradoxical cause for concern for the party and that was the disadvantages that so-called Cleggmania had on the party's targeting strategy, 'the opinion-poll-driven optimism diverted activists away from seats where the chances of victory were greater,'⁵⁵⁵ as numerous unwinnable seats decided that they had

⁵⁵³ Jones N., Campaign 2010: The Making of a Prime Minister (London, 2010), Baldini G. & Hopkin J., Coalition Britain: The UK General Election of 2010 (Manchester, 2012), Allen N. & Bartle J., Britain at the Polls 2010 (London, 2011) and Kavanagh D. & Cowley P., The British General Election of 2010 (Basingstoke, 2010)

⁵⁵⁴ Kavanagh D. & Cowley P., The British General Election of 2010 (Basingstoke, 2010) p.230

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid p.238

become winnable as a consequence of the national swing exhibited in the polls following the leadership debates. Some polling was conducted by Ipsos-MORI concerning the relative strengths of the ground campaign. It identified that ‘the Conservatives’ ground war campaign advantage was clear, although relatively slight’ But as Kavanagh and Cowley concede that although this and their own research identifies that more people received literature from the Conservatives than the other parties, ‘they do not take into account the *volume* of literature.’⁵⁵⁶ This is clearly a significant draw back to their election study of 2010, as many parties will deliver one leaflet through the royal mail facility offered as part of the election process. As Liberal Democrats particularly depend on volume to create local credibility, this should be noted and compared to this study.

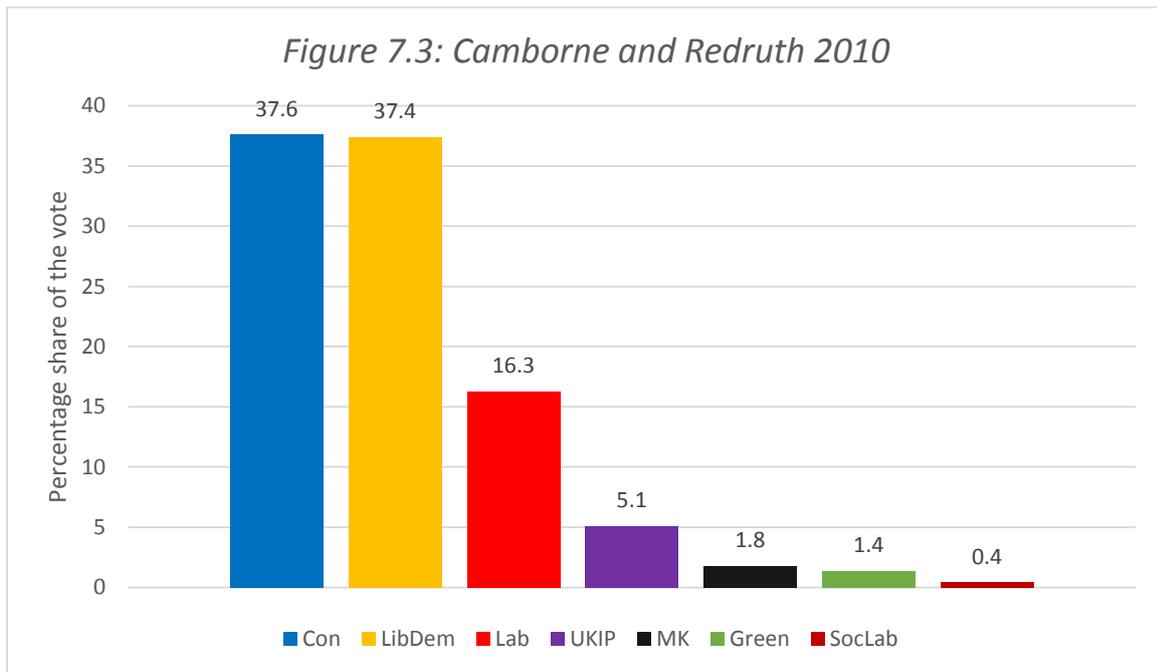
Background to the re-surveying of constituencies

Because the timespan available for the re-surveying was restricted, it was decided to select three groups of two seats that had similarities in their makeup. One of these aspects was, of course, geographic. There was also the issue that the parties had fared differently in different localities. For example of the four seats that the Liberal Democrats had notionally held before the 2010 election in Cornwall the party had notionally lost three of the seats that this project surveyed. The party only retained one, St. Austell and Newquay, and lost Camborne and Redruth, Truro and Falmouth and South East Cornwall. Camborne and Redruth and Truro and Falmouth were lost by small majorities to the Conservatives and South East Cornwall now had the largest majority for any party in any of the Cornish seats. This made it appear to have potentially the most significant swing away from the Liberal Democrats: in terms of electoral swing it certainly did. The four seats that were surveyed before the election delivered the following results in 2010.

Camborne and Redruth delivered one of the closest election results across the country, electing the new Conservative Member of Parliament by a majority of just sixty-six votes. The new Conservative MP, George Eustice, defeated Julia Goldsworthy, who had been the member for half of the constituency, before the boundary changes. Retrospectively it seems reasonable speculation to assert that

⁵⁵⁶ Kavanagh D. & Cowley P., *The British General Election of 2010* (Basingstoke, 2010) p.230

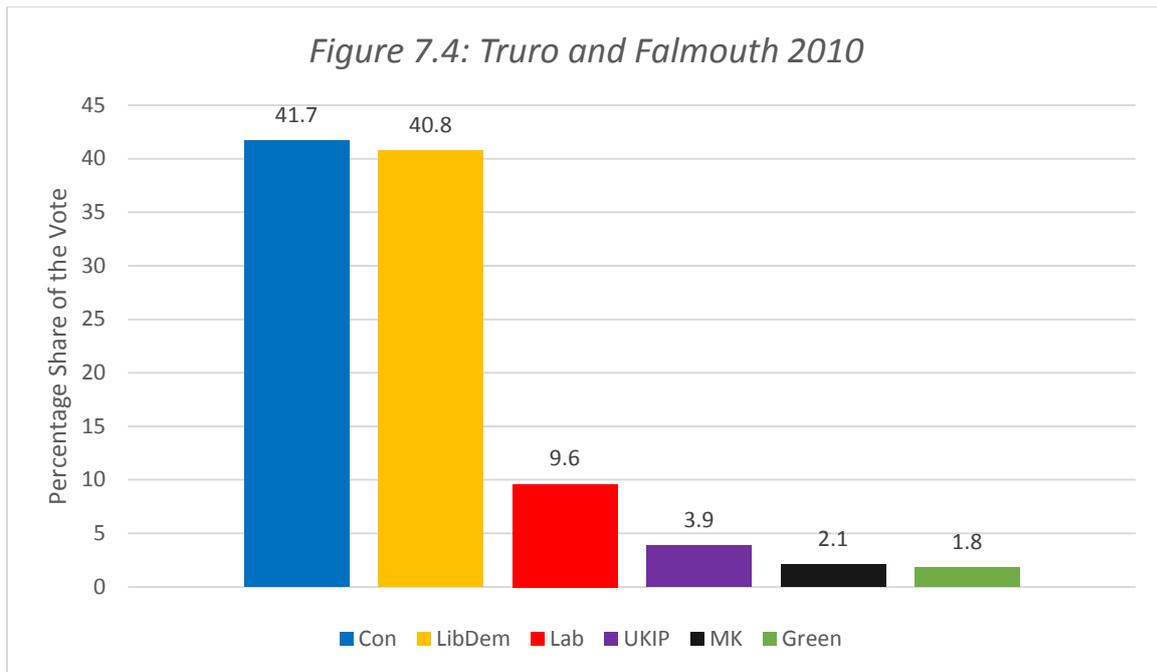
Goldsworthy's defeat⁵⁵⁷ may have been at least partially attributable to the loss of favour she received locally as a consequence of her being caught up in negative coverage of her use of parliamentary expenses.⁵⁵⁸ This might have been clear from the previous chapter where Goldsworthy's popularity was clearly diminished locally compared to other incumbent Liberal Democrat Members of Parliament.



Similarly the party failed to retain Truro and Falmouth. Although the candidate for the constituency was not affected by the expenses scandal, not being a sitting MP, she was, as shown in the previous chapter, the only Liberal Democrat candidate to achieve a negative favourability rating within her constituency. Again the margin of victory for the Conservatives was only 435, a very narrow victory for the new Member of Parliament, Sarah Newton.

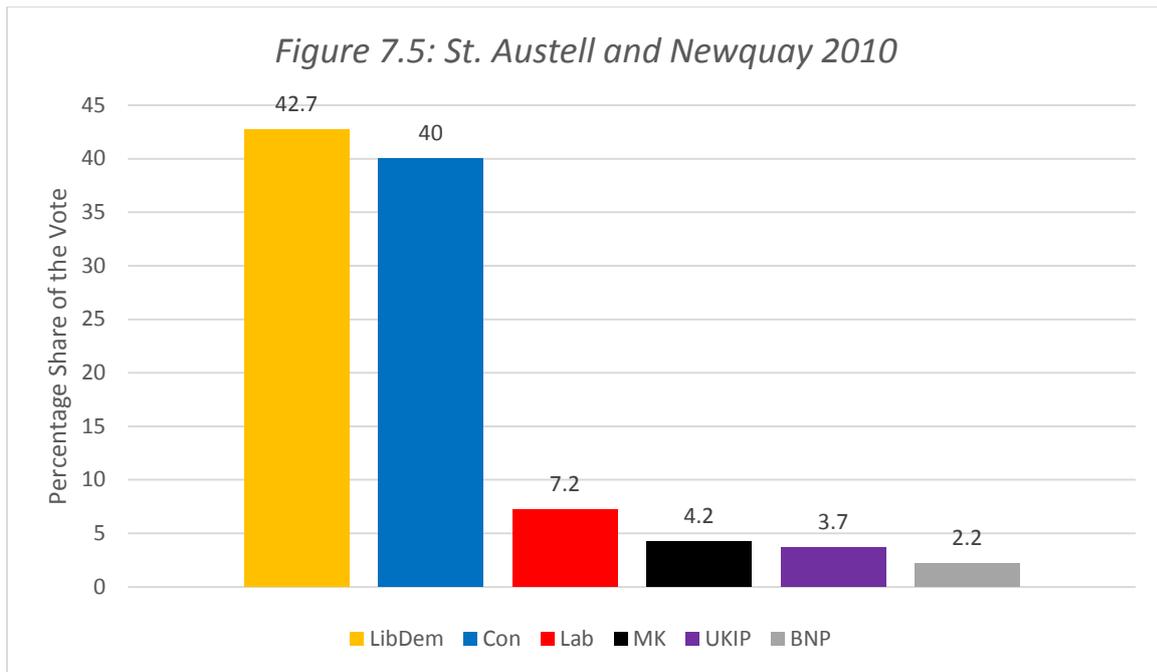
⁵⁵⁷ Interview with Dan Rogerson MP. November 2011

⁵⁵⁸ *Western Morning News*, May 13th 2009



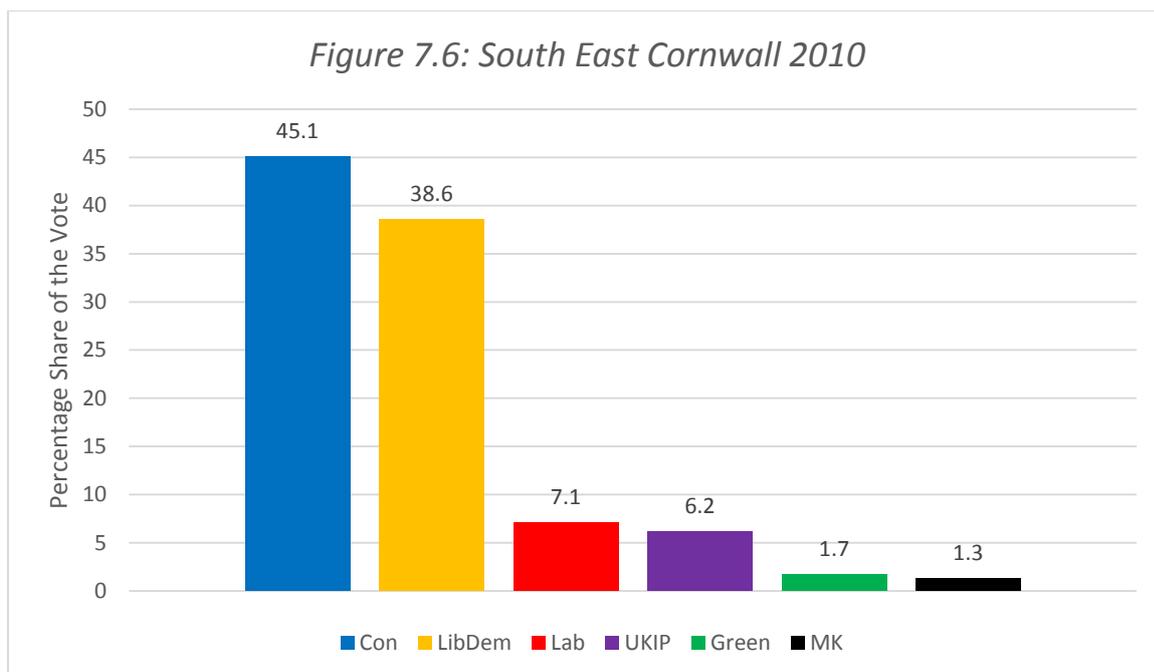
The two seats that were re-surveyed were St. Austell and Newquay and South East Cornwall. In St. Austell and Newquay Stephen Gilbert successfully ‘held’ the seat, bearing in mind the sizeable boundary changes that the seat undertook before the election. Although the Liberal Democrats did suffer from a swing against them in this seat it was less than either of the previous two Cornish contests mentioned and they held the seat by a majority of 1,312. Both these seats were perceived as being vulnerable due to the retirement of long-standing MP, Matthew Taylor.⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁹ <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2010/mar/26/south-west-general-election-guide>



In South East Cornwall, the Liberal Democrats suffered their most dramatic loss in Cornwall, suffering a 9.1% swing against the party, losing the seat which they had held since 1997. The new Member of Parliament, Sheryll Murray, won the seat by a majority of 3,220. According to the *Daily Telegraph* 'Conservatives in the constituency felt that their main rival, the Lib Dem candidate Karen Gillard and her supporters, fought a negative, even dirty, campaign.'⁵⁶⁰ Though this would not be the first time the Liberal Democrats had used hard hitting campaigning the fact that it was reported in the national press is notable.

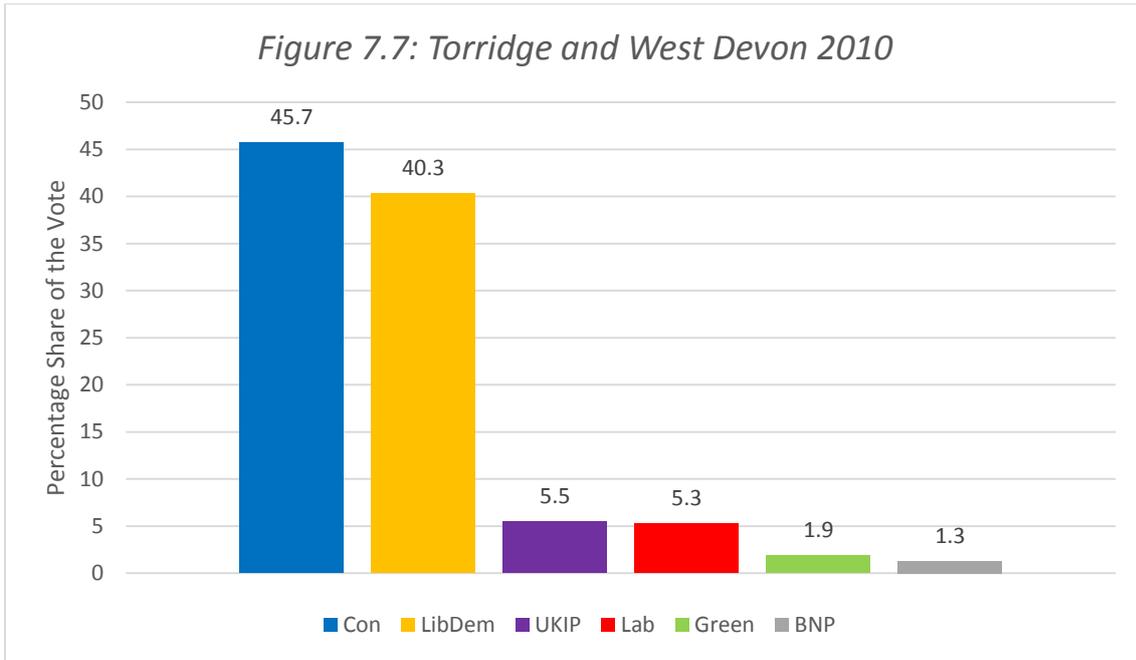
⁵⁶⁰ *The Daily Telegraph*, 9th May 2010



The Liberal Democrats had been perceived to have performed well in 2010 nationwide, primarily based on the success of Nick Clegg in the Prime Ministerial debates. However they had not done so in Cornwall, losing half of their representatives on paper, leaving Cornwall with three Liberal Democrat MPs and three Conservatives. This large swing and the nature of the defeat for the Liberal Democrats in South East Cornwall made it the most significant seat in Cornwall for the re-surveying to see if it was possible to assess the reason for this about-turn. As a consequence, St. Austell and Newquay being the only seat the party successfully defended in 2010 which had been surveyed before the election, was the logical comparator within Cornwall.

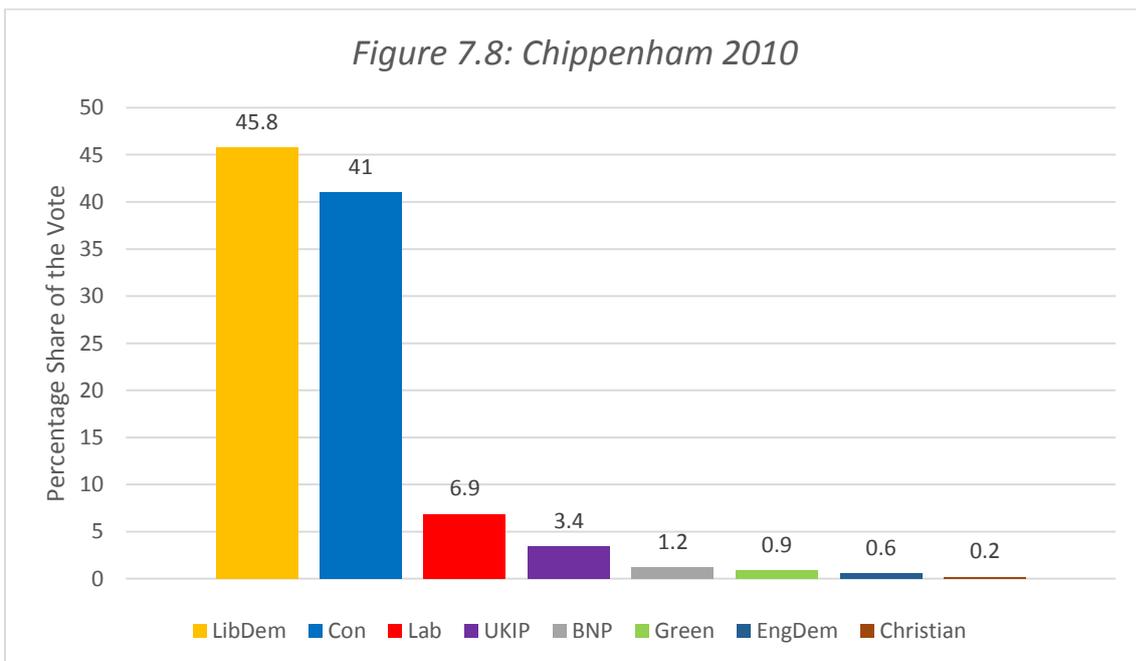
Outside Cornwall, in the two South West regional seats that were surveyed, Torridge and West Devon and Chippenham there was no change in control, based on the notional results of 2005. The Conservatives held Torridge and West Devon with a slightly reduced majority over the Liberal Democrats: Geoffrey Cox defeating Adam Symons by a majority of 2,957.

Figure 7.7: Torrington and West Devon 2010



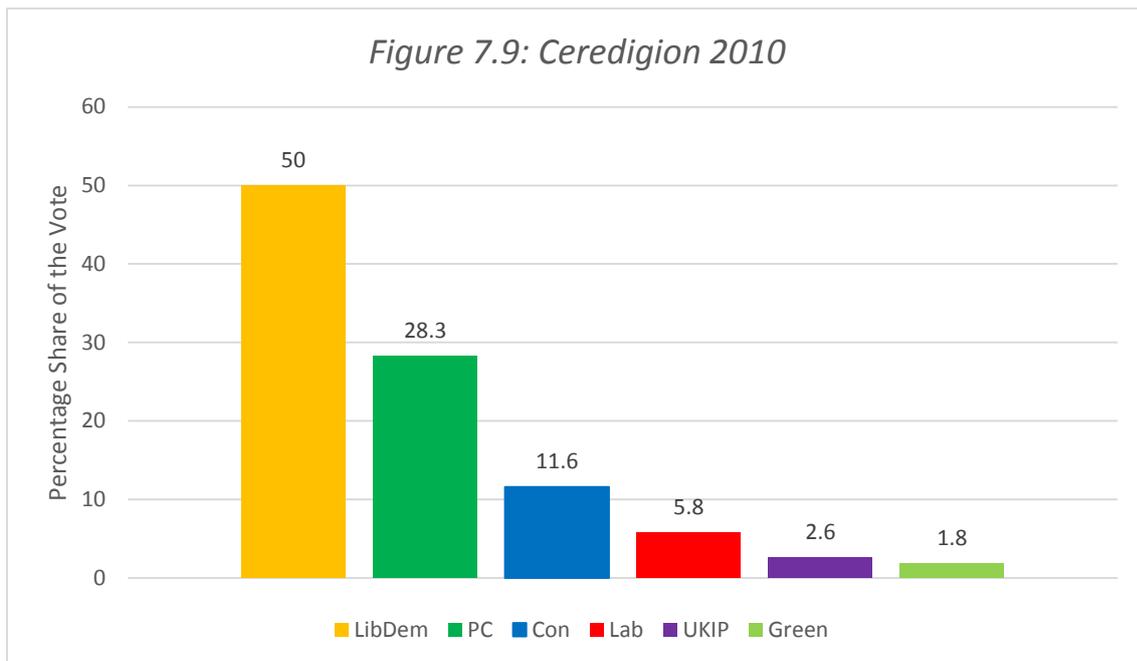
In Chippenham, which was notionally Liberal Democrat on the boundary changes, Duncan Hames was successful in *holding* the constituency with a majority of 2,470 over Wilfred Emmanuel-Jones, the Conservative candidate. This was the first time the Liberals or their successor party had won the seat in the post-war period so although it is described as a hold Hames' victory was quite a surprise.⁵⁶¹ The party was technically in the same notionally incumbent position in York Outer which it lost by the significant margin of 3,688.

Figure 7.8: Chippenham 2010



⁵⁶¹ <http://election.pressassociation.com/constituencies.html> Last viewed 30/11/13

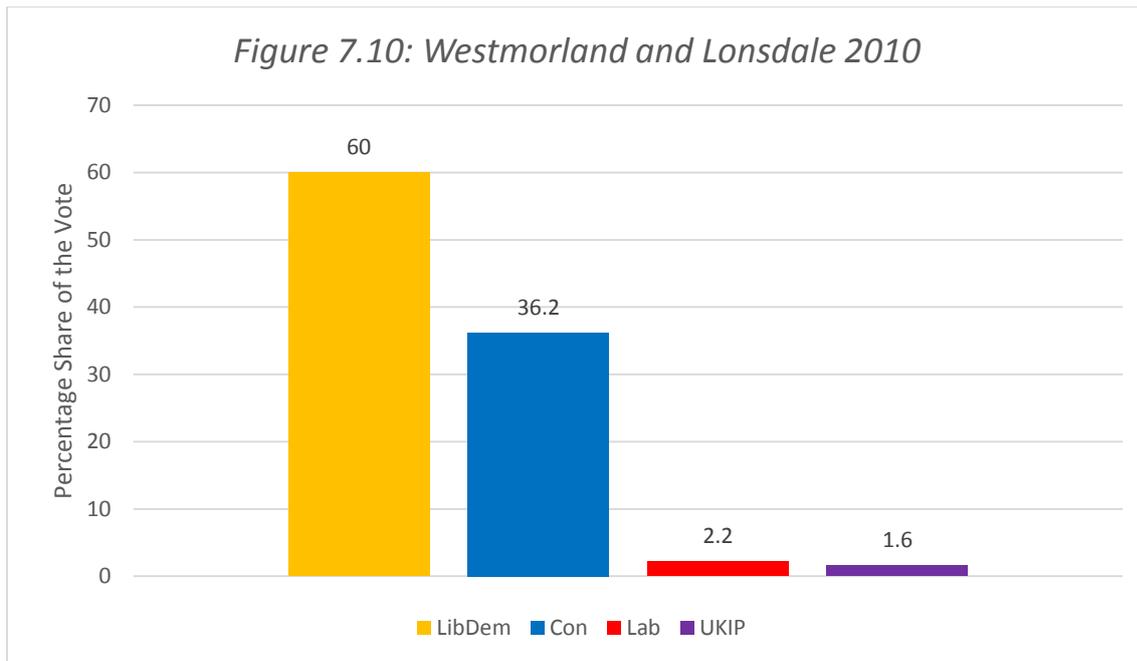
Ceredigion, the only seat surveyed in Wales, saw Mark Williams, the incumbent Liberal Democrat MP, returned with a large swing from Plaid Cymru to him of 10.6% and a majority of 8,324. It is possible that this large swing was assisted by the fact that Plaid Cymru (and the SNP) were excluded from the UK televised debates, though this may just have helped to entrench the view that Plaid Cymru were not contestants to run the UK Parliament after the election.⁵⁶²



Similarly, in Westmorland and Lonsdale, incumbent Liberal Democrat MP, Tim Farron, received a large swing from the Conservatives, having won by a very narrow majority in 2005. He received a swing of 11.1% from the Conservatives resulting in a comfortable majority of 12,264. Despite the election being considered a disappointment in general the party's result here was impressive to say the least.⁵⁶³ Logically, therefore, Westmorland and Lonsdale serves as an excellent comparison to the seats in Cornwall to assess the impacts of campaigning in the local context.

⁵⁶² *The Daily Telegraph*, 22nd April 2010

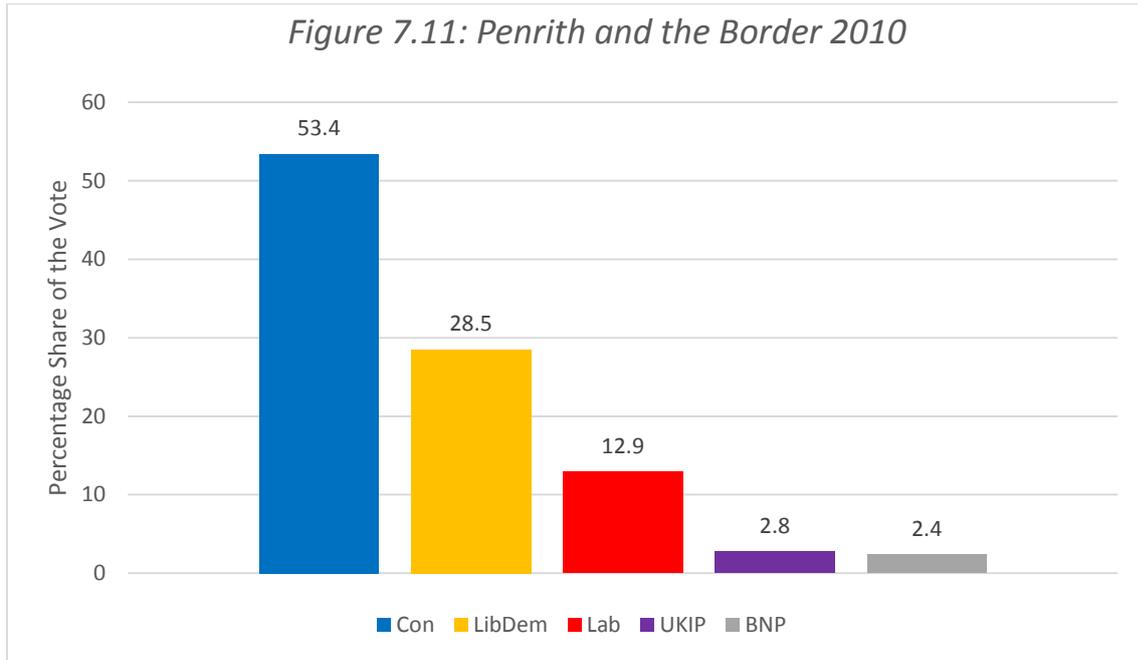
⁵⁶³ <http://www.politics.co.uk/news/2010/05/07/general-election-2010-lib-dems-hold-westmorla> Last viewed 7th December 2013



Penrith and the Border, one of the *control* seats that was chosen, along with Chippenham, saw the new Conservative candidate comfortably defeat the Liberal Democrats. Though, despite the previous marginality of Westmorland and Lonsdale, Penrith and the Border was now a closer result. There was a slight swing against the Conservatives, although Rory Stewart actually increased his share of the vote. His local popularity may also have been helped by his increasing national profile as commentator on the Iraq War. Even by 2010, despite not yet being elected, he was already identified as being a potential future cabinet minister.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶⁴ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/election-2010/7696703/General-Election-2010-The-top-20-rising-stars.html?image=2> Last viewed 7th December 2013

Figure 7.11: Penrith and the Border 2010

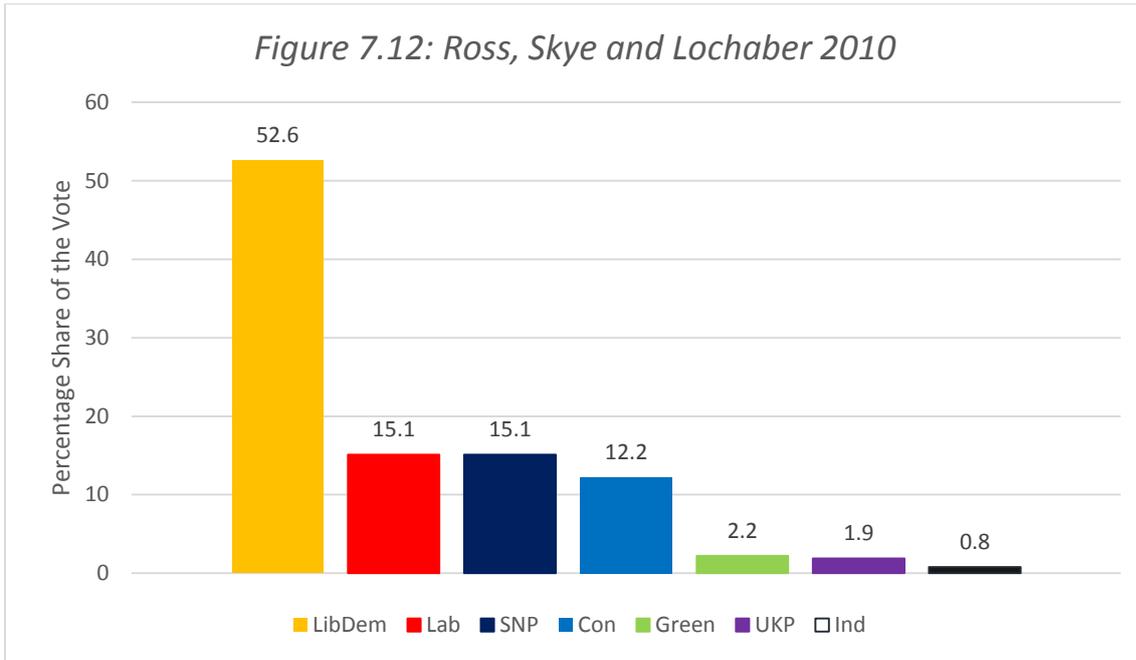


In Scotland the seats that were surveyed, Inverness, Ross, Skye and Lochaber, North East Fife and Dunfermline and West Fife only one changed hands. Charles Kennedy comfortably held Ross, Skye and Lochaber though with a slightly reduced share of the vote. Kennedy's much publicised fall from the leadership⁵⁶⁵ did not seem to affect his local popularity and despite his public admittance of his drinking problem 'Nick Clegg's average approval ratings were much lower than Charles Kennedy's, especially in the polls referring to his ability as Prime Minister.'⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁵ http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4590688.stm Last viewed 7th December 2013

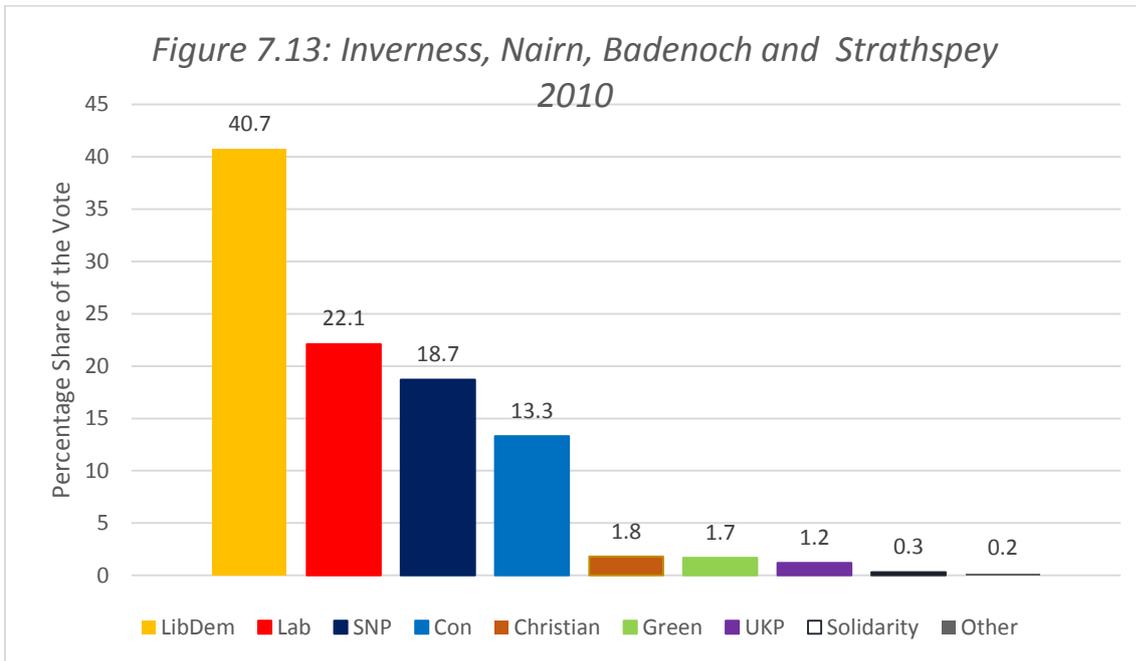
⁵⁶⁶ <http://www.britishpoliticsgroup.org/documents/BPG2010-Boyer.pdf> Last viewed 7th December 2013

Figure 7.12: Ross, Skye and Lochaber 2010



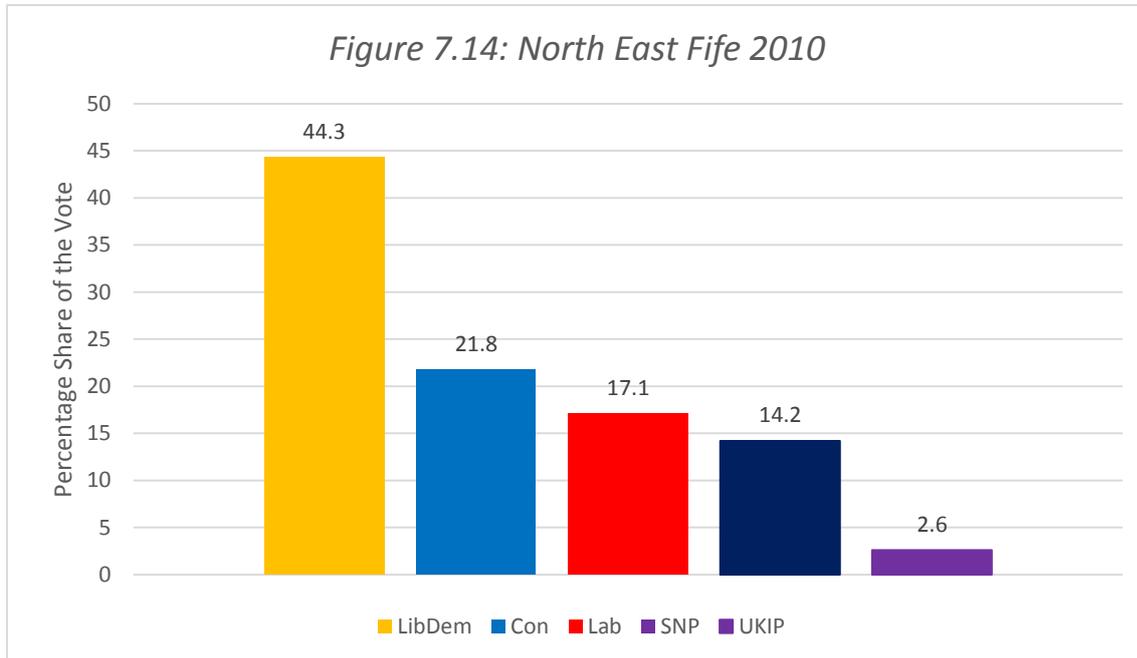
Danny Alexander increased his majority in Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey. Although still only winning a plurality of the vote, Labour fell back in the seat giving him a larger majority, being doubled to 8,765.

Figure 7.13: Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey 2010



In North East Fife Sir Menzies Campbell saw a reduction in his majority and share of the vote but comfortably retained the seat he first won in 1987. Perhaps in a year when a Labour government was rejected one might have expected his majority to

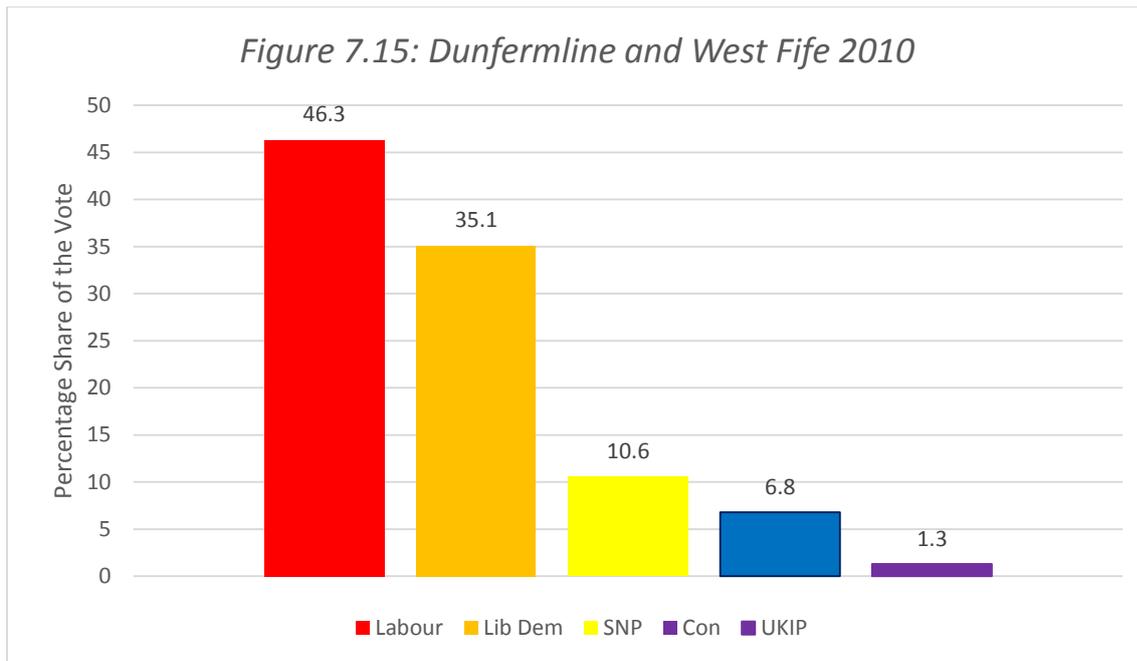
increase but there is evidence that Campbell moved a great deal of his campaign activity to help in the nearby Dunfermline seat.⁵⁶⁷



However, by-election winner, Willie Rennie was not to prove as fortunate in Dunfermline and West Fife and the success of the 2006 by-election, won at the time of the leadership campaign to replace Charles Kennedy, was reversed. Despite Rennie increasing his own support by over 5,000 votes, compared to the by-election, he lost out to the Labour Party. Although a by-election seat, the fact that the Liberal Democrats lost the seat is of some interest, especially as Gordon Brown represented part of this seat for many years, though having now moved into the neighbouring constituency despite still be a resident of the constituency. As Cutts says, the Liberal Democrats were ‘faced by a resilient Labour party in Scotland which was extremely effective in mobilising its core support, the Liberal Democrats lost votes, performed badly in key target seats and failed to retain their by-election success in Dunfermline and West Fife against a resurgent Labour party.’⁵⁶⁸ Cutts also attributes some of this failure to the loss of Charles Kennedy who was lost as leader in 2006, before the by-election that saw Rennie win the by-election.

⁵⁶⁷ Interview with Willie Rennie MSP

⁵⁶⁸ Cutts D., ‘Yet Another False Dawn? An Examination of the Liberal Democrats’ Performance in the 2010 General Election’, *BJPIR: 2012 VOL 14*, (2012), p.100

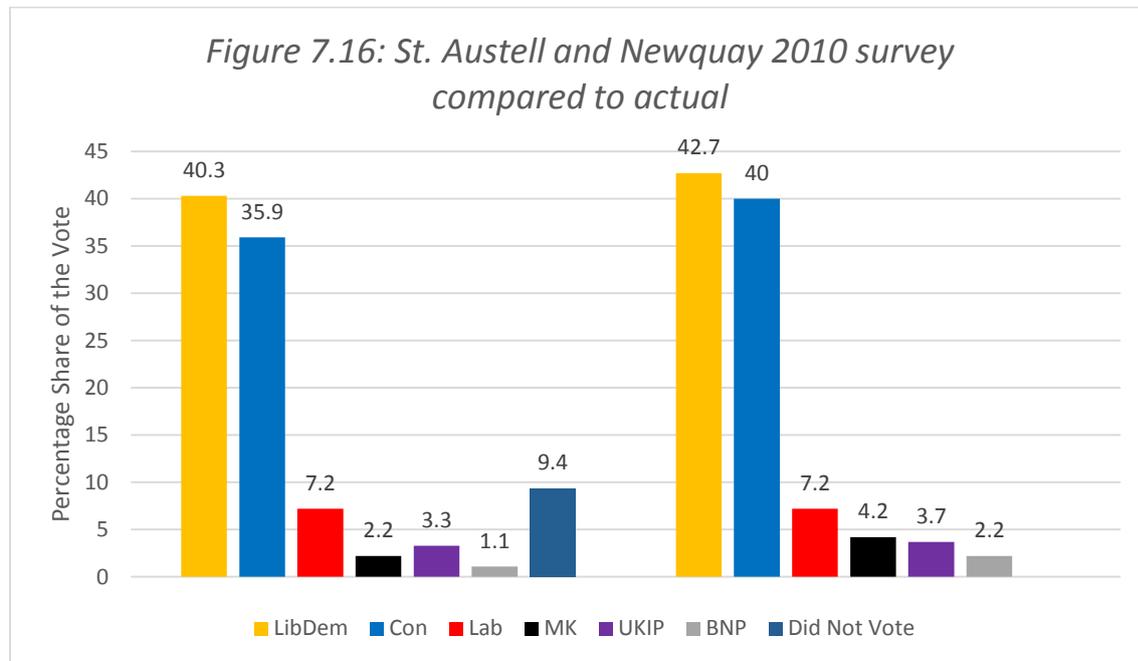


Therefore, partly due to the availability of data, and attempting to achieve a geographic spread to identify seats, three clusters out of the original group of thirteen were chosen. In Cornwall, St. Austell and Newquay and South East Cornwall: the former successfully defended with a new candidate for the Liberal Democrats and the second lost with the largest swing against the party in Cornwall. Westmorland and Lonsdale and Penrith and the Border, the neighbouring Cumbrian seats in which Tim Farron increased the majority in one from 267 in 2005 to 12,264 in 2010, proving the Liberal Democrats could defend a small majority successfully, with the other being a control seat from the original sample. This seat might well show levels of campaigning in areas where the Liberal Democrats are not as active. Finally, the two Fife seats, North East Fife where Menzies Campbell held his seat, with a reduced majority and Willie Rennie failed to sustain the success of his 2006 by-election in Dunfermline and West Fife, against Labour.

Methodology

As with the pre-election surveys the telephone surveys were done across a geographic spread of the six constituencies. The same questions were asked in each case, with the exception of the specific differences in the Scottish context, with the SNP being a significant national and local player, and with the local names of candidates. All the surveys were conducted after the coalition had been agreed and Liberal Democrats were in government, which may have contributed to some

noticeable drop-offs in the party’s support in some areas. The other benefit of conducting the surveys in the post-election period was that the sampling of the surveys, and the voting choices of the public in those areas could be compared directly with the way the six electorates had voted in May 2010. Thus, giving an extra level of accuracy in the quality of the surveys that had been done.

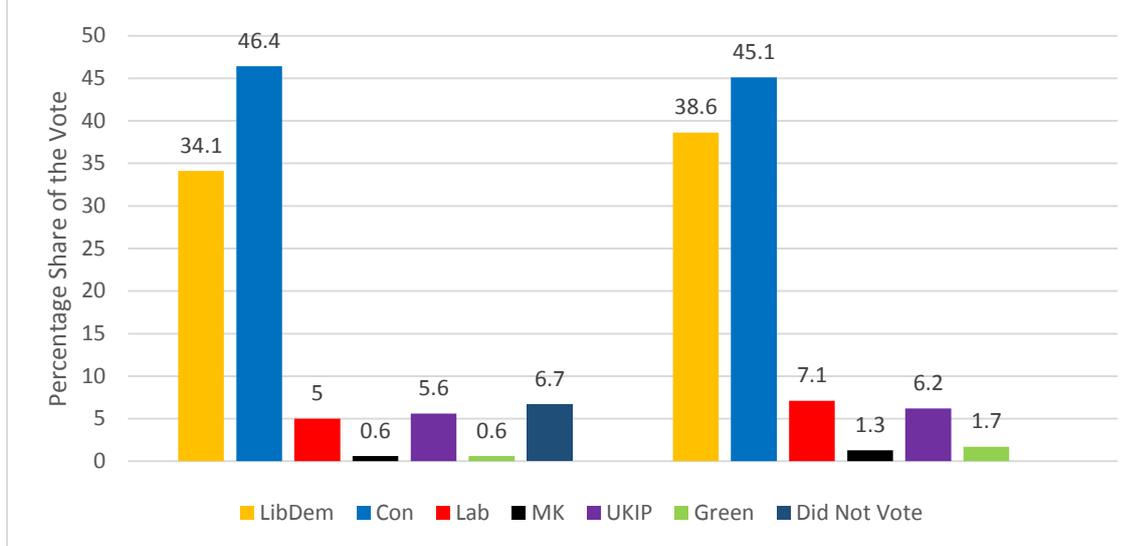


The surveys included those that did not vote, as one purpose was to discover if non-voting had any link with the campaigns, or lack of campaigns, that the parties ran locally.⁵⁶⁹ The results do suggest that the surveys had a significant level of accuracy when it came to political allegiance as well as the other questions that were used to assess the impact of local campaigning.

In South East Cornwall the Liberal Democrats have been slightly underrepresented but when one ignores the non-voters, again this figure becomes a good comparison for the party.

⁵⁶⁹ Although Non-voters are not shown in the actual turnout of the six re-surveyed seats, they are shown in the case of the surveys as they can still contribute to data on whether the parties delivered leaflets to the voters’ houses and are included for accuracy. The non-voter proportion in each seat was: St Austell and Newquay 38.1%, South East Cornwall 31.3%, Westmorland and Lonsdale 24.2%, Penrith and the Border 29.9%, Dunfermline and West Fife 33.6% and North East Fife 36.4%.

Figure 7.17: South East Cornwall 2010 survey compared to actual



In Cumbria again the surveys broadly reflected the electorate accuracy. In Westmorland and Lonsdale Tim Farron’s emphatic retention of the seat was shown in the post-election surveys. Although the Conservative vote is slightly underrepresented in the survey this may be to do with the ongoing support for Farron, but might also reflect an historic concern in polling of the so-called ‘shy Tory’ effect,⁵⁷⁰ which although less important in recent elections, might be the case in an area where the Liberal Democrats did so well.

⁵⁷⁰ <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/apr/08/general-election-2010-polls> Last viewed 7th December 2013

Figure 7.18: Westmorland & Lonsdale 2010 survey compared to actual

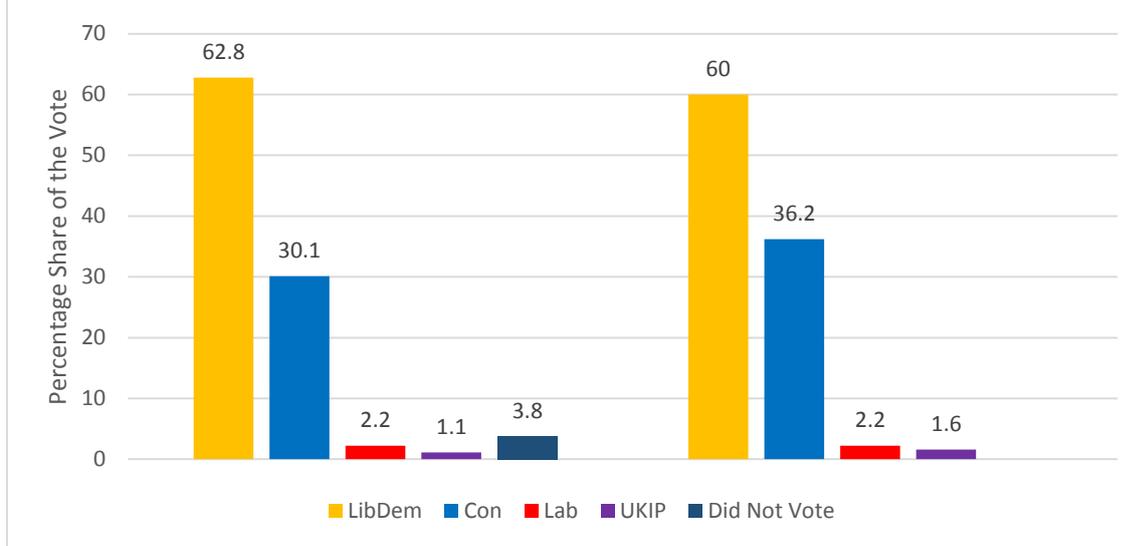
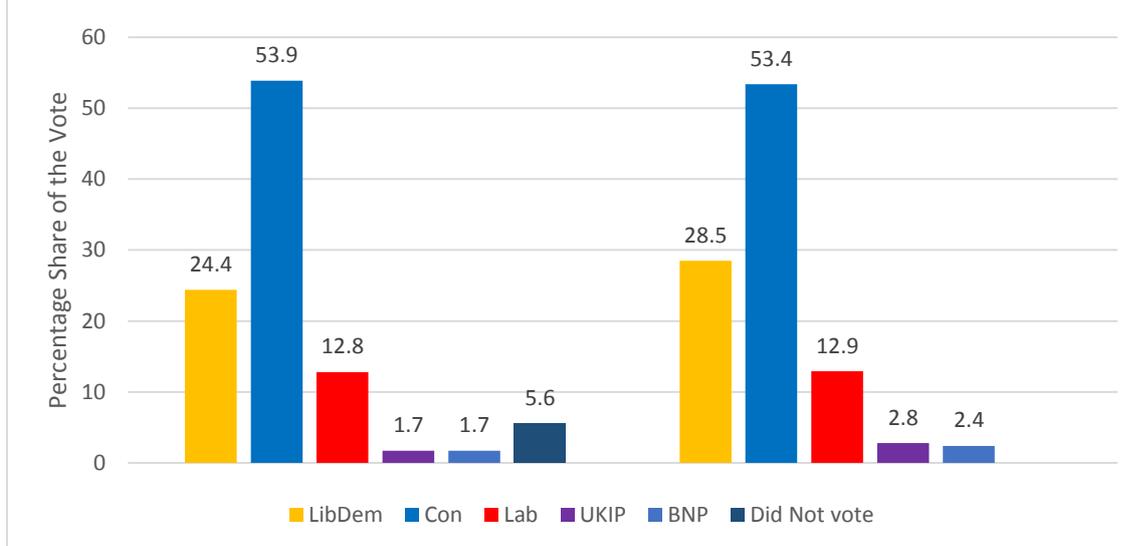


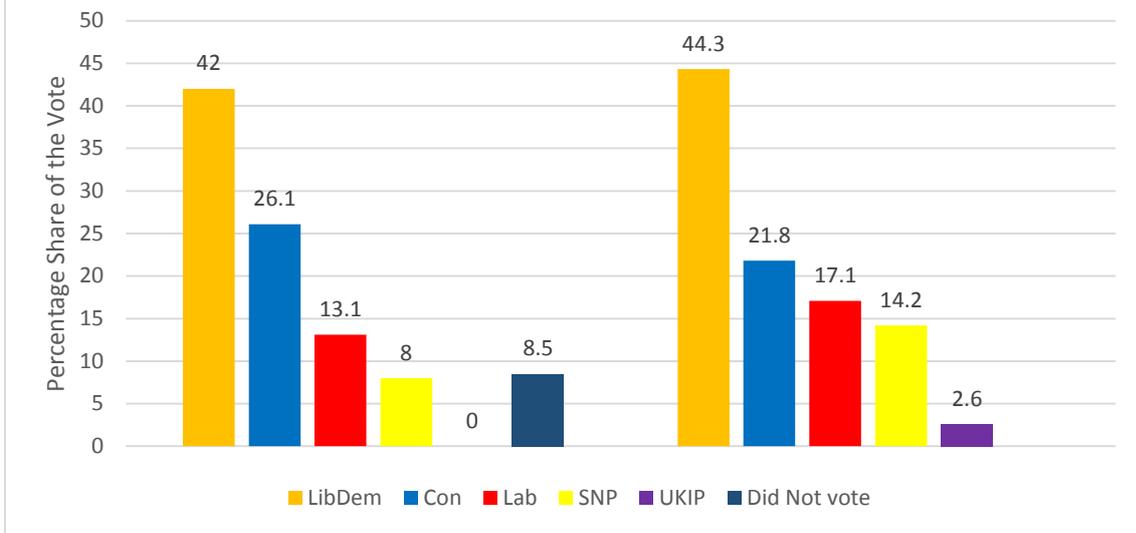
Figure 7.19: Penrith and the Border 2010 survey compared to actual



In Penrith and the Border the Liberal Democrats are slightly underrepresented possibly for a similar reason as the Conservatives were in Westmorland and Lonsdale, despite there having been no evidence of a 'shy Liberal Democrat' effect, one of being a 'shy Cleggite' seems to have arguably appeared following the 2010 election.⁵⁷¹

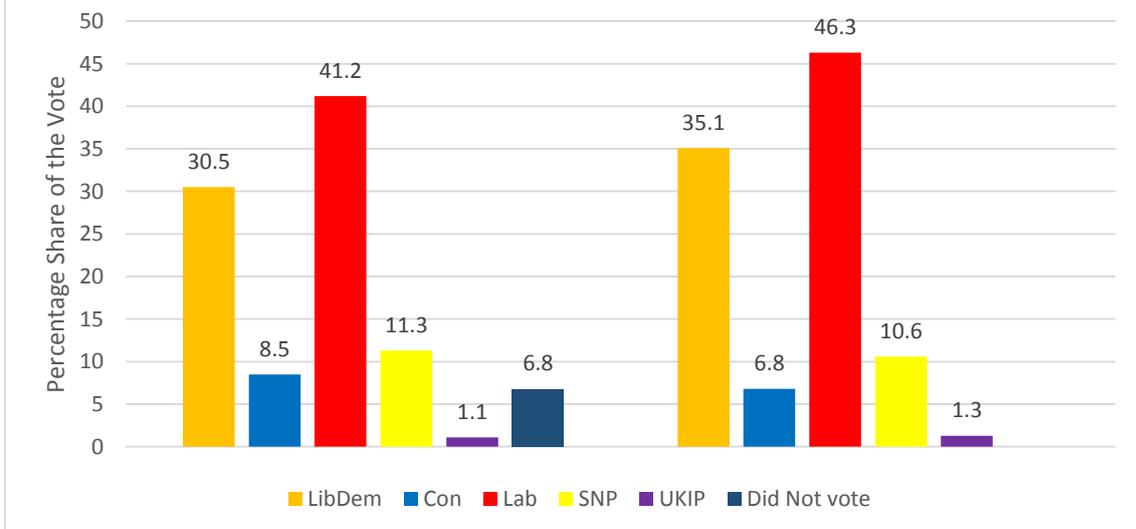
⁵⁷¹ <http://www.libdemvoice.org/has-nick-detected-the-emergence-of-shy-cleggites-22747.html> Last viewed 30/11/13

Figure 7.20: North East Fife 2010 survey compared to actual



However, in Scotland the North East Fife constituency there does seem to be some discrepancy. UKIP did not register on the survey at all and the SNP are significantly under-represented. Only the Conservative vote is over represented but as these voters are an important comparison to Liberal Democrat voters in aspects of this survey it was decided that this discrepancy was not significant enough to need to find extra voters who were supportive of UKIP and the SNP as the time spent doing so might have required the survey being more than twice the sample size.

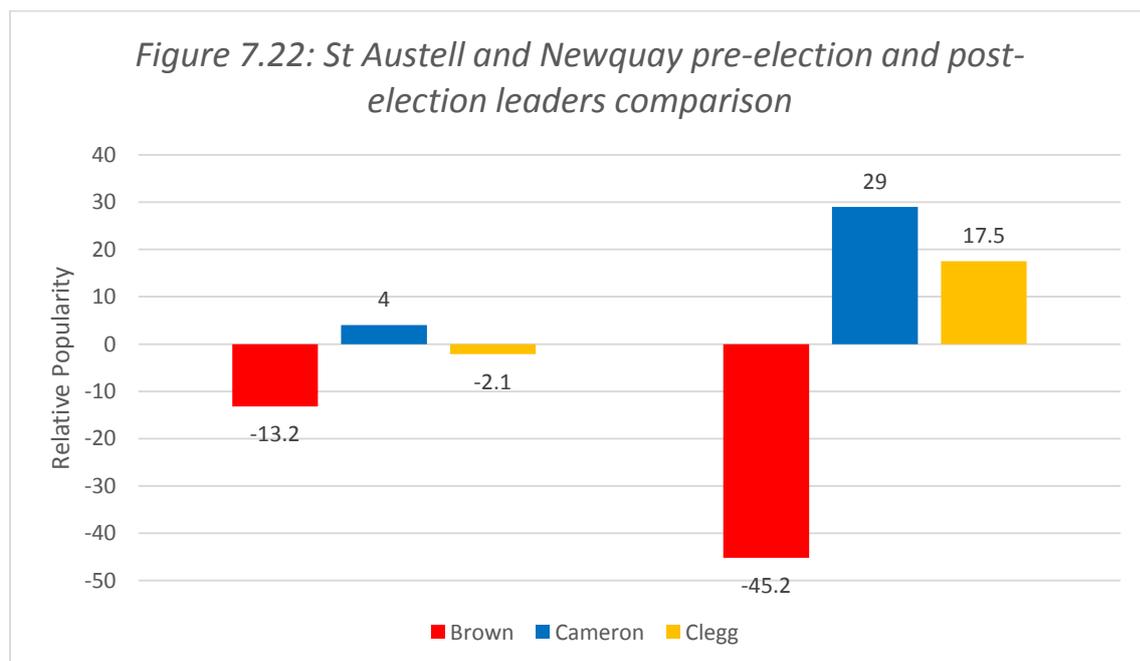
Figure 7.21: Dunfermline & West Fife 2010 survey compared to actual



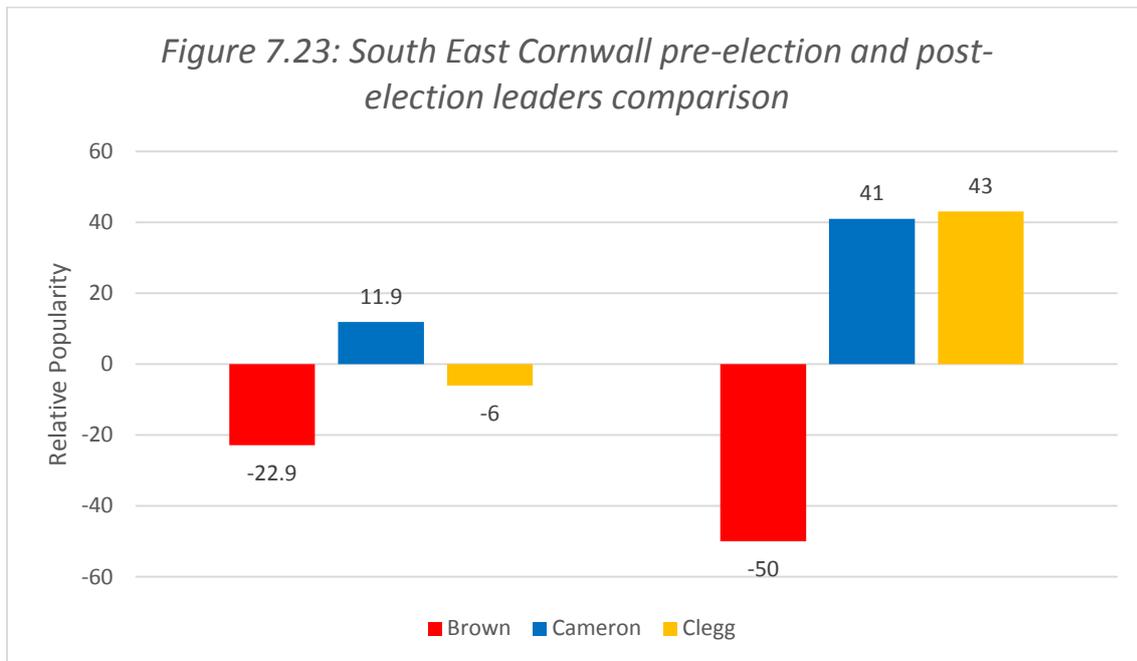
Although in Dunfermline and West Fife the two main parties, Labour and the Liberal Democrats, are both underrepresented in the final survey, they would have been the main beneficiaries if the non-voters had been excluded. Even this survey essentially comes within the range of accuracy of +/-3% accuracy and as such the surveys would seem to be accurate in terms of the geographic spread in each constituency (which was always intended), socio-economic group, but also in terms of the voting intentions of the electorate.

The post-election surveys

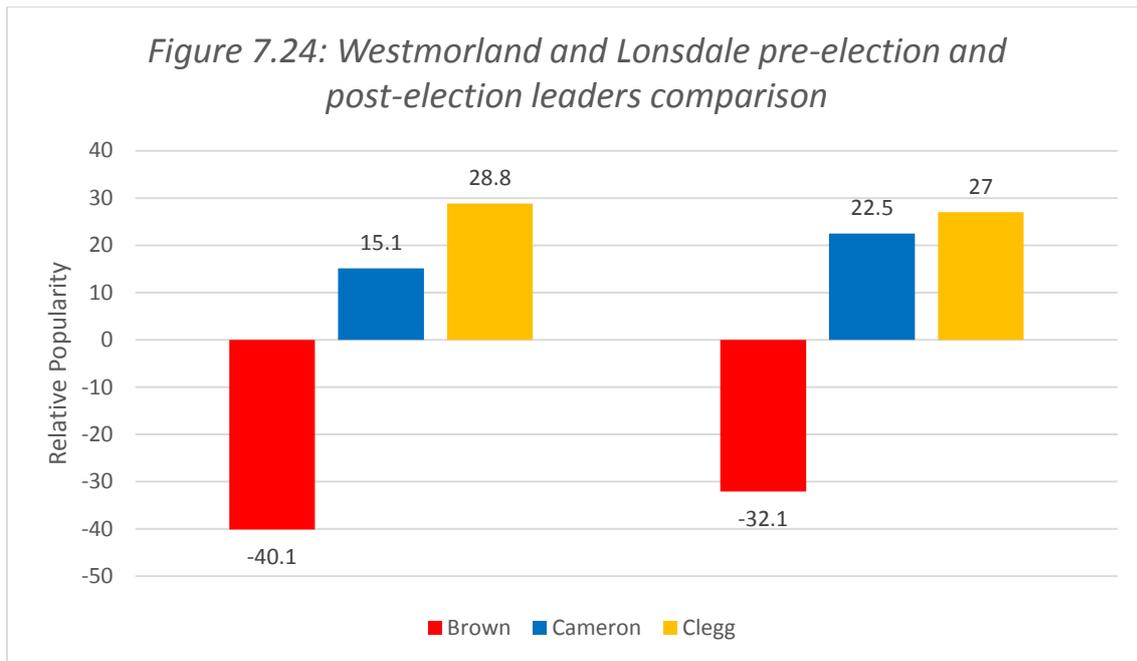
The primary purpose of the post-election surveys was to try to evaluate the level to which the election campaign itself impacted the result in the constituencies surveyed. The emphasis for this study was on the local campaign, but questions about the party leaders were retained to see if there had been a change in their local popularity compared to the pre-election surveys. Because the 2010 election had the first ever Prime Ministerial debates this might have proved to have had an increased importance compared to the pre-election period when politics was arguably less focused on the three personalities of Gordon Brown, David Cameron and Nick Clegg. Indeed Nick Clegg was still relatively unknown by the beginning of the election campaign. Based on Nick Clegg's success, at least in the first Prime Ministerial debate, it would be logical to predict that his popularity would have increased.



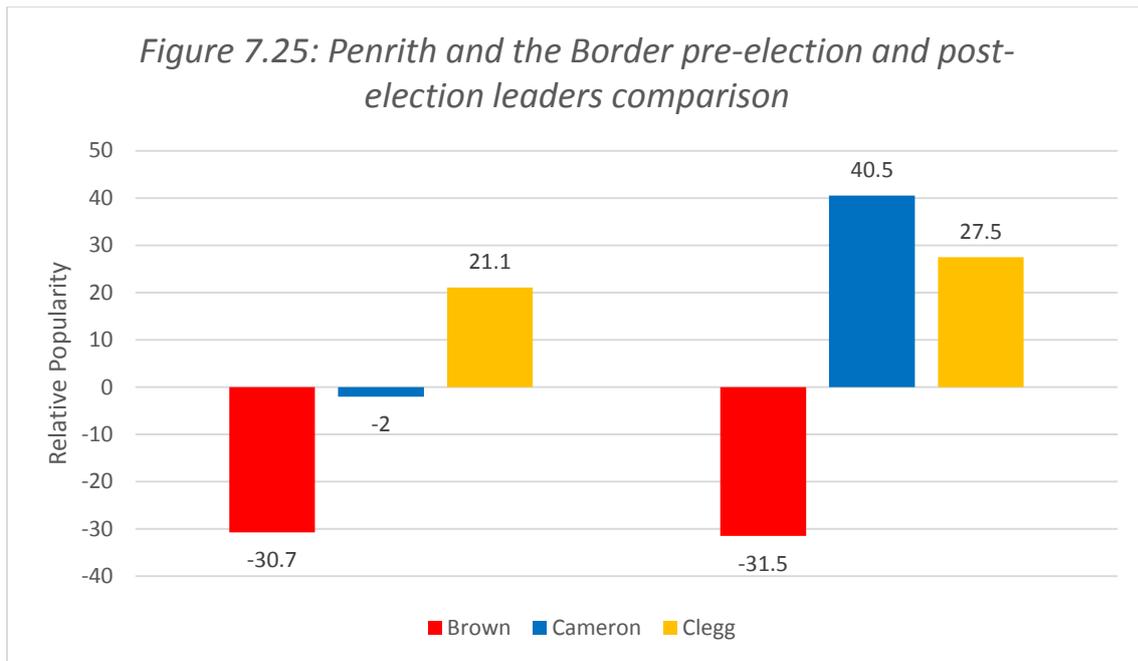
As can be seen from the survey in St Austell and Newquay, local voters had become less enamoured with the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, but Cameron and Clegg had become more popular. It is unreasonable to assume that Brown would never have been 'popular' in a seat where his party regularly polls below 15% of the vote but nonetheless the drop in his popularity is significant.



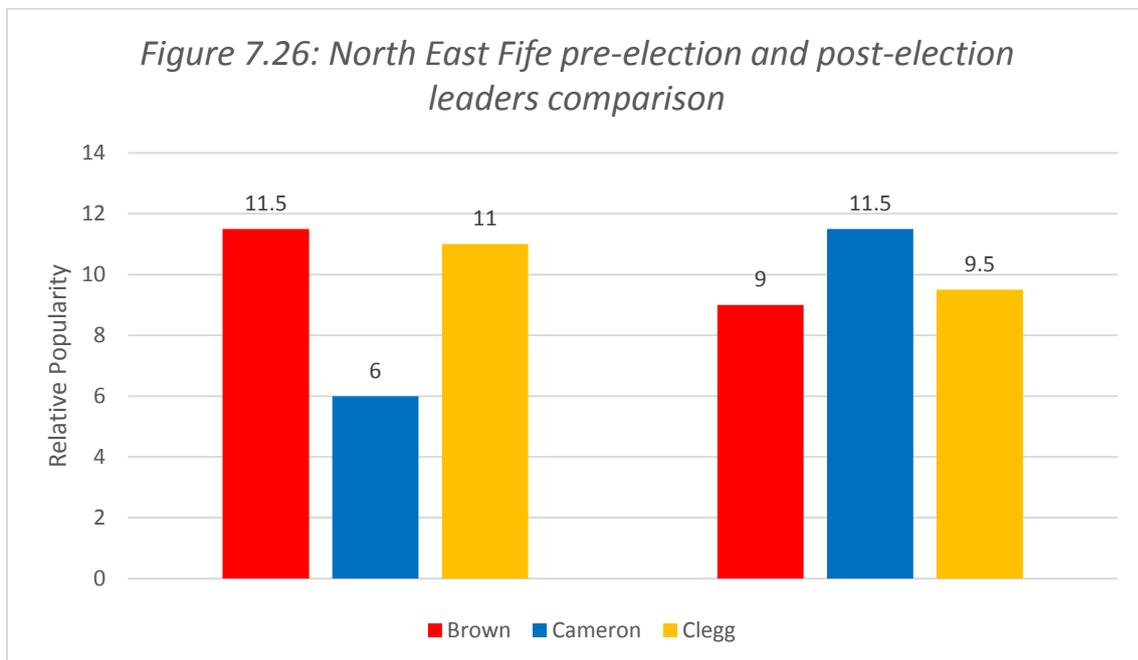
Most notably the increase in Nick Clegg's popularity is combined with an increased awareness of him. In the original South East Cornwall survey only 34.8% of the population had an opinion of Clegg, 36.8% had no opinion as yet formed and a surprising 28.4% did not even know who he was - by the time of the post-election survey this had risen to a recognition rating of 98.5%. David Cameron, being the longest serving of the leaders, seems to have built up a level of recognition, and support, during his lengthy leadership, compared to the more meteoric rise of Nick Clegg. However, this does seem to pose the question as to how important leaders are if despite being the most popular, and the most increased in popularity, Nick Clegg's party failed to retain this relatively safe seat at the election.



Westmorland and Lonsdale does not seem to fit the same pattern as the two re-surveyed Cornish seats. Gordon Brown is more popular, if only modestly, compared to the earlier survey. David Cameron has increased in popularity to an equal extent, but Nick Clegg has actually lost support compared to the earlier survey. This may be to do with the fact that the Westmorland re-survey was the last to be conducted in the second phase, but this does not account for the fact that Clegg was popular in the first survey, when nationally he was still relatively unknown. He was better known in Westmorland and Lonsdale than in Cornwall in the earlier survey, with only 21.2% not knowing who he was and 26.8% not having an opinion in 2008/09. This still does not explain why Clegg's popularity was higher in the first survey than any of the others in the second phase.

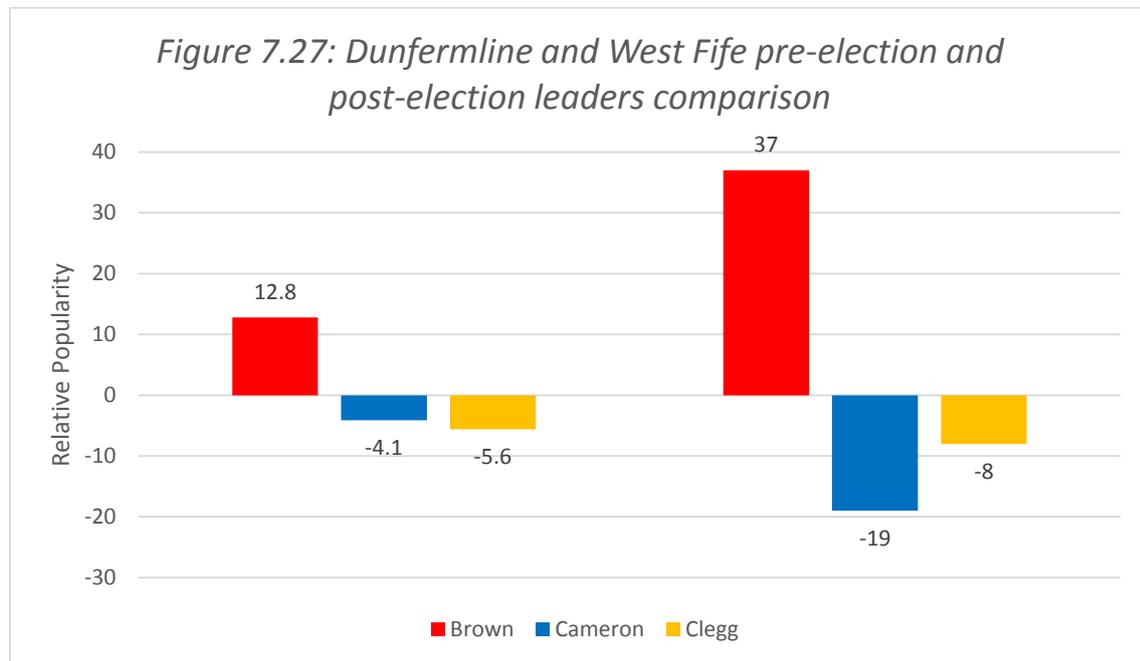


Penrith and the Border, the remaining control seat from the first phase of surveys, shows that Gordon Brown's popularity has not changed, Nick Clegg's has improved minimally but David Cameron, who was much less popular than Nick Clegg on the original survey has become the most popular leader.



The North East Fife survey shows the apparent indifference of the local electorate to any of the party leaders. However, this is the first constituency to show a positive rating for Gordon Brown, which is perhaps not surprising when his constituency borders North East Fife and being a Scottish Prime Minister. This is shown in even

starker relief in Dunfermline and West Fife which Labour was to retake in the 2010 election.



The comparative popularity of the leaders seem to be completely inverted in the Dunfermline context. Gordon Brown has become more popular and both Cameron and Clegg have lost support. Brown, being a neighbouring MP, and a former MP for Dunfermline might be expected to have local support, but for this to have increased appears difficult to explain, except possibly in the context that Brown’s Scottish Labour Party regained the seat in 2010 after surprisingly losing the seat in 2006. This was even asserted by winning candidate Thomas Docherty on election night when he put his own victory down to the fact that, ‘people have spoken clearly in west Fife, in Kirkcaldy and in Glenrothes that Gordon Brown remains our favourite son.’⁵⁷² His local popularity was clearly perceived as being a factor in Docherty’s win.

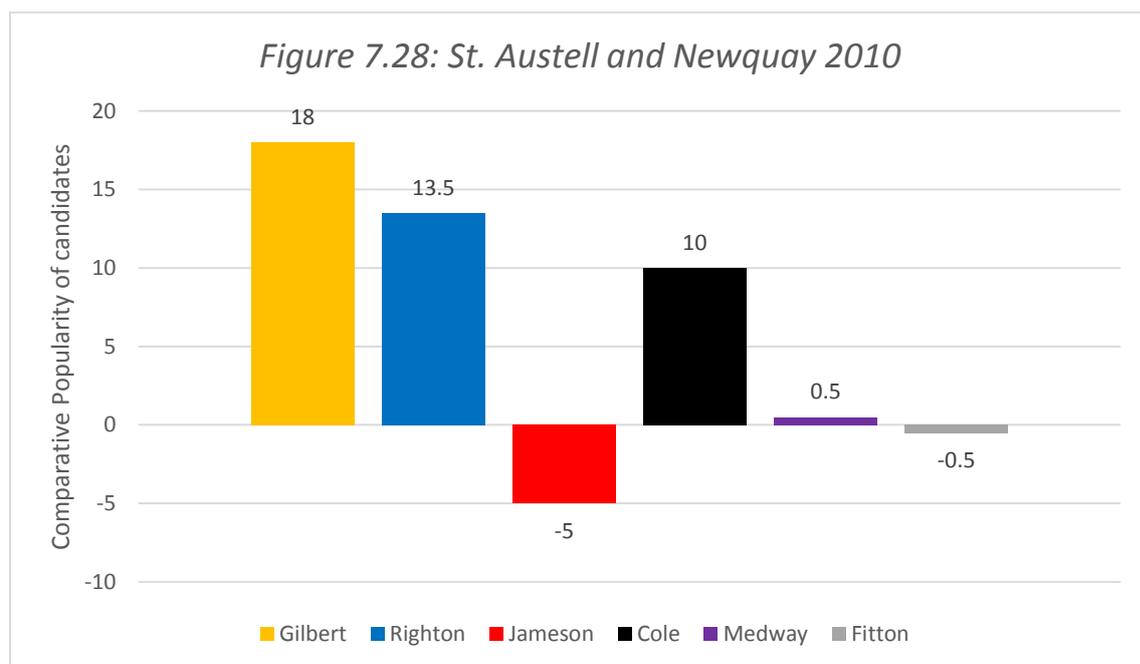
The election, at least nationally, was dominated by the build up to, engagement in and fallout from the three historic debates between the party leaders. Logically, if the party leader was to prove an important factor in deciding these local contests then presumably the party leader with the most support in a seat would have won the seat. This is not the case in half of the seats re-surveyed. It also indicates the apparent lack of importance that the electorate suggest they place in the significance

⁵⁷² *The Courier*, 6th May 2010

of the leader in making their choices. This will be returned to at a later point in this chapter.

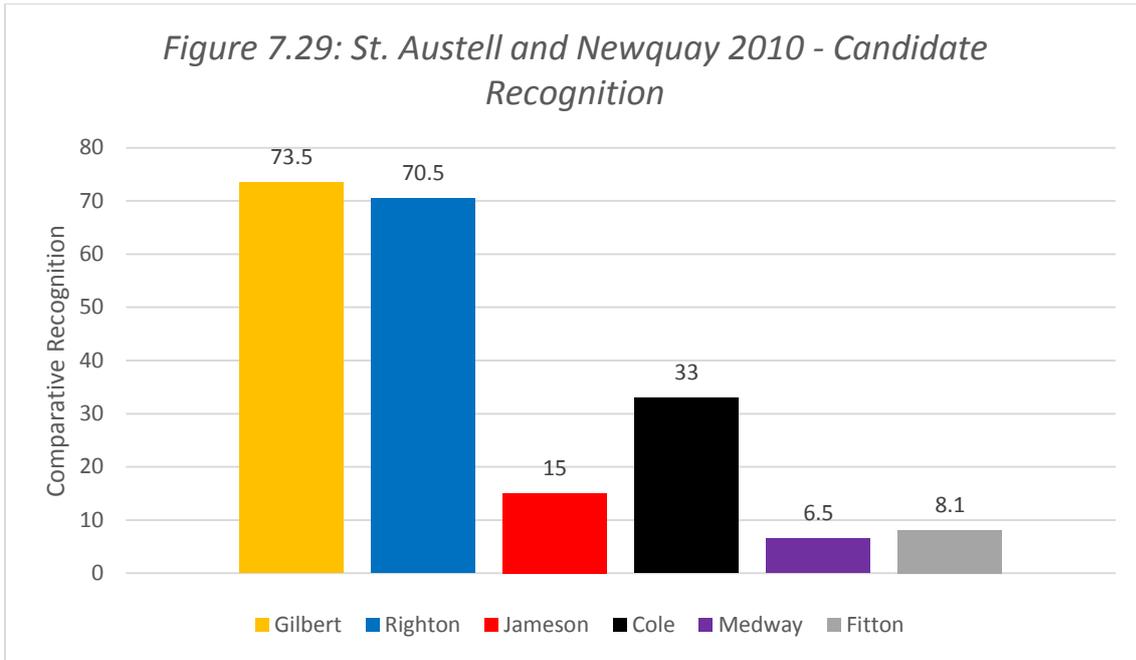
The Local Candidate

One of the key aspects of this research is to assess the significance of the local candidate. As such the relative popularity of candidates is an important aspect to assess if the parties' campaigns managed to publicise the candidate successfully. As well as surveying about those candidates who actually contested the 2010 election if a former MP was standing down, as in the case of St. Austell and Newquay. As can be seen from the St. Austell and Newquay survey Stephen Gilbert is the most popular candidate with his defeated Conservative opponent coming closely behind in second. However, Dick Cole, the Mebyon Kernow candidate, is relatively popular, in fact more popular than his party when it failed to save its deposit.



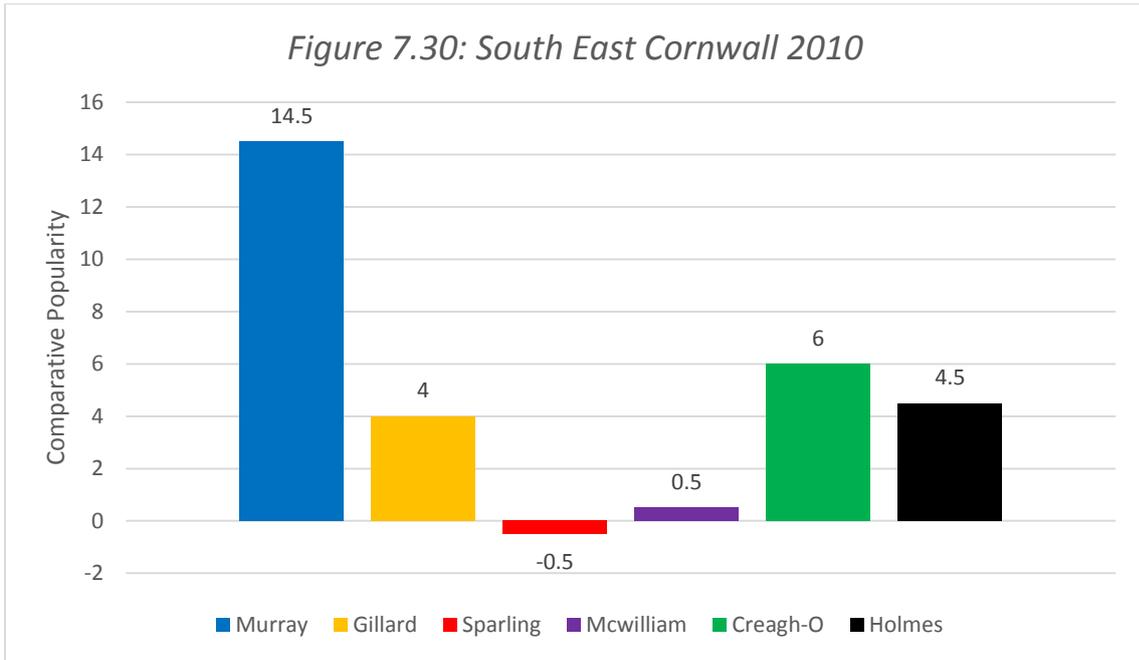
What becomes even clearer about the importance of local candidates is when one assesses the public awareness of each of the candidates when it comes to voting for them. Party leaders, by the time of the election in 2010 had universal awareness, but local candidates failed to have the same recognition.

Figure 7.29: St. Austell and Newquay 2010 - Candidate Recognition

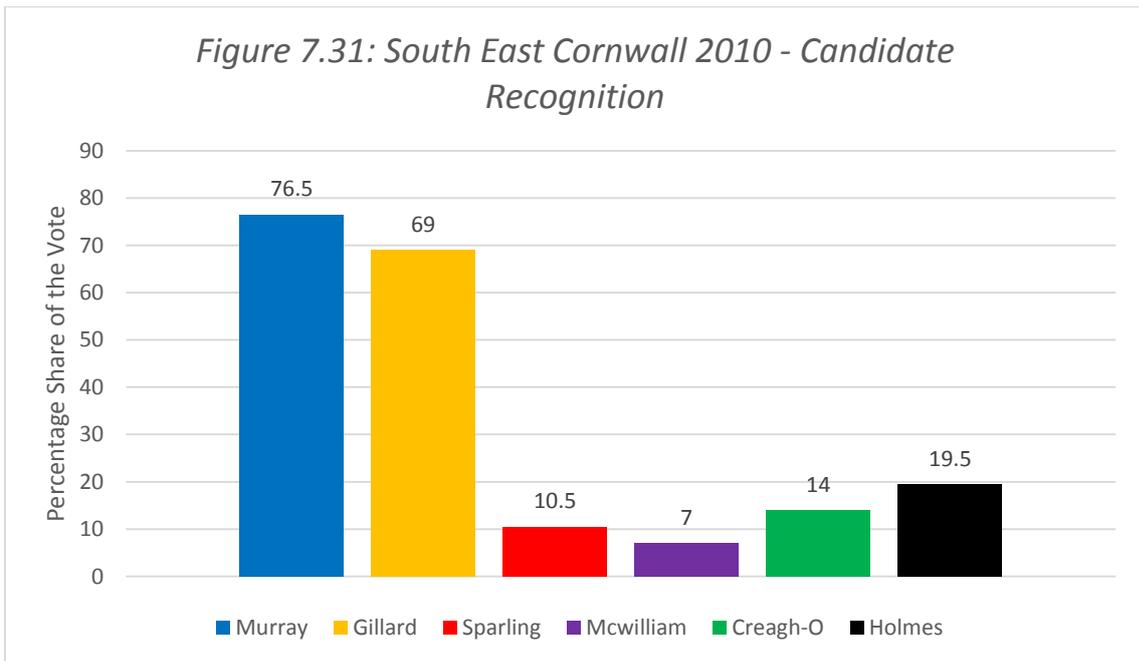


Although the two main candidates had public recognition of over 70% this still falls short of the awareness of their leaders or for that matter the previous incumbent, Matthew Taylor, 89.4%, which is perhaps high considering he was only MP for half of this constituency. Again Dick Cole's recognition is perhaps higher than one might expect for a candidate who failed to save his deposit. Of course, compared to the pre-election survey the two main contenders have increased consciousness in the public's mind. Gilbert has become better known (from 26.4% to 73.5%) than Righton (34.5% to 70.5). Oddly Jameson is less well-known (19.4% to 15%) and Cole has also become more publically known (24.6% to 33%). The other two candidates were not selected at the time of the first survey.

In South East Cornwall Sheryll Murray proved to be the most popular candidate with the Liberal Democrat, Karen Gillard, some way behind, even being beaten in terms of relative popularity by the Green and Mebyon Kernow candidates.



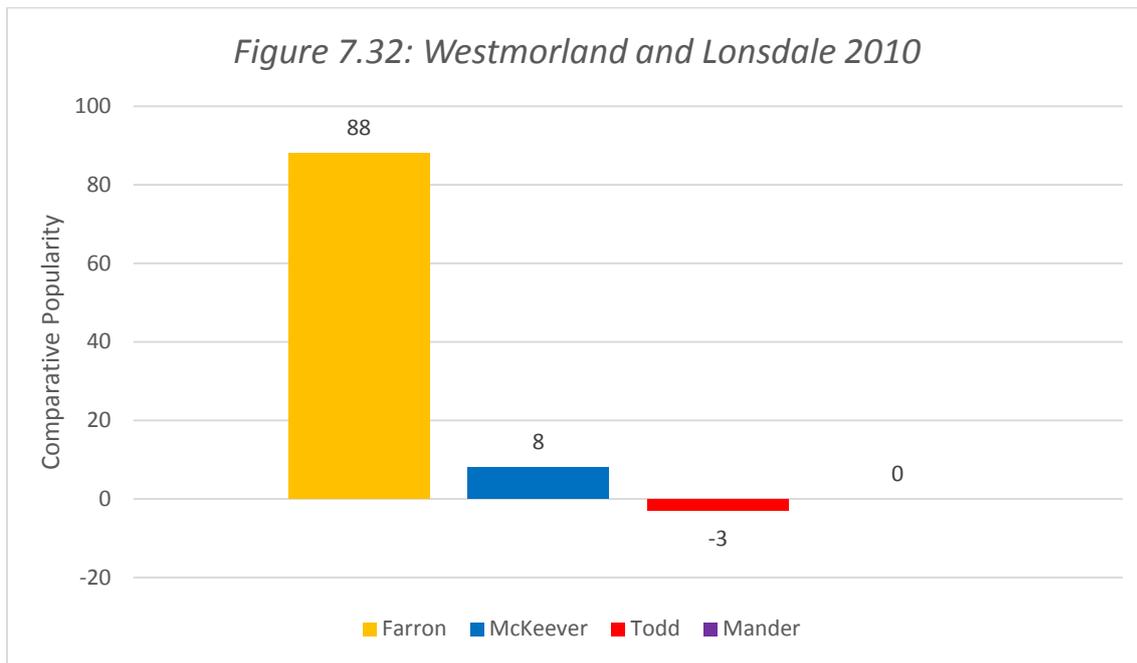
When assessing the relative public awareness of the candidates again Gillard performs poorly compared to her Liberal Democrat colleagues.



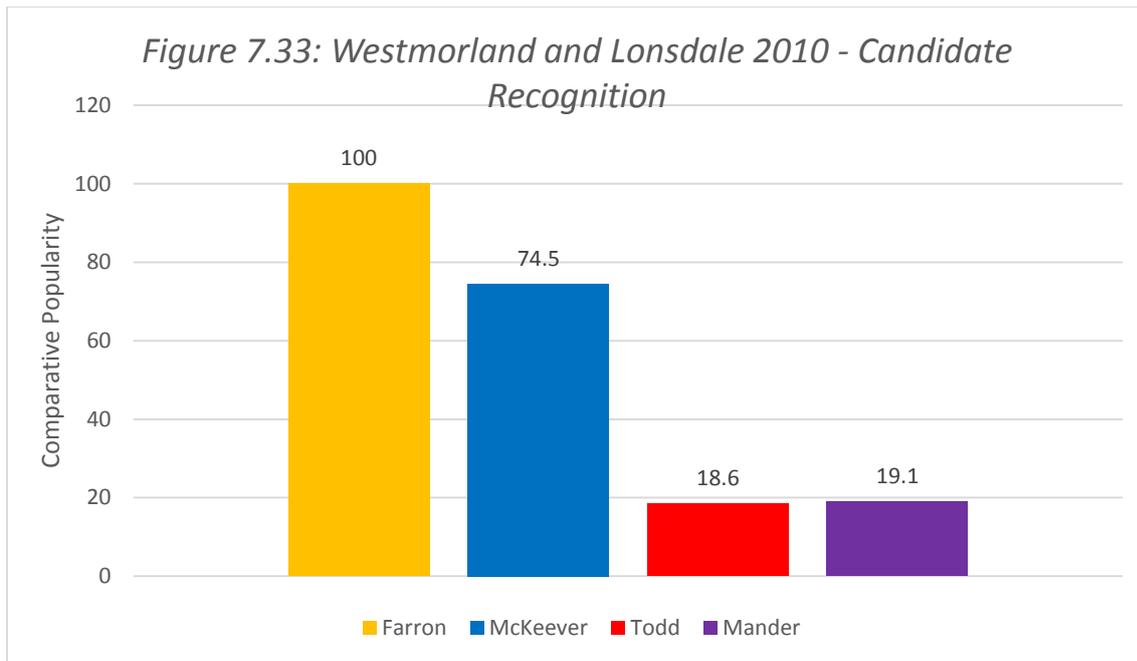
Despite being relatively well-known, although Murray is better known, Gillard's performance as a candidate appears to have been modest as even though 69% of the population know her she only receives a positive rating of 4%. Despite being better known than both the Green and Mebyon Kernow candidates she is less popular which suggests a degree of ambivalence from the electorate to her candidature. This may have been a significant contributor to the Liberal Democrats

failing to retain this seat. The comparative popularity of the retiring MP, Colin Breed, stood at 37.5% in this re-survey of the constituency.

In Westmorland and Lonsdale, Tim Farron's personal popularity is almost universal (when one considers that it is a figure which deletes those opposed to him from those who are supportive, bearing in mind it is amongst all voters, including those that voted against him in May 2010.) To have an 80% lead over his main opponent does suggest that his success in 2010 has a great deal to do with his personal popularity.

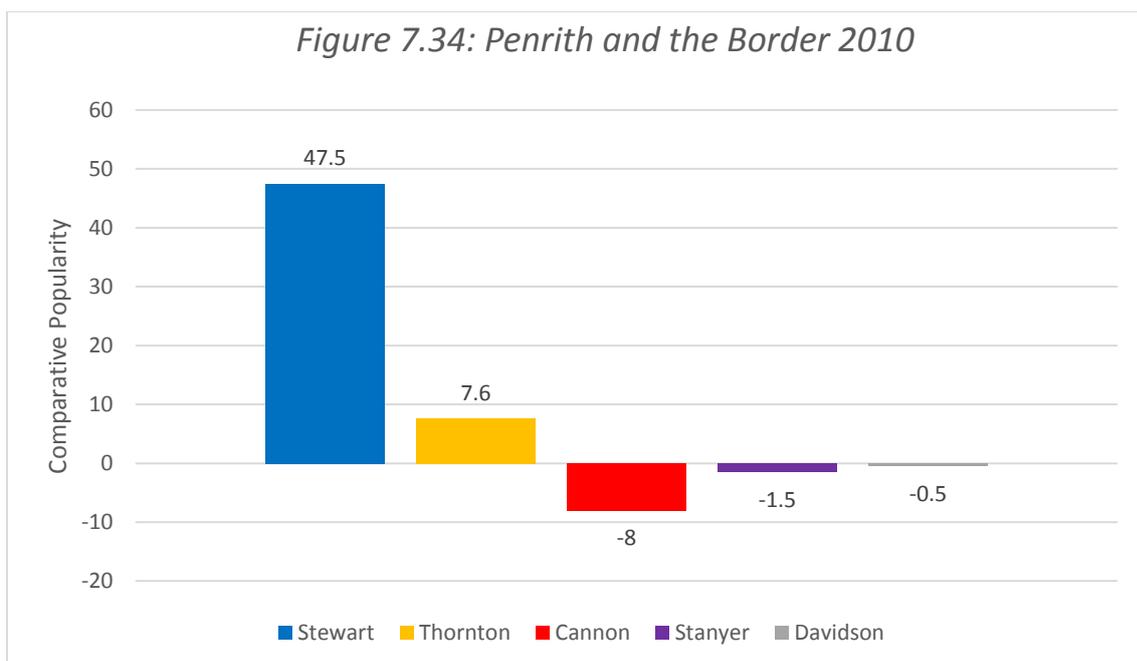


This popularity has increased since the first survey where it stood at a comparatively lower 81.9%. This level of personal popularity is difficult to find anywhere else in the surveys.

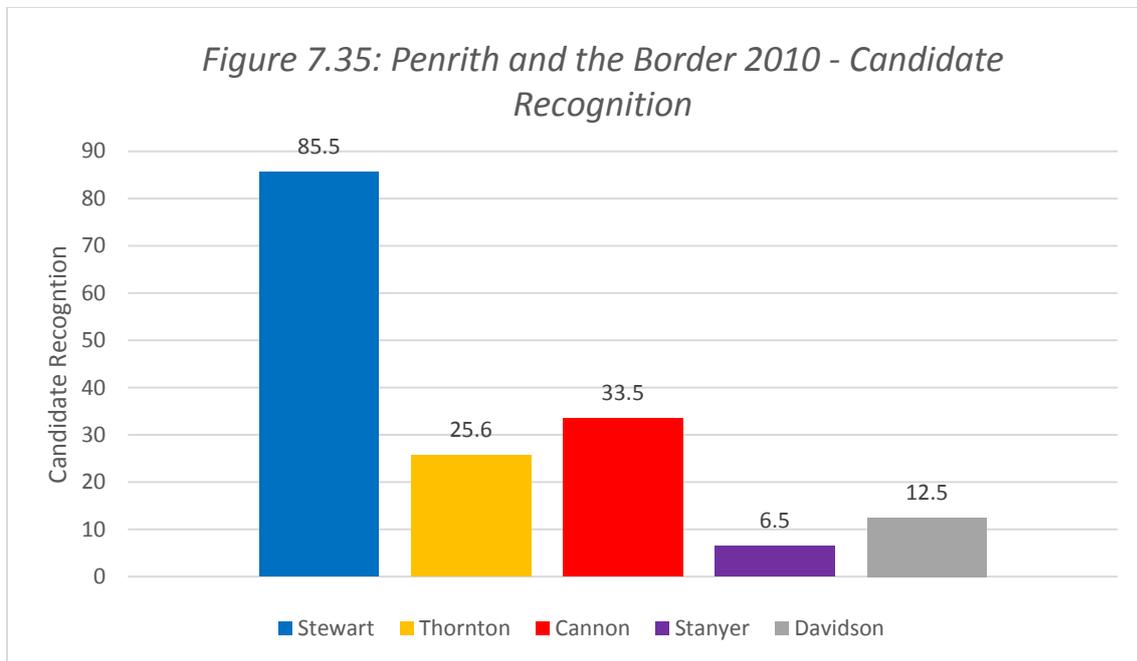


However, the comparative lack of popularity seems to hide the fact that Gareth McKeever is actually well known in Westmorland and Lonsdale. McKeever is as well-known as his more successful colleague in South East Cornwall, but the overwhelming popularity of Tim Farron was a vital asset in his increased success in 2010.

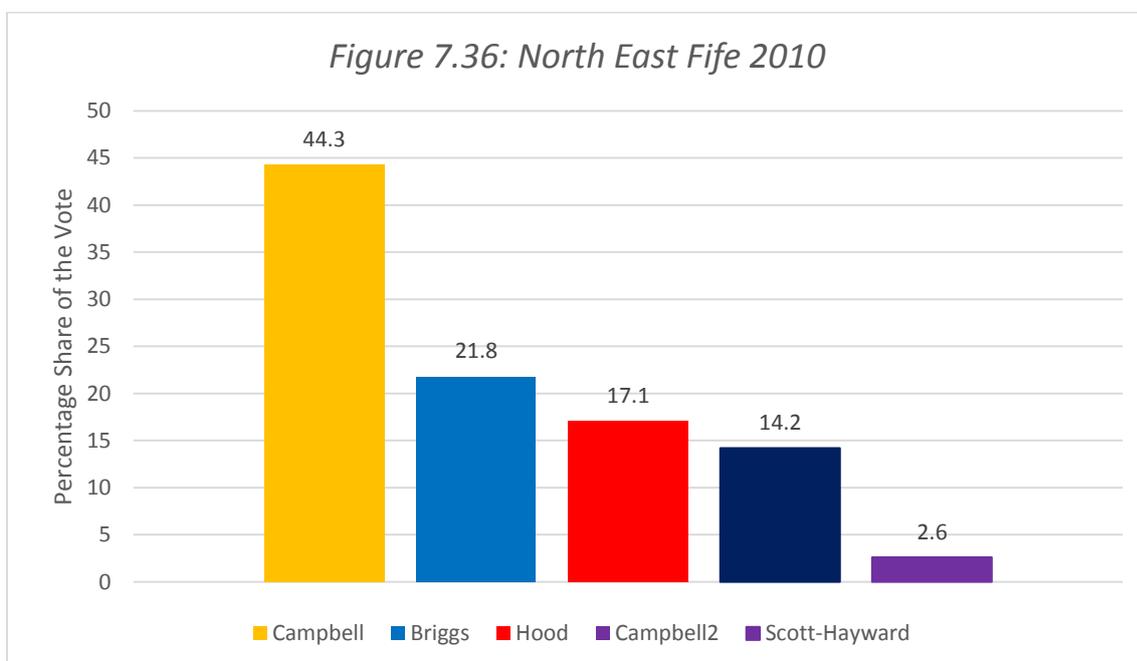
In Penrith and the Border the successful Conservative candidate again shows through as being popular, with Rory Stewart proving to be the most popular of the first-time candidates standing in the second surveyed seats.



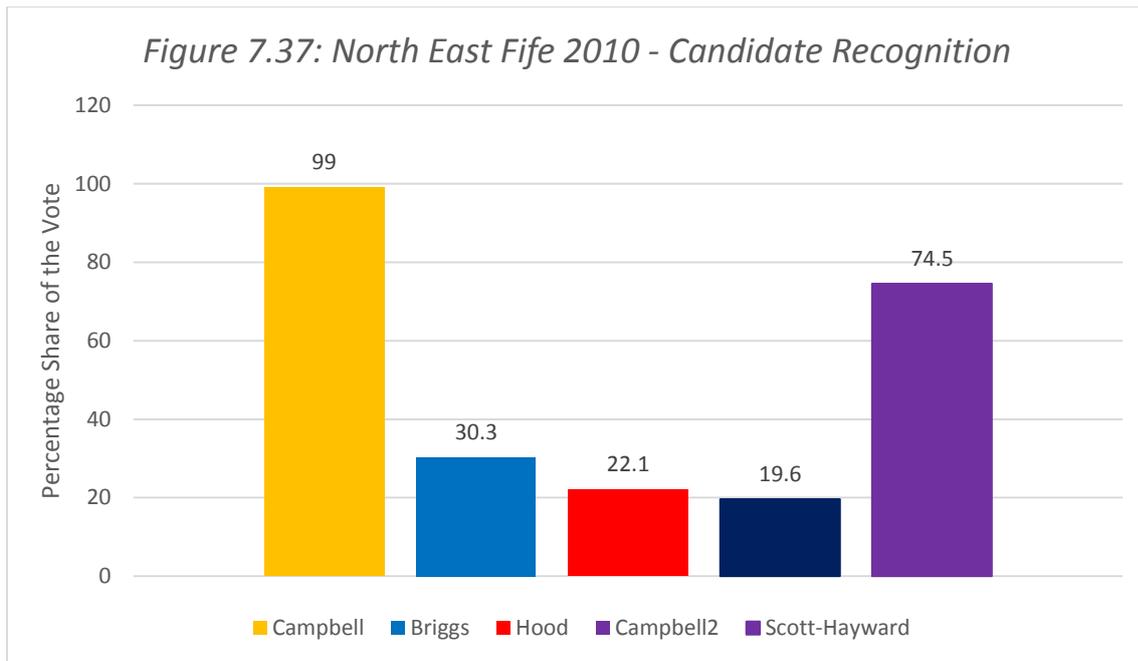
Not only was he most popular but again his personal recognition locally made him much the best known candidate. This made him better known than the new candidates in Cornwall, despite being a much larger rural constituency.



In Scotland, North East Fife showed the benefits of a long-standing parliamentarian in Menzies Campbell.

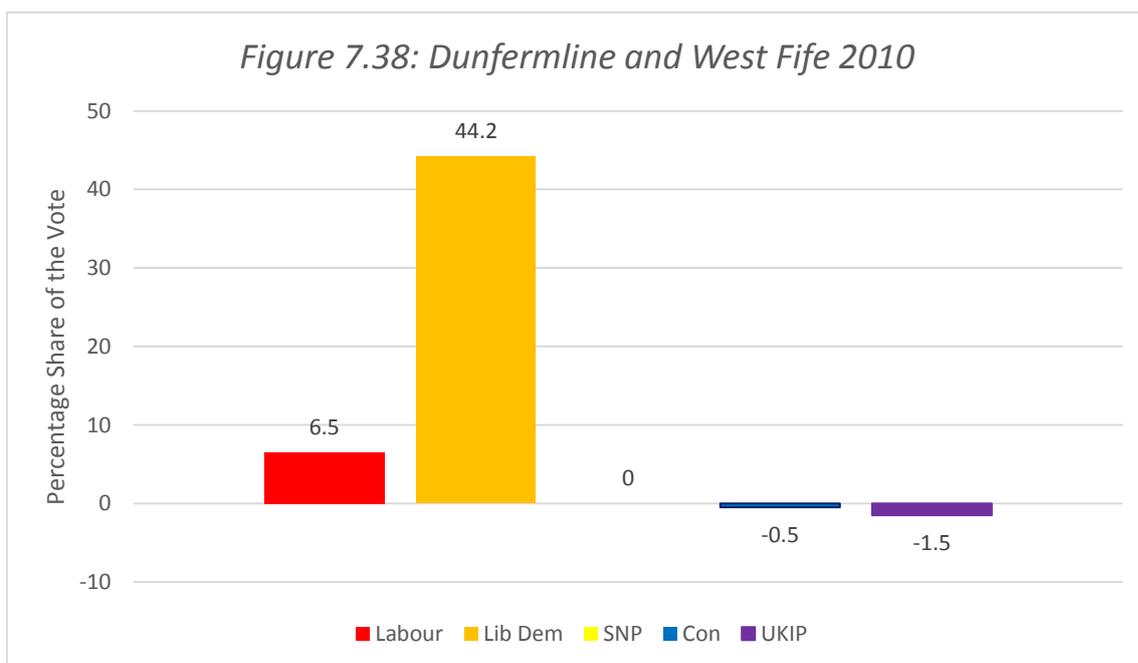


His personal popularity, having been the local MP since 1987 is perhaps not in question, but the comparative failure of any of his opponents to make a breakthrough might also be explained by their relative anonymity, apart from one candidate.

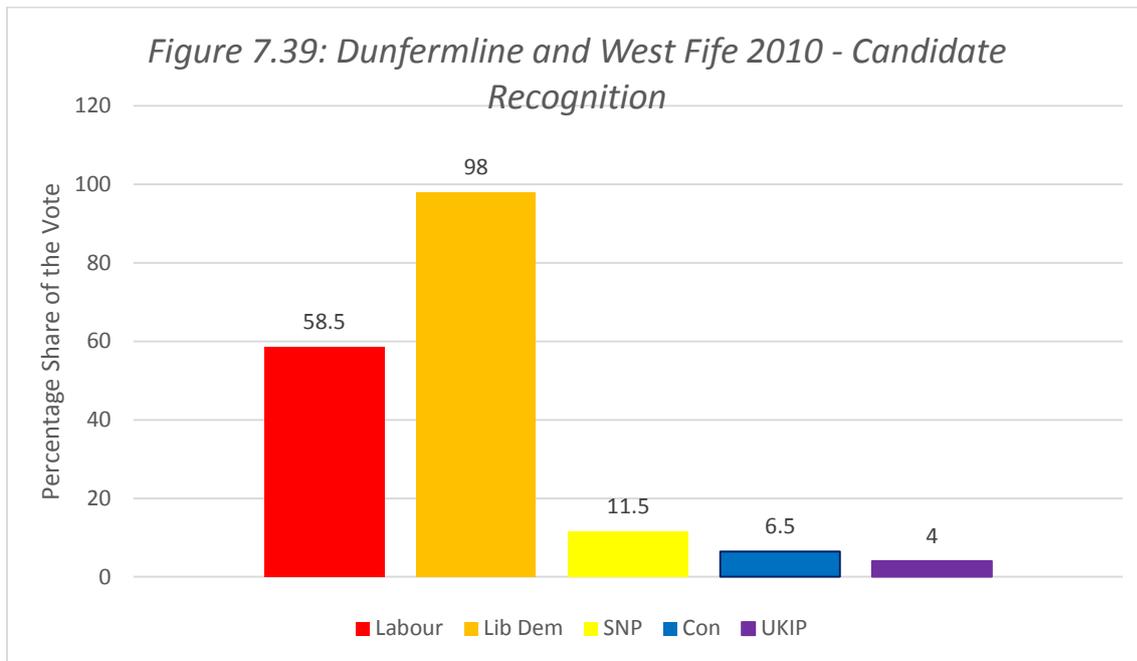


What is fascinating about the candidate recognition in North East Fife is the notoriety of the UKIP candidate, who came last in the election. This can be attributed to Scott-Hayward being the Scottish Chair, and therefore spokesman for the party in Scotland during the election. His personal recognition does not seem to have led to a great deal of local popularity however.

Finally, in Dunfermline and West Fife it seems that candidate popularity is not as important as other factors surrounding the election.



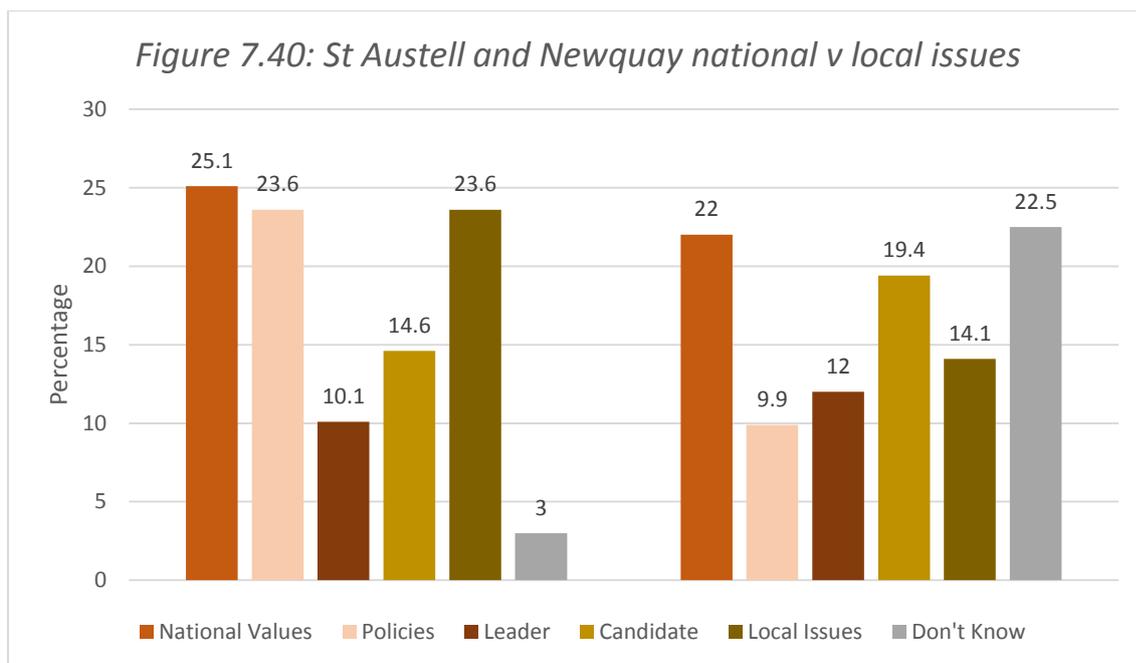
Willie Rennie’s personal popularity locally does not seem to have been an important factor when deciding to elect a new Labour MP, who was the least popular of all the successful candidates in this survey, and indeed much less popular than many who lost. Rennie, having been the MP for four years was also much better known, but this also seems not to have been important.



Although the victorious Docherty was not well-known, indeed the least well-known of all the candidates who were successful, nonetheless his victory does seem to suggest that candidate popularity is not the deciding factor in electing a local MP, nor for that matter is simply being well-known locally, as demonstrated by the UKIP candidate in North East Fife. It clearly is an important asset to be locally popular, but it is not the deciding factor in winning a constituency campaign.

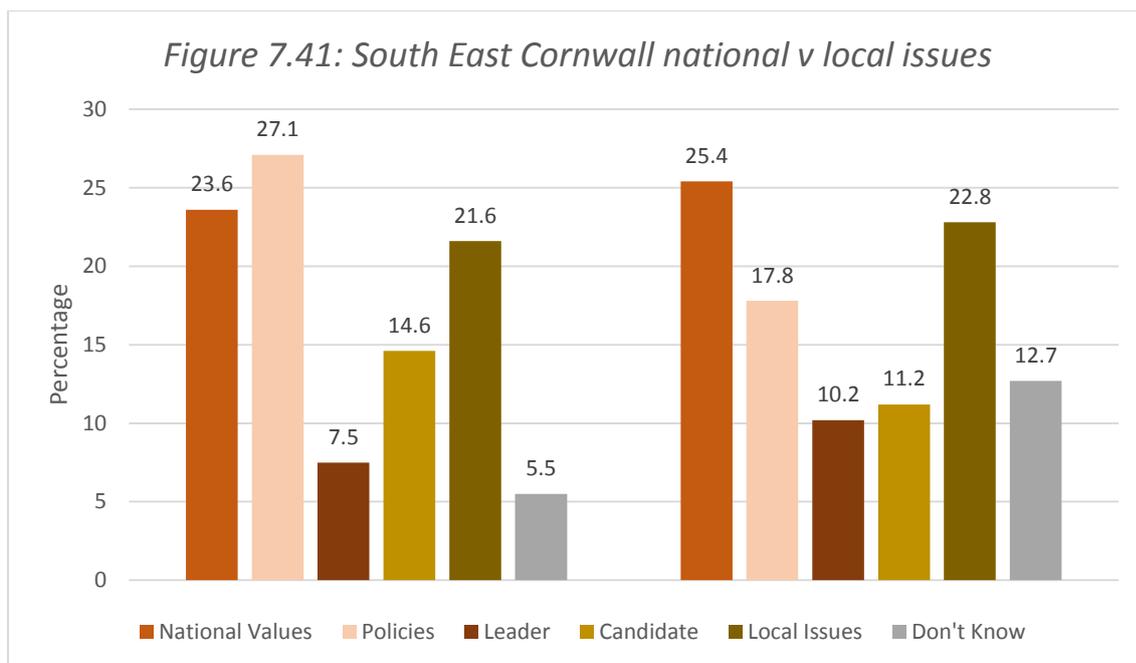
The Main Factor in Voting

As in the pre-election surveys, respondents were asked to identify which was the main factor in them deciding on how to cast their vote. This should give some indication as to which party was winning the campaign argument. If voters maintained an interest in local issues and the local candidate over the national issues and the leader this would suggest that the Liberal Democrats were having an impact locally which superseded the impact of the national campaign. As was discussed earlier the more the electorate considered local issues the more likely a constituency was to vote for the Liberals Democrats.



As can be seen from the election survey (on the left) and the pre-election survey (on the right) there have been two main gainers in terms of how people have decided how to vote. Firstly, the detailed policies of the national parties and the local issues affecting the constituency. The impact of the leaders' debates seem to have been minimal as there is only a 1.9% rise in the importance of the party leader in casting a vote. Although the significance of the local candidates has reduced this might be due to the fact that all the main contenders were new candidates and less well-known and popular than their predecessors. Despite the view of Pattie and Johnson that 'voters no longer really need to know the names of the individual candidates—on the assumption that when they enter the polling booth is soon enough for them to know the name of the candidate of the party they intend to support',⁵⁷³ there still does seem to be evidence that some of the electorate, if only a significant minority do consider the local candidate to be important.

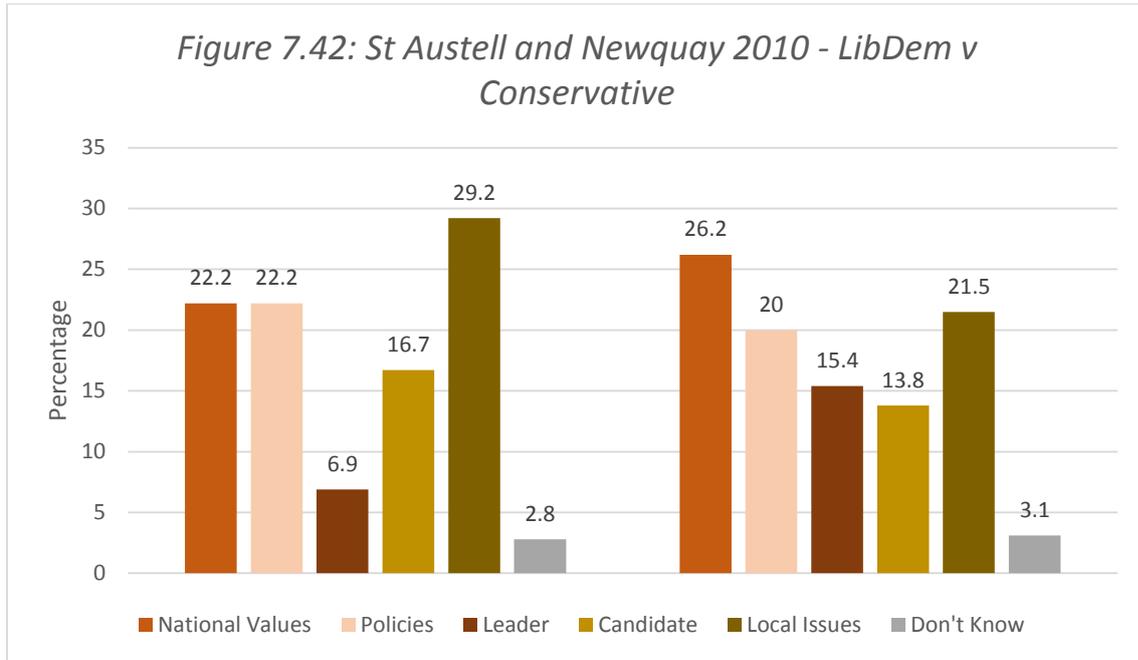
⁵⁷³ Pattie C. & Johnson R., 'Party knowledge and candidate knowledge: constituency campaigning and voting and the 1997 British General Election', *Electoral Studies* 23 (2004) p.799



As in St. Austell and Newquay, South East Cornwall shows a similar pattern: *national values* have reduced slightly but *the detailed policies of the parties* has increased noticeably. This suggests that many people do take an interest in the agendas that the parties put forward at elections. Gillard blamed “Conservative scare tactics” about her party’s policies on Europe and replacing the Trident nuclear deterrent,⁵⁷⁴ but *policy issues* seems, according to the survey, to have been only a small part of the basis of voting and there is no suggestion that these were the policies were the ones that motivated voters against the Liberal Democrats.

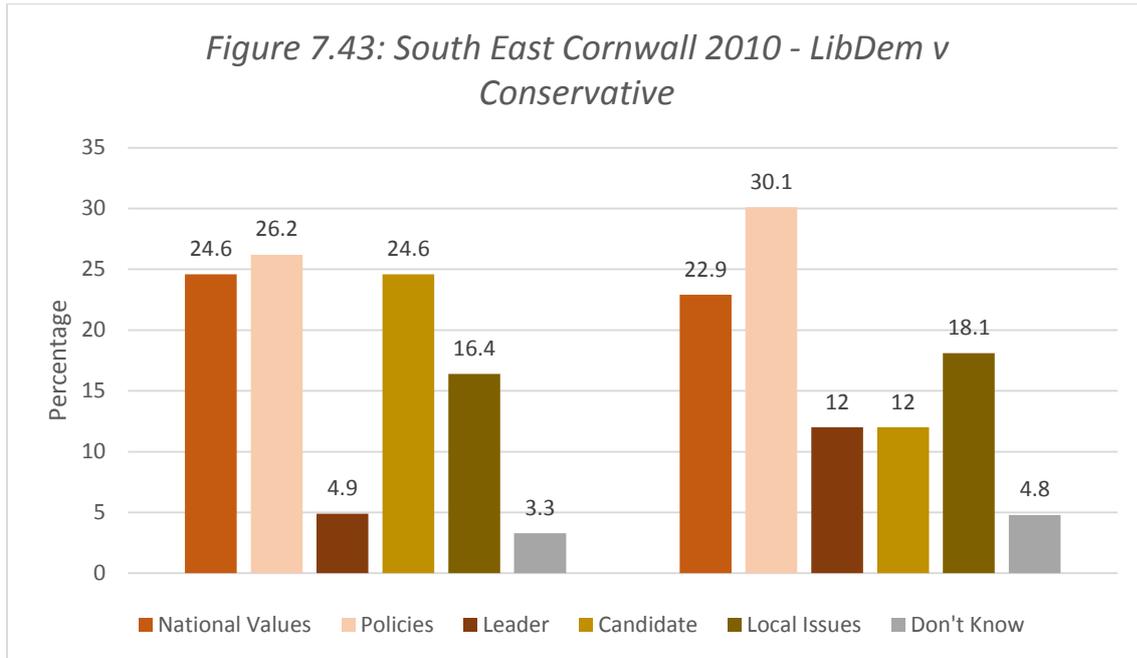
⁵⁷⁴ <http://www.thisisdevon.co.uk/Scare-tactics-voters-Lib-Dems> Last viewed 2nd November 2013

Figure 7.42: St Austell and Newquay 2010 - LibDem v Conservative



Of course the test of the importance of issues becomes even clearer when the statistics are broken down and a comparison is made between the voters of the two main contenders in each seat. As can be seen, local issues are the most important factor when Liberal Democrat voters make their choice whereas for Conservative voters the national values of the party are identified as being the most significant. Interestingly the Conservative voters are much more interested in the leader of the party and it would be logical to see this same subtle dichotomy reflected in South East Cornwall, if the Liberal Democrats were winning the local argument, which of course they did not.

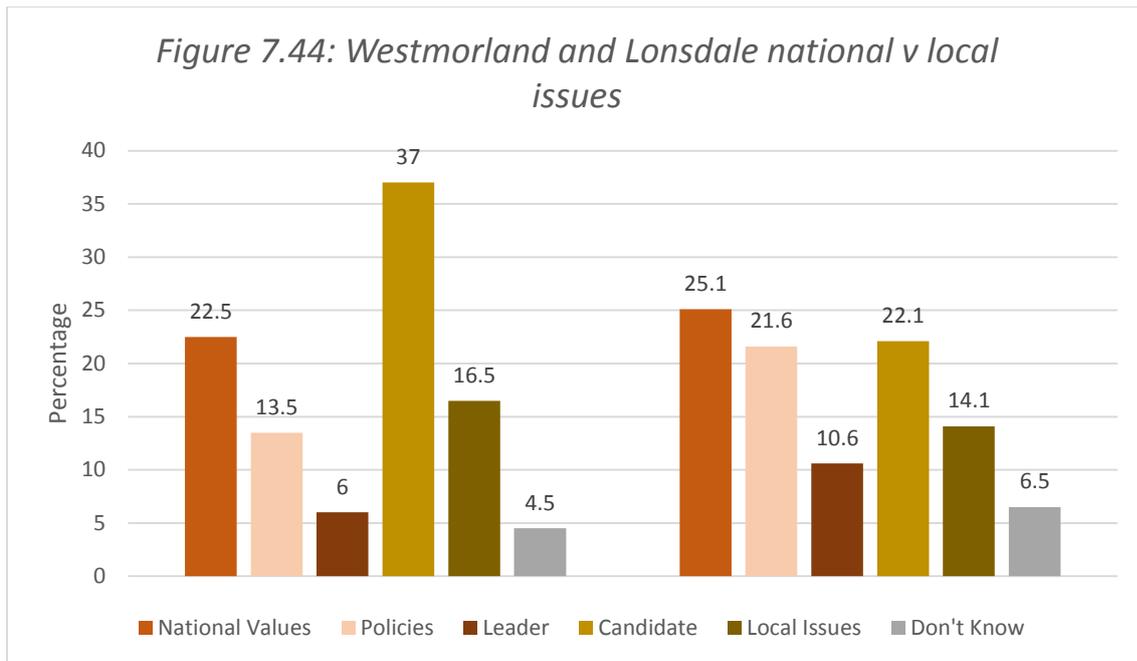
Figure 7.43: South East Cornwall 2010 - LibDem v Conservative



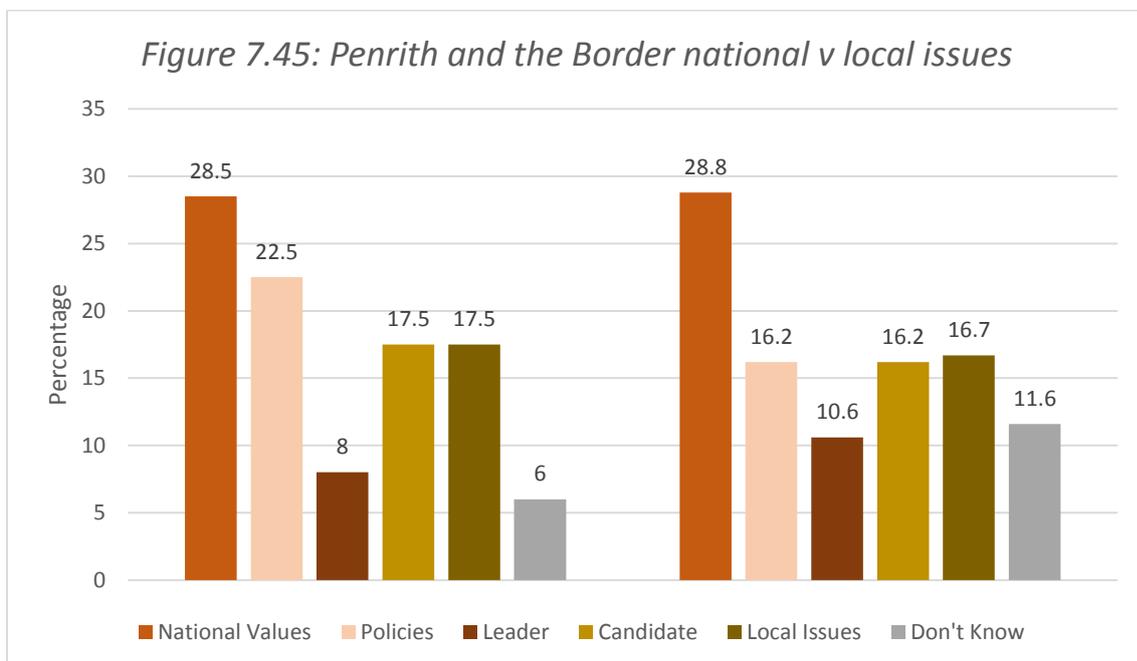
Although it is difficult to extrapolate too much meaning from the statistics, the South East Cornwall chart does suggest that Liberal Democrats are voting based on national issues more than they are in St Austell and Newquay. If we are to accept that the strategy of the party is to create an introspective electorate, that is deciding based on local factors, then in South East Cornwall this appears not to have been the case. In fact more Conservatives are voting on local issues than Liberal Democrats. This might be a suggestion as to why the party lost the seat for the first time in 13 years. As well as this the Liberal Democrat voters in South East Cornwall seem more interested in the candidate than their Conservative opponents. When looking back at the popularity of the Liberal Democrat candidate, Karen Gillard, this might suggest that she was popular amongst Liberal Democrat voters, but this did not spread beyond that core group of supporters.

Elsewhere in the UK, especially when looking at Westmorland and Lonsdale sample, and bearing in mind the popularity of Tim Farron in the general survey, it would be sensible to predict that the importance of the local candidate might well stand out as being more important than in the Cornish seats.

As can be seen from the post-election survey in Westmorland and Lonsdale this has proven to be correct there, but more so than in the Cornish seats. The importance of the local candidate has become the most important factor whilst national policies have become much less important amongst all voters.



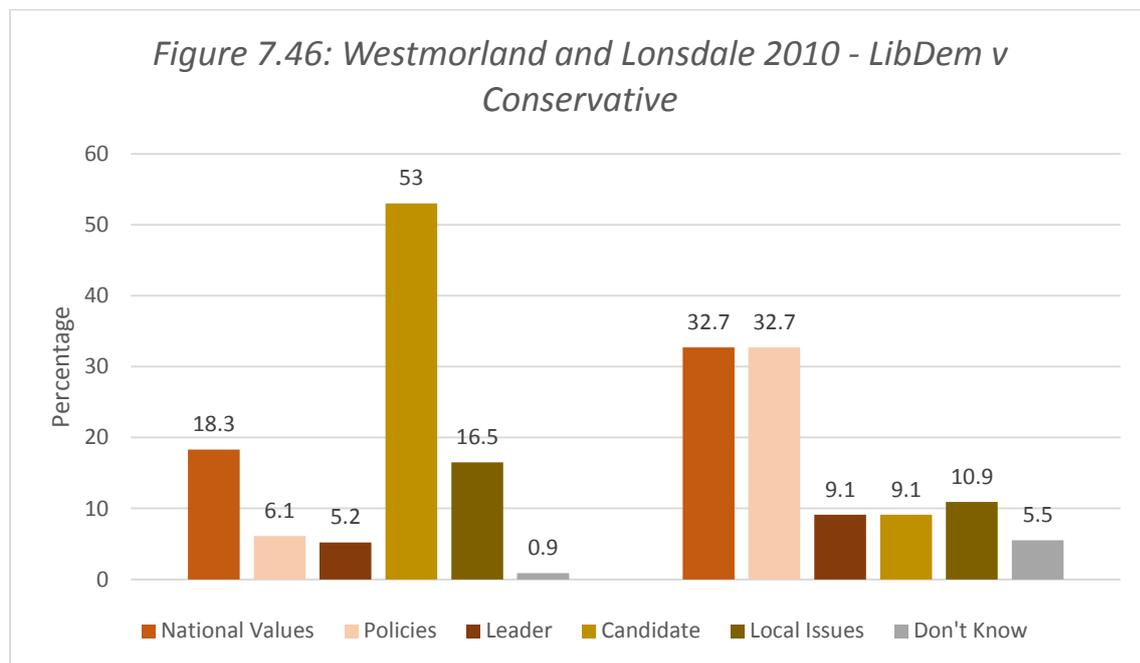
This suggests that the Liberal Democrats desire to create a localised campaign has been highly effective and this is reflected in the final result – a landslide for Liberal Democrat MP, Tim Farron. Logically, as it is not a target, or for that matter an actively contested seat, one would not expect to see the same pattern in Penrith and the Border.



Indeed the pattern in Penrith and the Border suggests almost no change between the pre-election survey and the post-election survey which does strongly suggest that the campaign had little impact in this area. The only main change appears to be

that more voters are deciding based on national policies, which would hardly be something that would be entirely affected locally, indeed it could be augmented locally if the main parties were campaigning on national issues, and rather suggests that the voters in Penrith and the Border were mainly effected by external factors and not a localised campaign.

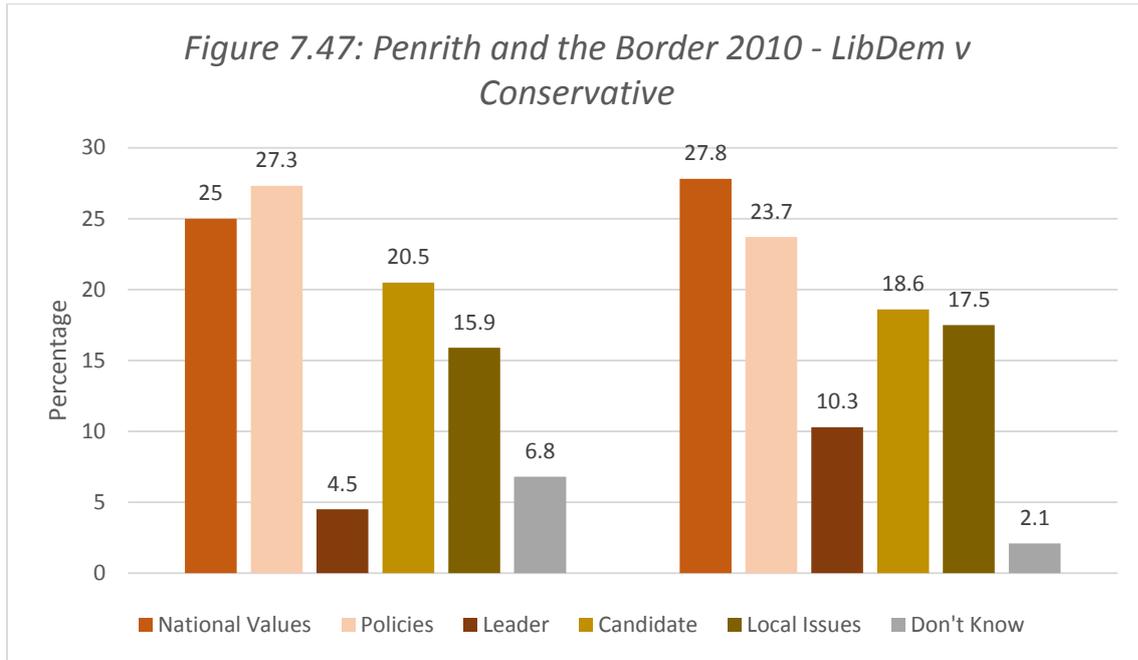
In Westmorland it would be sensible to assume that Liberal Democrat voters were more affected by the Liberal Democrat campaign that made the local candidates the most significant factor in vote choice.



Of course quite why the Liberal Democrat voters of Westmorland and Lonsdale have come to the conclusion that their vote is decided on the basis of the local candidates is unclear but this will be assessed later when evaluating the level of the local campaign.

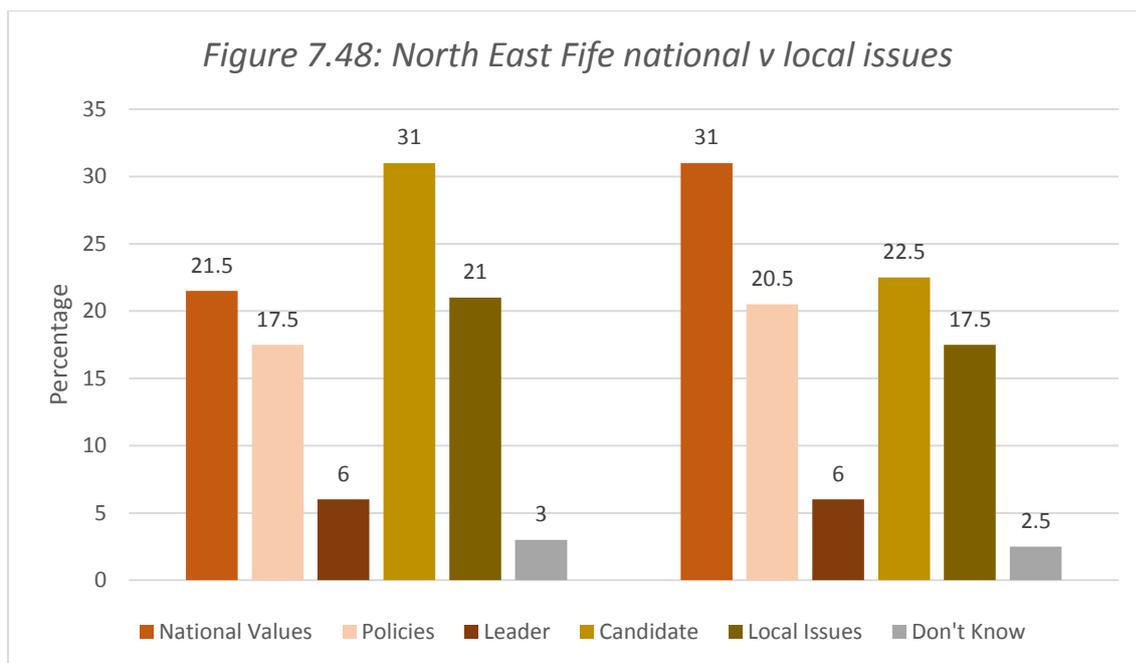
If the premise persists that Westmorland and Lonsdale is behaving differently from other seats, because of a local campaign, then it makes sense that Liberal Democrat voters in Penrith and the Border, where there is a minimal local Liberal Democrat campaign, would act similarly to their Conservative neighbours. As they lack the local campaigning stimuli of their Westmorland compatriots, in not viewing local factors as more important than national ones when deciding how to cast their vote, they are not being persuaded by any other means but those that are available to the general public in inactive areas.

Figure 7.47: Penrith and the Border 2010 - LibDem v Conservative



As is clear, the two opposing electorates in Penrith and the Border (Liberal Democrat v Conservative) actually behave very similarly. Although there are small differences, Liberal Democrat voters are voting in equal measure on national issues as are Conservative voters and this indicates that the local campaign does not penetrate and, as a consequence, the party fails to make headway. It seems logical to attribute this to the absence of a significant Liberal Democrat campaign: where the party does not campaign and depends upon national activity, its supporters behave like those of the two main parties. It seems reasonable to conclude that conversely where they do campaign they do affect the result by the campaigning they do.

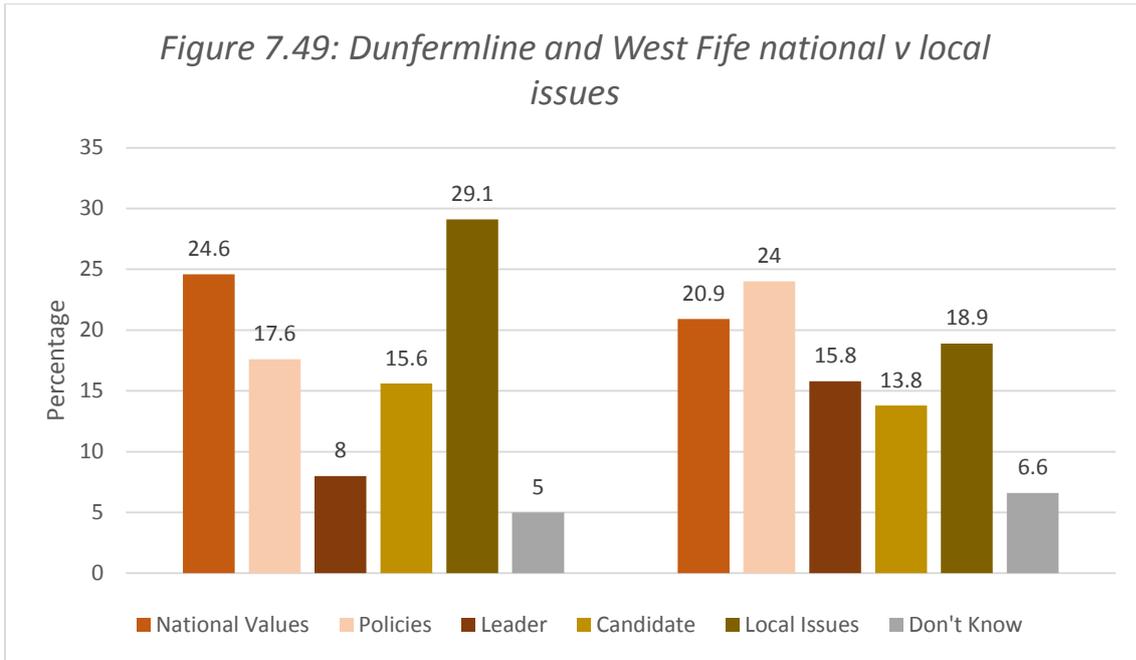
In North East Fife the Liberal Democrats appear to have had some success in localising the campaign around Menzies Campbell as both the *values of the parties* and *policies* have reduced in importance compared to the candidate.



This is in no way as marked as in Westmorland and Lonsdale but nonetheless is notable. In Dunfermline and West Fife what is interesting is that local issues have become the main factor in voter choice, which, given the Labour victory, might seem to undermine the case for local issues being the preserve of the Liberal Democrats. It is worth considering how local and national issues overlap in some constituencies and how they can be used by a party for campaigning purposes. To outsiders the issues over Rosyth dockyard⁵⁷⁵ and its use as a centre for shipbuilding is vital to the local, industrial and unionised electorate in Dunfermline and West Fife. However, it would be simple for onlookers to see this as being a national issue rather than a local one in a constituency such as this. Logically it would also seem reasonable to associate the same potential issues with local electors who might see the decision of an incoming Conservative government as one that might undermine such delineation. Voters may not see a discreet line between local and national issues in a way that would benefit a quantitative investigation such as this research over a qualitative one.

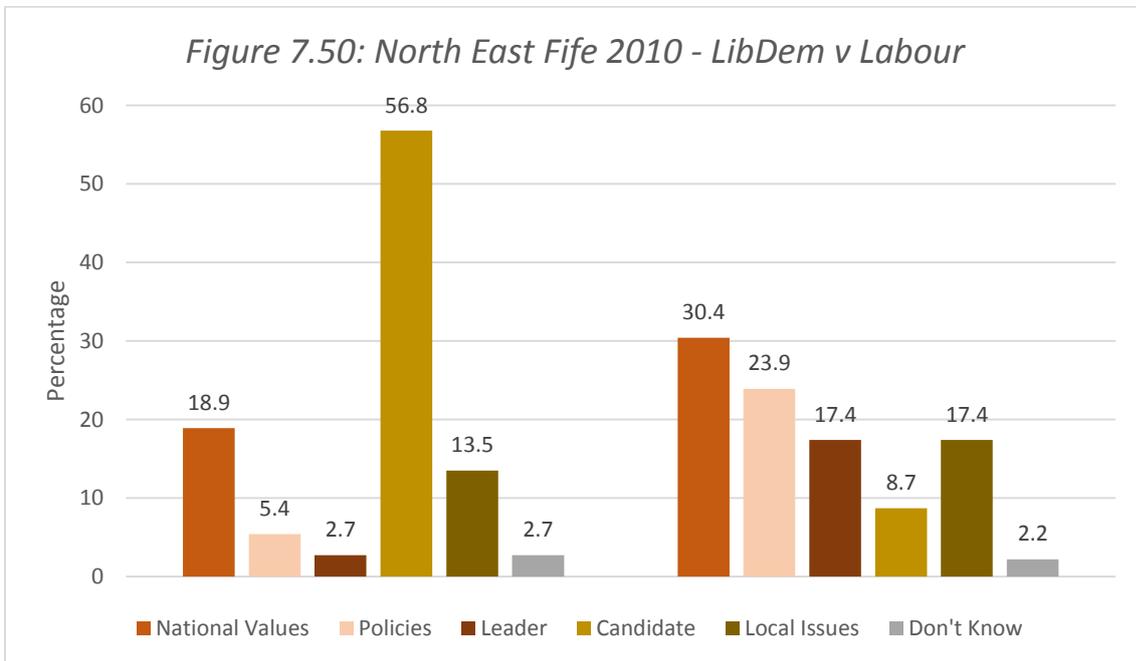
⁵⁷⁵ <http://news.sky.com/story/1164634/bae-announces-1775-shipyard-job-losses> Last Viewed 30th November 2013

Figure 7.49: Dunfermline and West Fife national v local issues



What is very illuminating is the failure of the Liberal Democrat campaign to localise the election around their popular by-election winner Willie Rennie. Despite his personal popularity it was, apart from the national leader, the least important factor when local voters decided their choice.

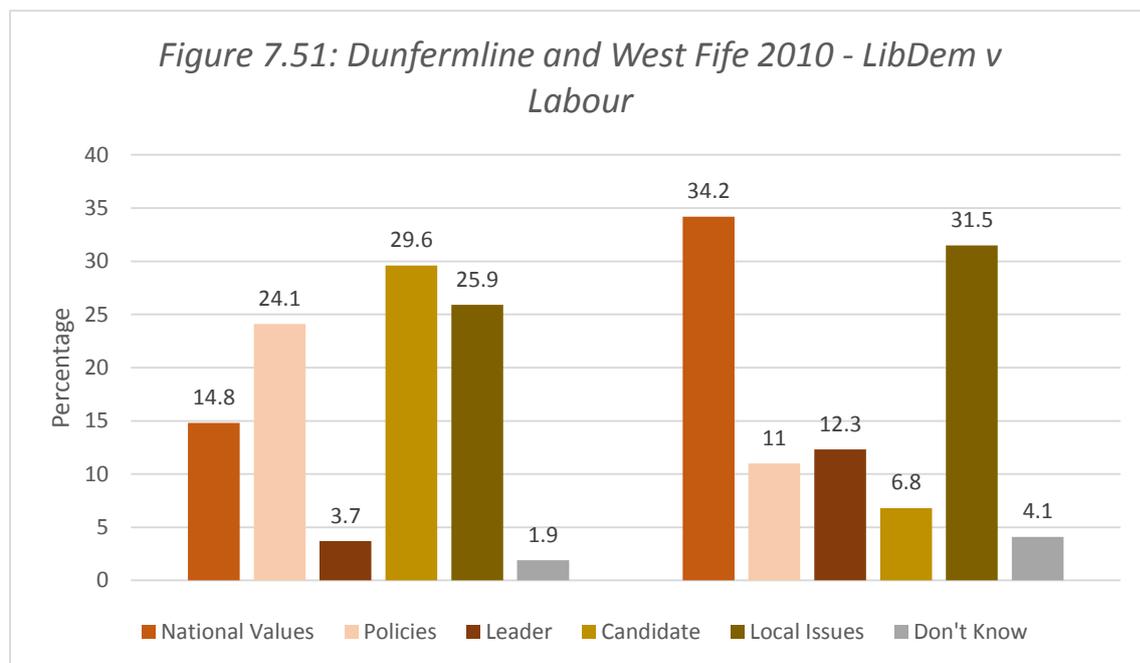
Figure 7.50: North East Fife 2010 - LibDem v Labour



If Liberal Democrat campaigning is having an effect one might expect that in areas where the party has built up support over many years that similar factors would begin to show through. When comparing the two Fife seats to the other seats, again

Liberal Democrat voters might be expected to identify local factors, including the candidate, as their main factor in their decision. As can be seen when comparing Liberal Democrat voters in North East Fife with their local Conservative counterparts, their motivations are very different. This result is very similar to Westmorland and Lonsdale, with the Liberal Democrat candidate being most important amongst Liberal Democrat voters and might be the direct impact that Farron and Campbell were defending seats that they had held previously – so-called incumbency. As Johnson et.al. identify, the Liberal Democrats have ‘traditionally invested most effort and money between elections on campaigns to reinforce their incumbents’ personal visibility.’⁵⁷⁶ This may be because the party has ‘an advantage of 6.7% of the vote where their incumbent stood as opposed to standing down.’⁵⁷⁷

Logically this incumbency should also benefit Rennie in Dunfermline but it appears not to have done.



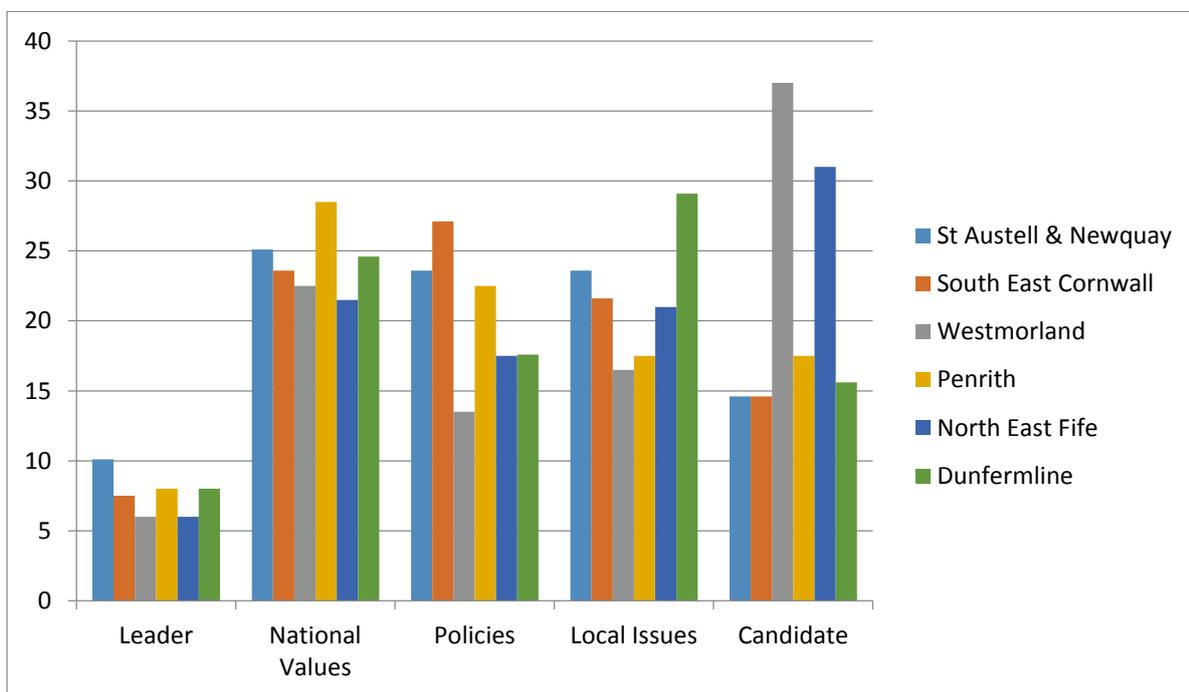
Although Liberal Democrat voters have just identified the *local candidate* as their main reason to support the party, it only narrowly defeats *the national policies of the party* and *the local issues*. What is fascinating about the result in Dunfermline is that Labour won almost in spite of their candidate. His role was not significant as only

⁵⁷⁶ Johnson R., Pattie C., Cutts D. et. al., ‘Local Campaign Spending at the 2010 General Election and Its Impact: Exploring What Wider Regulation has Revealed’, *The Political Quarterly*, Vol. 82, No. 2, (April–June 2011) p.176

⁵⁷⁷ Smith T., ‘Are you sitting comfortably? Estimating incumbency advantage in the UK: 1983–2010’ *Electoral Studies* 32 (2013) p.168

6.8% of Labour voters supported their party because of the candidate. However, local issues do seem to have been a major factor when voting Labour in Dunfermline, rather than for the more traditionally localised Liberal Democrats. The most important reason to vote Labour was the values of the national party which suggests a deeply held tradition of voting Labour in this part of Scotland, which was only undermined briefly by the by-election success of Rennie in 2006. The failure to sufficiently personalise the campaign around Rennie, as happened for Farron and Campbell, would seem to have been the reason for the party's failure in Dunfermline.

Figure 7.52: All Seats Comparison



However, when comparing the success of the Liberal Democrats in Westmorland and North East Fife, it does suggest that Cornwall does behave differently than these other areas that vote Liberal Democrat. It is not just the local campaign that personalises the campaign in the form of the candidate (bearing in mind they were both incumbent and Stephen Gilbert was not) that appears to be the deciding factor in Cornwall. This section of the post-election surveys would seem to suggest that Liberal Democrat support in Cornwall is less dependent on the campaign the party runs locally, which might suggest that the culture of voting Liberal Democrat is more engrained in Cornwall, even when the party loses, than in other parts of Britain with a less historic tradition of voting Liberal Democrat. Even if in recent years seats like North East Fife have become relatively safe for the party, they still behave differently

to Cornwall which elected Liberal MPs at various points throughout the mid-twentieth century, which neither Westmorland nor North East Fife did.

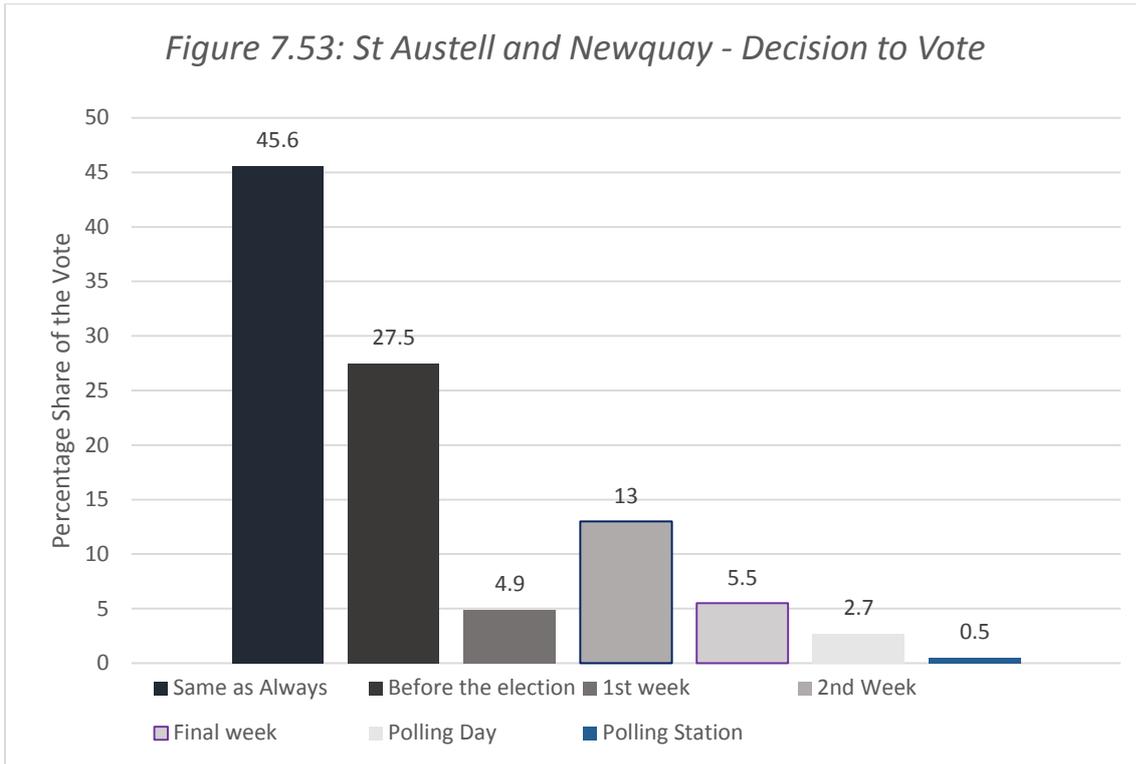
When did the voter decide to vote the way they did?

One of the most important aspects of modern Liberal Democrat campaigning is to take advantage of the assumed benefits of incumbency, by building a local reputation for campaign action between elections. By campaigning not just at election time, but between them, the party intends to convince the local electorate before the national media, generally not supportive of the Liberal Democrats, to stay with the party. Historically 'party loyalties were largely established on the basis of social group memberships, newly adult voters essentially inherited their partisanship and entered the electorate with their loyalties almost fully formed.'⁵⁷⁸ Assessing how people have voted in previous elections is potentially hazardous the further from those elections the survey gets. As such, it was decided to pose a question to each respondent as to when they decided to cast their vote in the way they did. The basis of this is that recent academic studies have discovered that a 'growing proportion of voters...now delay their voting decision until the election campaign is under way.'⁵⁷⁹

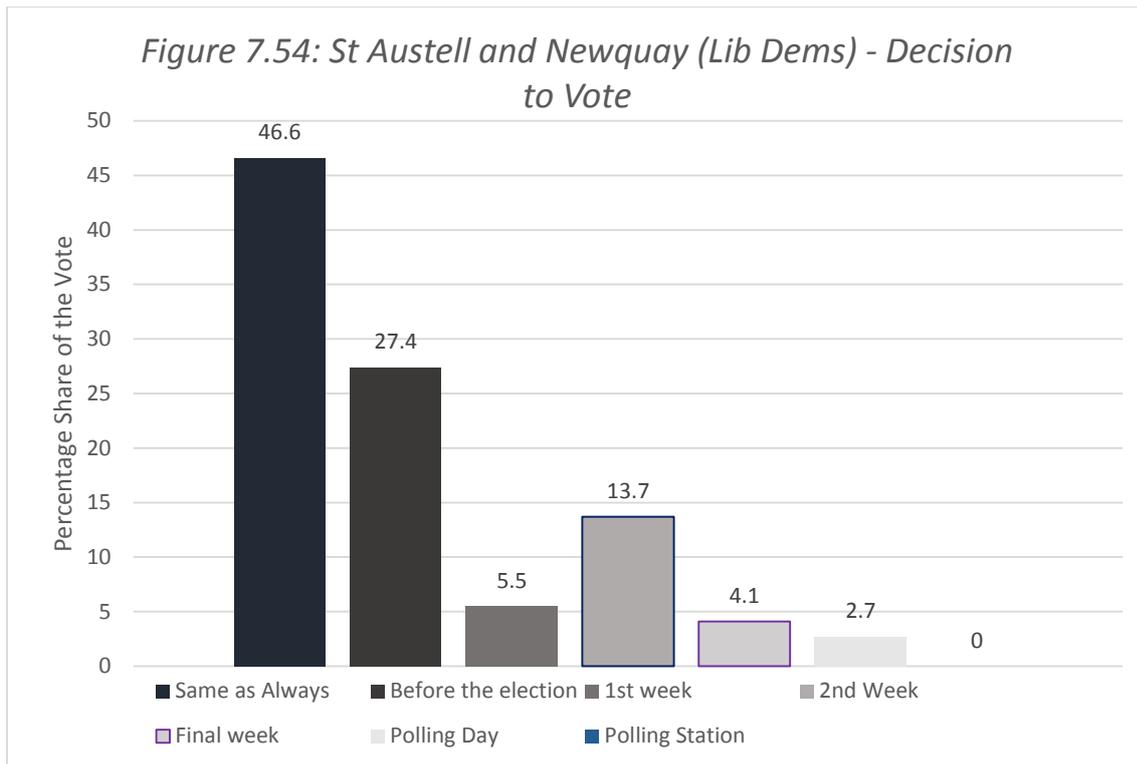
⁵⁷⁸ Van der Eijk C. & Franklin M., *Elections and Voters* (Arbor, 2009) p.180

⁵⁷⁹ McAllister I., 'Calculating or capricious: The new politics of late deciding voters', *Do Political Campaigns Matter?* (eds. Farrell D. & Schmitt-Beck R.) (London, 2002), p.22

Figure 7.53: St Austell and Newquay - Decision to Vote

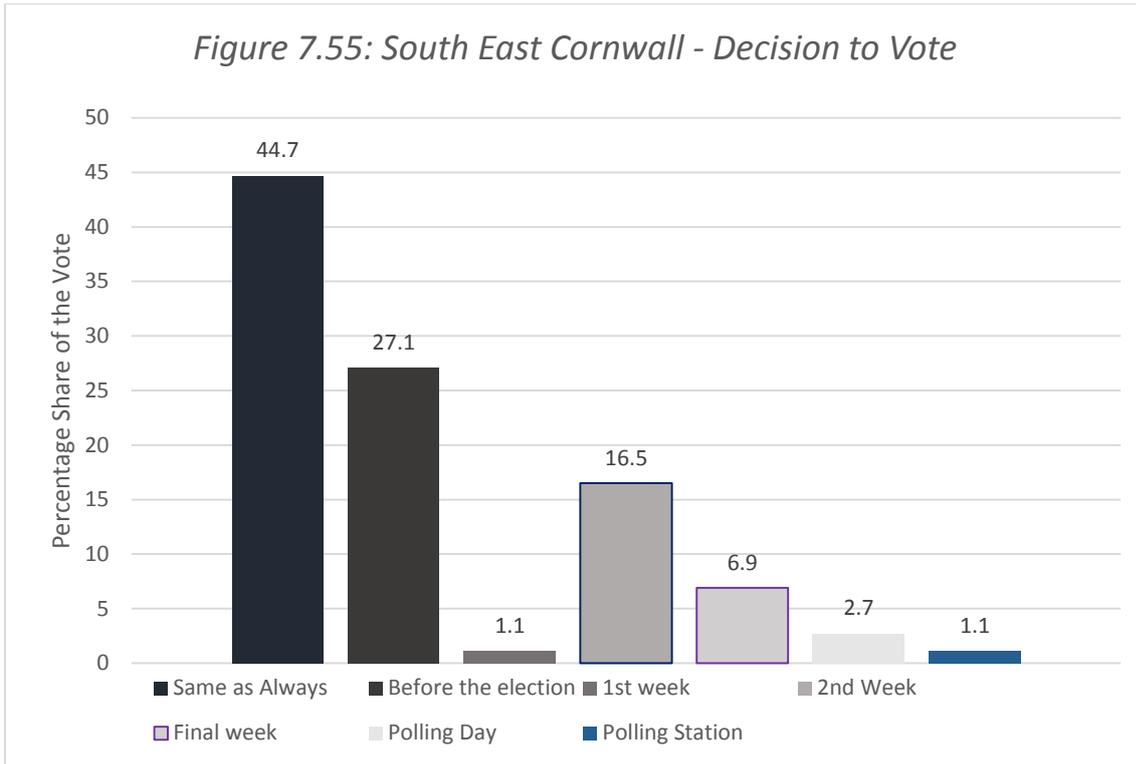


This might indicate whether a voter, or a group of voters, is more prone to vote ‘culturally’ rather than based on the campaign that has been run locally. It might also show some of the impacts of the campaign that the political parties are running locally. As can be seen in the St Austell and Newquay survey, 45.65% of the electorate decided how to vote based on how they always vote and 27.5 based it on factors before the election started. Consequently only 26.6% were going to be affected by the election campaign itself. On the one hand, this might seem a low number, but when one considers the final result in the election (a Liberal Democrat victory by 1,312 votes) this potential level of movement could be significant. However, this also suggests that the pre-campaign, before the election, is just as important as the election itself, suggesting that the work done by the parties before the election is almost of equal importance, at least in this seat, as the election campaign is. If other areas the surveys suggest a significant difference in the habitual voters and this might suggest that Cornwall has a more deeply ingrained level of support for one party than the other.



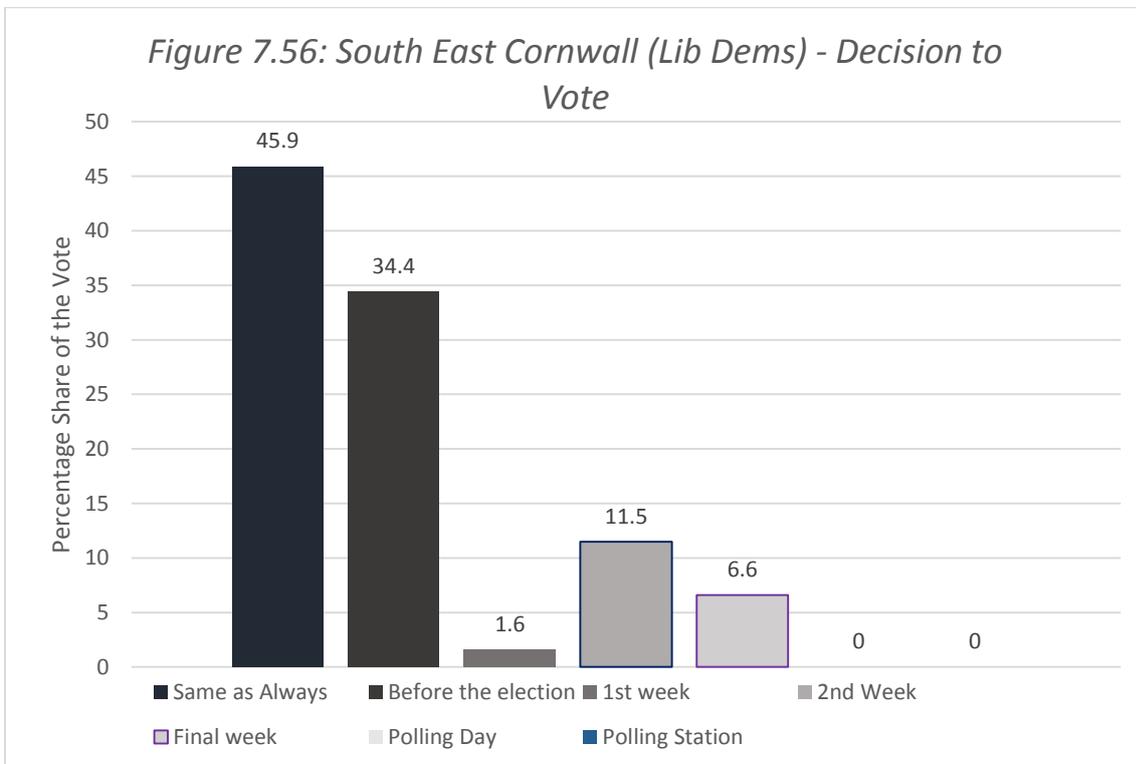
As can be seen from the table of just Liberal Democrat voters in St Austell and Newquay they do not behave differently from the general population in this seat, in fact it is almost identical. This does suggest that the Liberal Democrats have a strong base in Cornwall as, with 46.6% of Liberal Democrats voting habitually, this means that the party's base level of support is always in the 20% in the wider Cornish electorate, which would consistently prevent Labour becoming an effective local presence. Of course, whilst polling in the 20% might maintain the party's survival in Cornwall - it would not deliver the party victory.

Figure 7.55: South East Cornwall - Decision to Vote



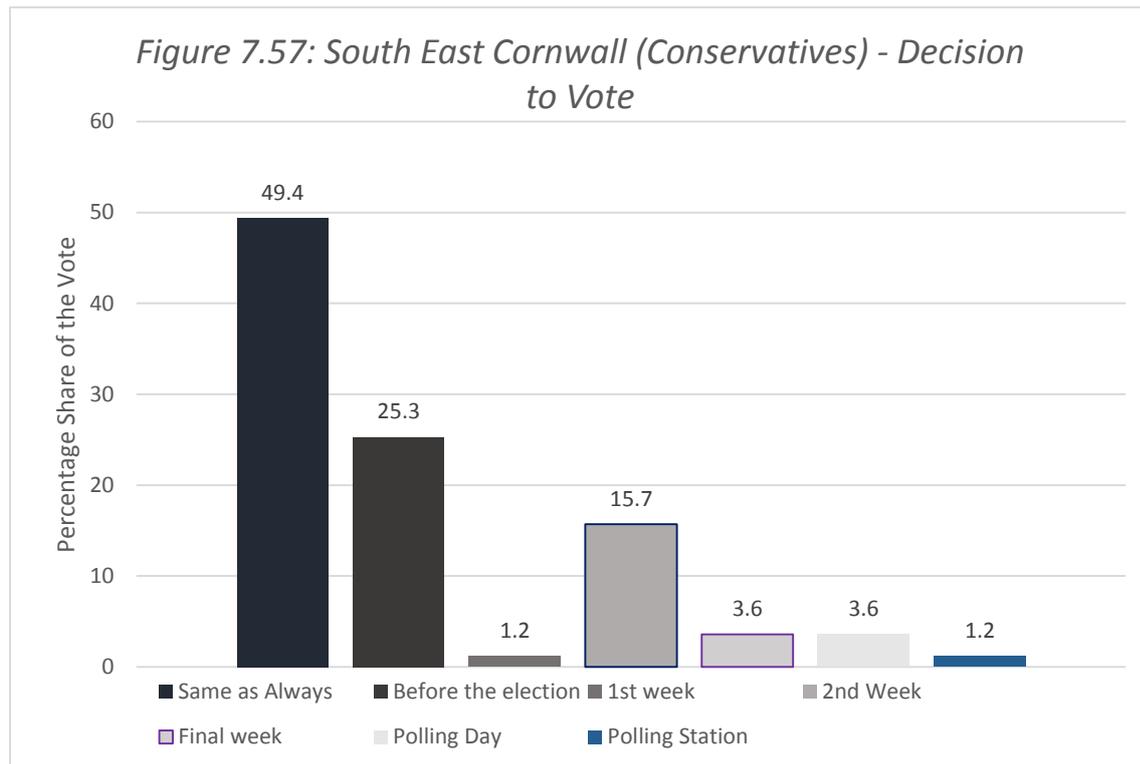
In South East Cornwall, the result of when voters decided how to vote is almost identical to that in St Austell and Newquay.

Figure 7.56: South East Cornwall (Lib Dems) - Decision to Vote



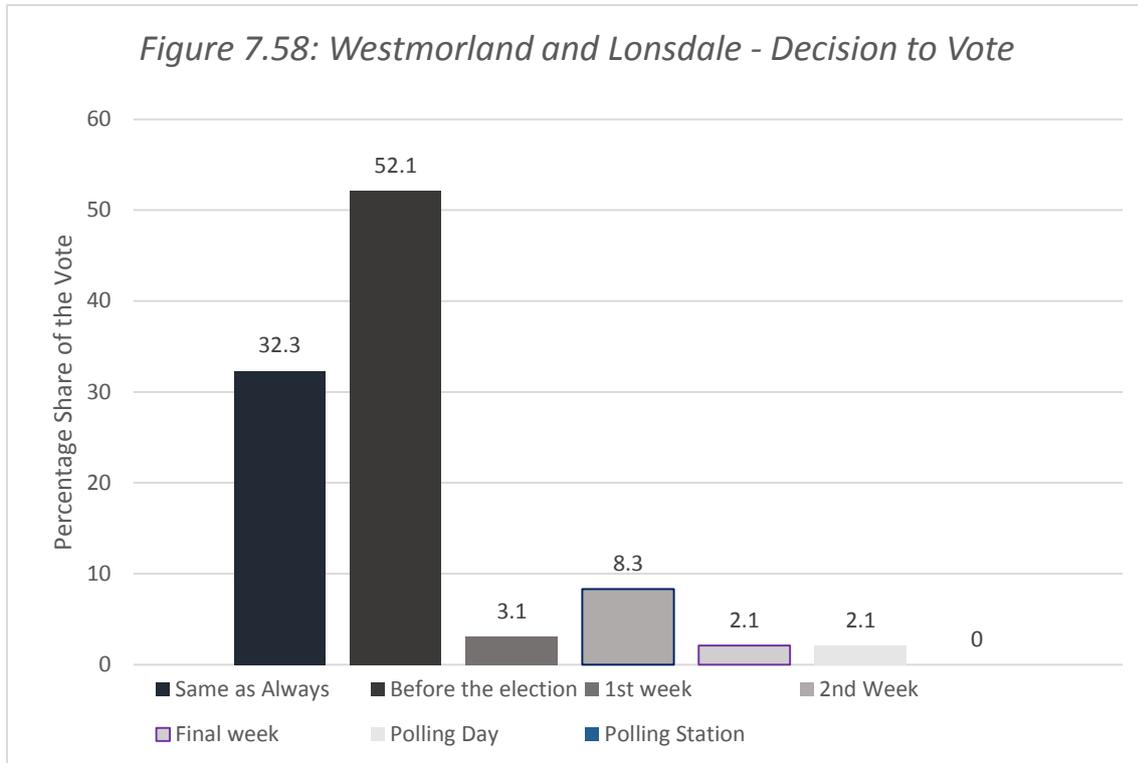
In South East Cornwall there does seem to be a slight discrepancy between Liberal Democrats and the general electorate. With 80.3% of those who eventually voted for

the Liberal Democrats deciding to support the party before the election started, this might suggest that the local campaign, during the election period, had less impact than St Austell and Newquay as there only 74% had decided their vote before the election had started. It might also suggest, of course, that the campaign before the election was more effective, but the eventual result might suggest otherwise. However, this might seem to be a negligible difference unless we compare it to local Conservative voters, who were successful in electing a new Conservative MP.

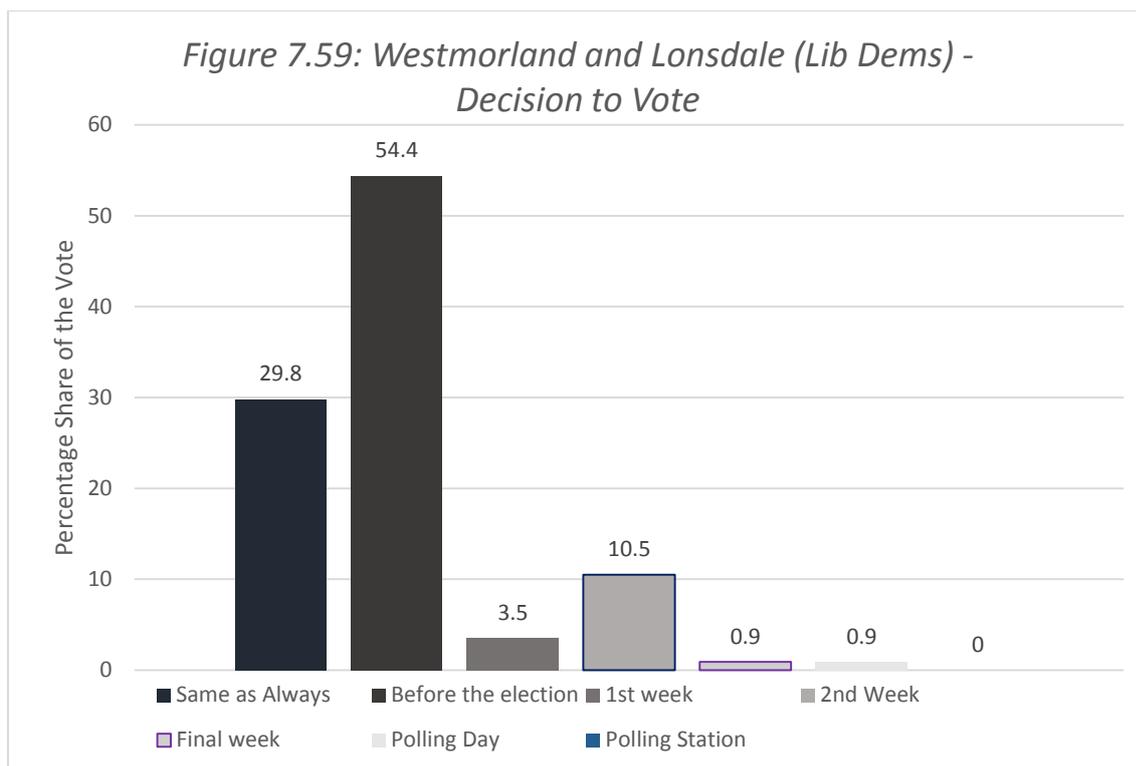


What is fascinating about this data is that the Conservatives have a rather polarised distribution of support. Almost half of all Conservatives vote that way traditionally, similar to the Liberal Democrat 45.9% but many more decided to vote Conservative in the election campaign than did Liberal Democrats: 25.3% for the Conservatives compared to 19.7% for the Liberal Democrats. This may not seem significant until one assesses, that of that group, 8.4% of Conservative voters decided to vote that way either in the final week of the campaign, on polling day or even in the polling station. The Liberal Democrats achieved no new supporters on polling day at all, which might indicate a more effective local, or national, campaign for the Conservatives, in the final days, than the Liberal Democrats. All the same, these slight variables in Cornish voting between these two seats does mainly suggest that a two-party (Conservative v Liberal Democrat) contest is deeply embedded locally

and it will be valuable to assess if this is similar in other parts of the country where that contest is less deeply engrained in local political culture.



In Westmorland and Lonsdale there is a notable and significant difference compared to the Cornish seats. Less than a third of voters have voted ‘traditionally’ compared to nearly half in Cornwall, whereas over half of the voters were convinced *before the election*.



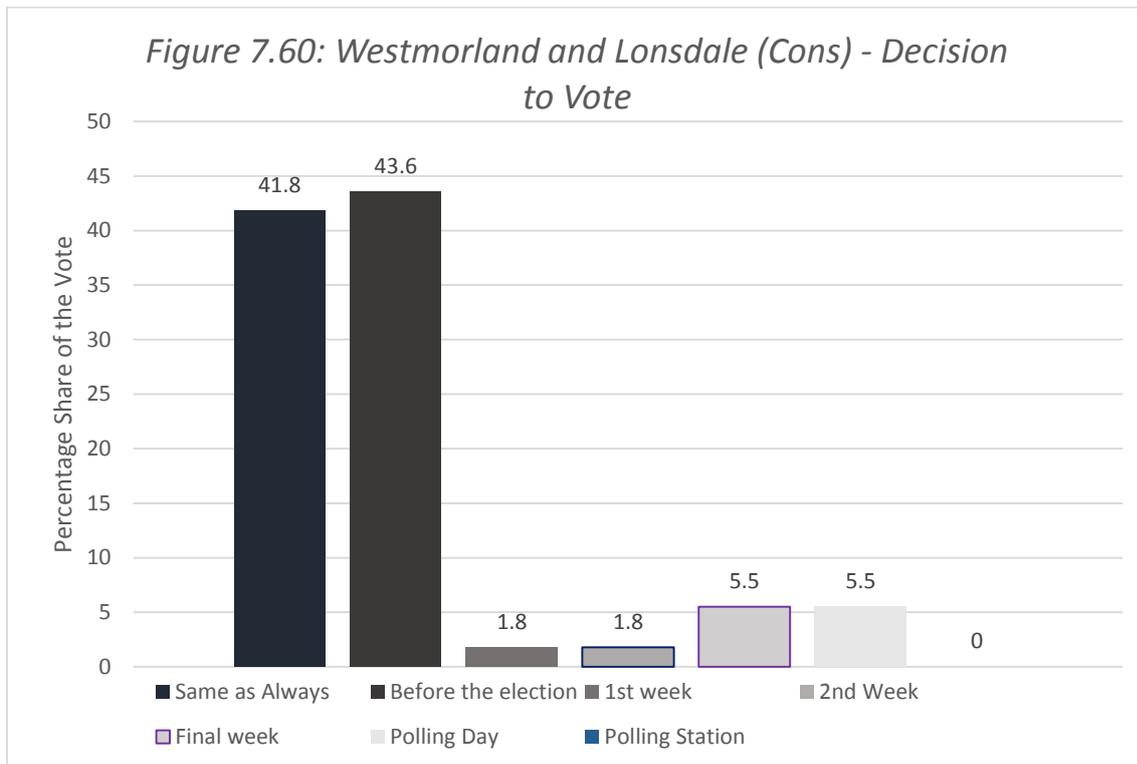
Crucially Figure 7.59 suggests that the campaign work done before the election started, as well as being a sitting MP,⁵⁸⁰ was a vital aspect of Farron's re-election in Westmorland and Lonsdale. Very few voters were affected by the election campaign itself as so many had decided before the election had started. This is supported by the evidence in the previous chapter that the party in Westmorland and Lonsdale had been so active in between the elections that the party essentially insulated itself from any later Conservative campaign. As Farron's Conservative opponent conceded whilst his party was conducting its Get Out The Vote (GOTV) operation his supporters were greeted by former Conservatives saying that they, 'normally vote Conservative but Tim [Farron] has worked so hard.'⁵⁸¹

This becomes even clearer when asking just 2010 Liberal Democrat voters. Although more of those who eventually voted for the Liberal Democrats were affected at the start of the campaign, than the average, virtually none decided to support them towards the end of the campaign. This variant might indicate the main explanation for the massive increase in Farron's majority in 2010; he had convinced many people in the intervening five years of working in the constituency. Consequently it might not

⁵⁸⁰ <http://www.conservativehome.com/platform/2013/03/gareth-mckeeever.html> Last Viewed 7th December 2013

⁵⁸¹ Ibid

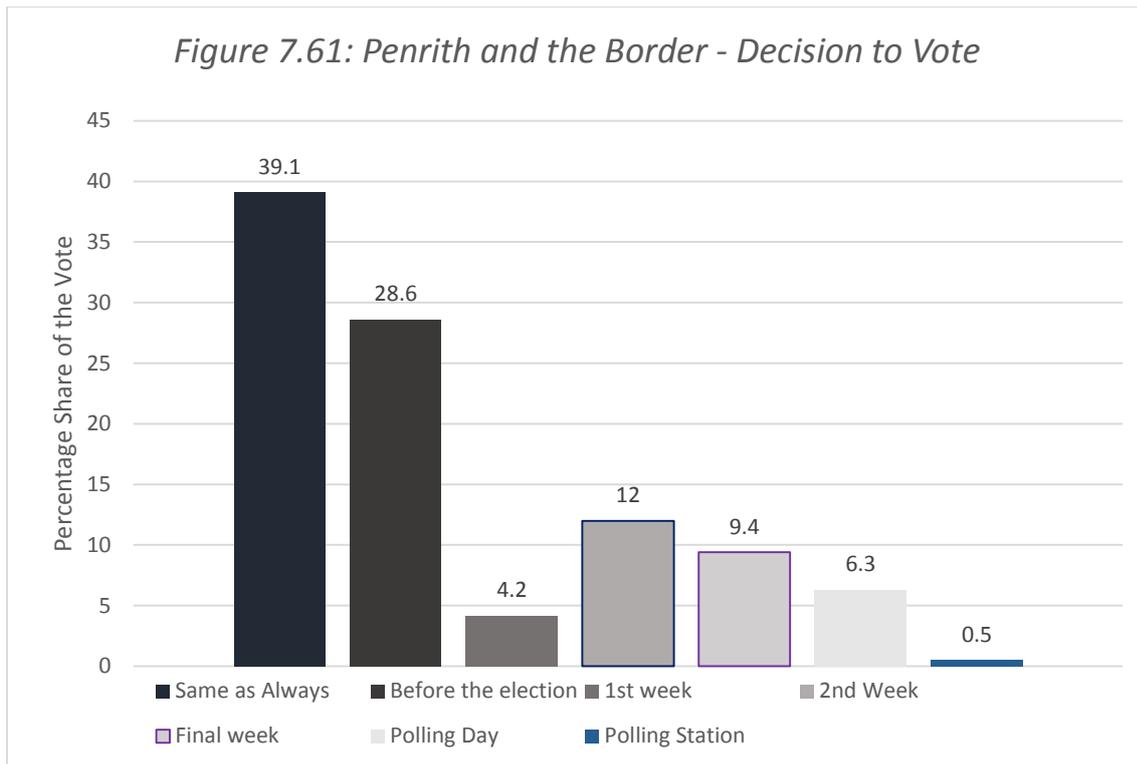
be expected that one would see traditional voting as so many Conservatives must have switched to the Liberal Democrats, but nonetheless traditional voting is significantly and intriguingly lower in this Cumbrian seat than it is in Cornwall. This adds some weight to the idea that Cornwall is more traditional in its voting behaviour than other more recently fertile territory, such as Westmorland.



What is interesting about the Conservative voters in Westmorland is that they are not in line with their neighbours at all. They are much more likely to be traditional voters than Liberal Democrats but appear to have also been affected by the pre-election campaign as Liberal Democrats were. This might suggest that the Conservative campaign was also fairly active locally, though clearly not as effective amongst all voters as the Liberal Democrat campaign was.

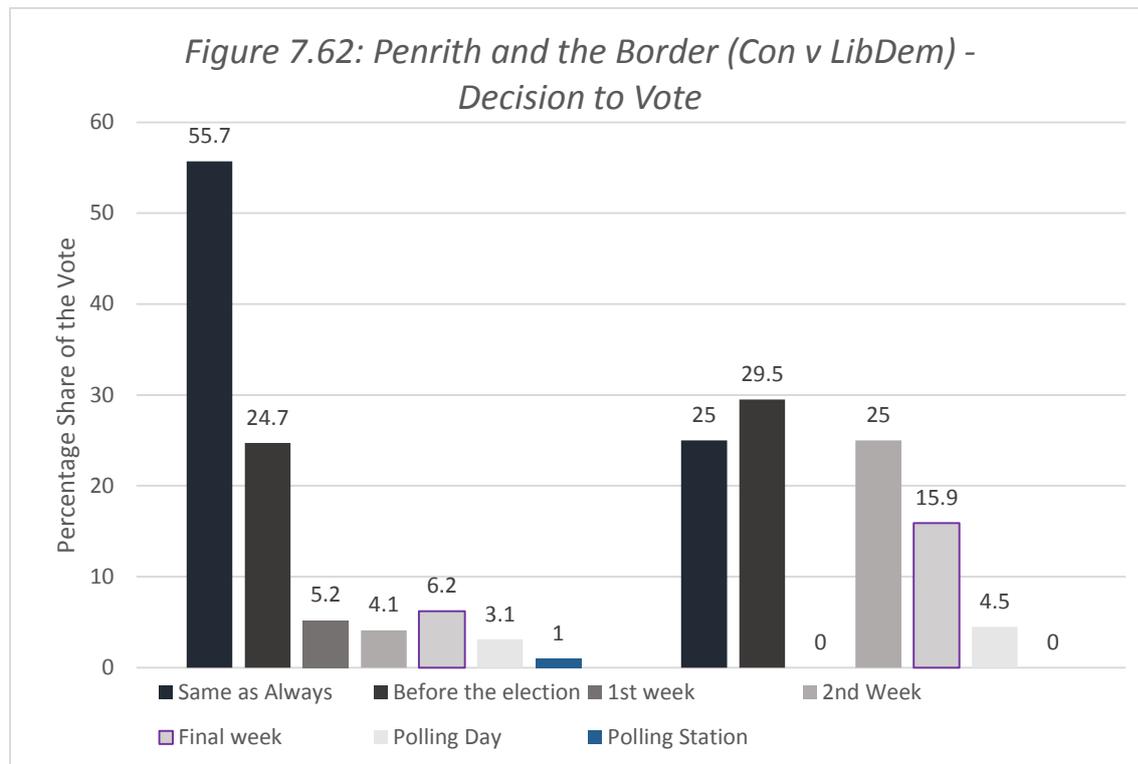
As Penrith and the Border has been identified as a non-target seat for the Liberal Democrats one might expect it to be the least affected by campaigning and therefore logically to have the highest levels of traditional voting of any of the seats where the Conservatives are embedded. If the Liberal Democrats are not conducting a campaign then few voters will switch from their traditional allegiances as they have no local stimuli upon which to base this change.

Figure 7.61: Penrith and the Border - Decision to Vote



What is interesting about Penrith and the Border is that, if anything, more voters appear to be open to being convinced by the election campaign as in seats where there is a campaign. Fewer people in this seat vote traditionally than in either of the Cornish seats yet more appear to be open to the election campaign, whether they appreciate it or not, because only 67.7% had made up their minds before the election had started. This, of course, may be only one driver and might suggest that locally because the campaign is so minimal from any side, local voters are waiting to be convinced by the parties, because of the absence of inter-election local campaign the electorate may be waiting to be convinced. The fact that nearly half of all those who decided during the election did so during the final week is a fascinating insight into a seat which essentially has little, or no, pre-election activity from the parties. This seat suggests that the work the parties do between elections does reduce the amount of voters who are undecided by the time the election is eventually called. However, this might suggest that voters would vote more traditionally as there is little outside influence on their voting behaviour. Although it is speculation this does suggest that the Cornish seats are more traditional in their party allegiance than this seat at least, even though this seat is extremely consistent in its support for the Conservatives. However, it would be difficult to assert that this is anything more than speculation.

There is, however, a massive discrepancy between Conservative and Liberal Democrat voters in Penrith and the Border.

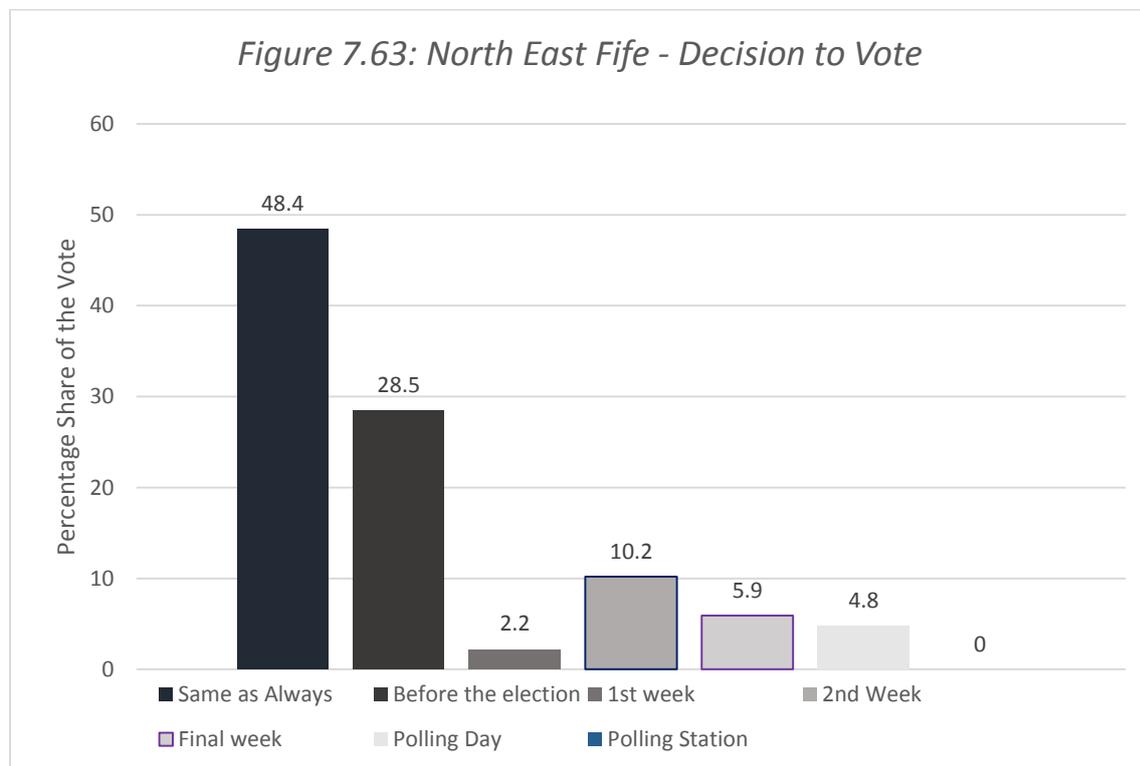


Conservatives in Penrith are much more traditional and fixed in their voting behaviour than Liberal Democrats. Almost half of all Liberal Democrat supporters in Penrith decided during the election. However, as will be seen this was not based on an active local campaign but must have been affected by the national election campaign. This could have been through the leader debates, the press and media or the use of national advertising campaigns, which the party has been praised for: increasing its national share of the vote. The fact that Conservatives are so engrained does suggest a traditional heartland Conservative seat, but the percentages that have decided to vote Conservative before the election starts in this seat is more in line with the behaviour of traditionally Liberal Democrat seats in Cornwall than its recently acquired neighbouring seat: Westmorland and Lonsdale.

In the two Scottish seats, one might expect to see a similar pattern as with Westmorland in North East Fife, but perhaps see higher levels of traditional voting in Dunfermline, where the Liberal Democrats have only recently won the seat. In an area where, until the 2006 by-election, the Labour Party had held the seat since the

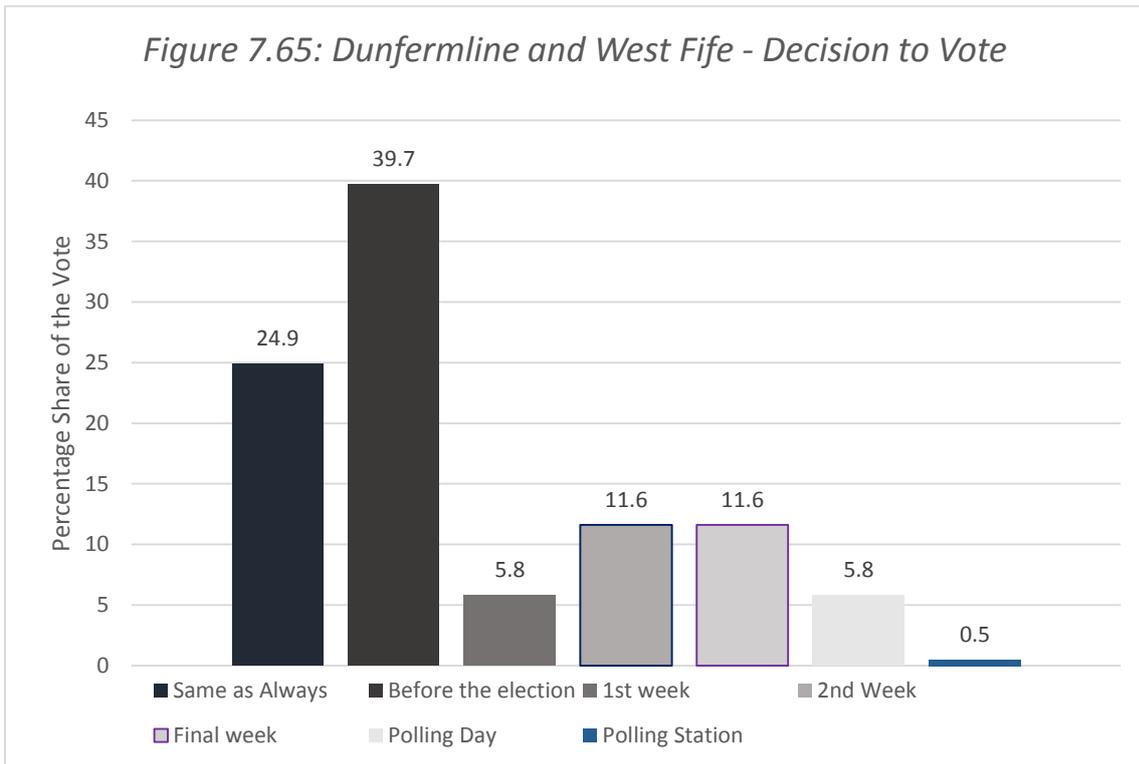
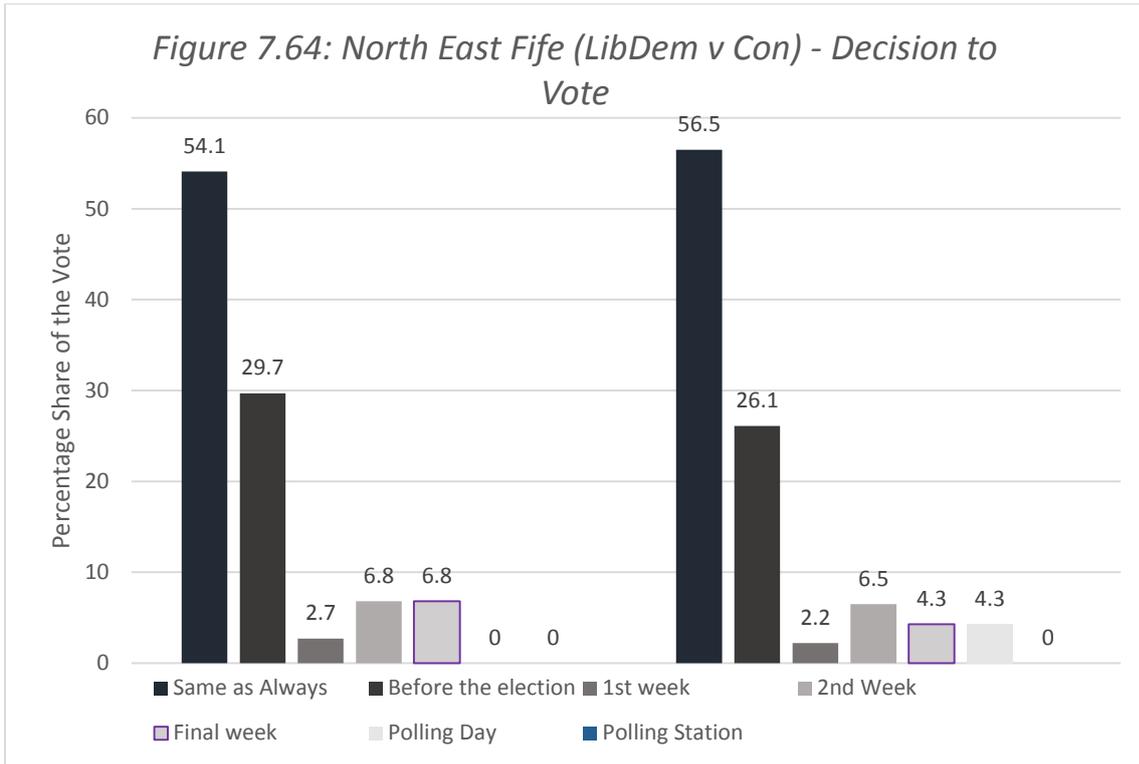
second world war, which was not built on the steady progress that the Liberal Democrats had made in seats like North East Fife over a series of elections.⁵⁸²

In North East Fife, the timing of the decision is actually very similar to the Cornish experience amongst all voters. With a long-standing, well-known and well-liked Member of Parliament, in Menzies Campbell, this might have been expected to track more closely the incumbent profile of Westmorland, (even though Farron's incumbency was far shorter than Campbell's) rather than the two Cornish seats which both saw new contestants for the party in 2010.



Amongst Liberal Democrats, this traditional support for their party is slightly higher than the general electorate but what is interesting, and perhaps illuminating, is just how similar this long-term Liberal Democrat seat shows a similar form of traditional voting amongst both them and their Conservative opponents. The pattern has settled down from a state of active political contest to a more entrenched position.

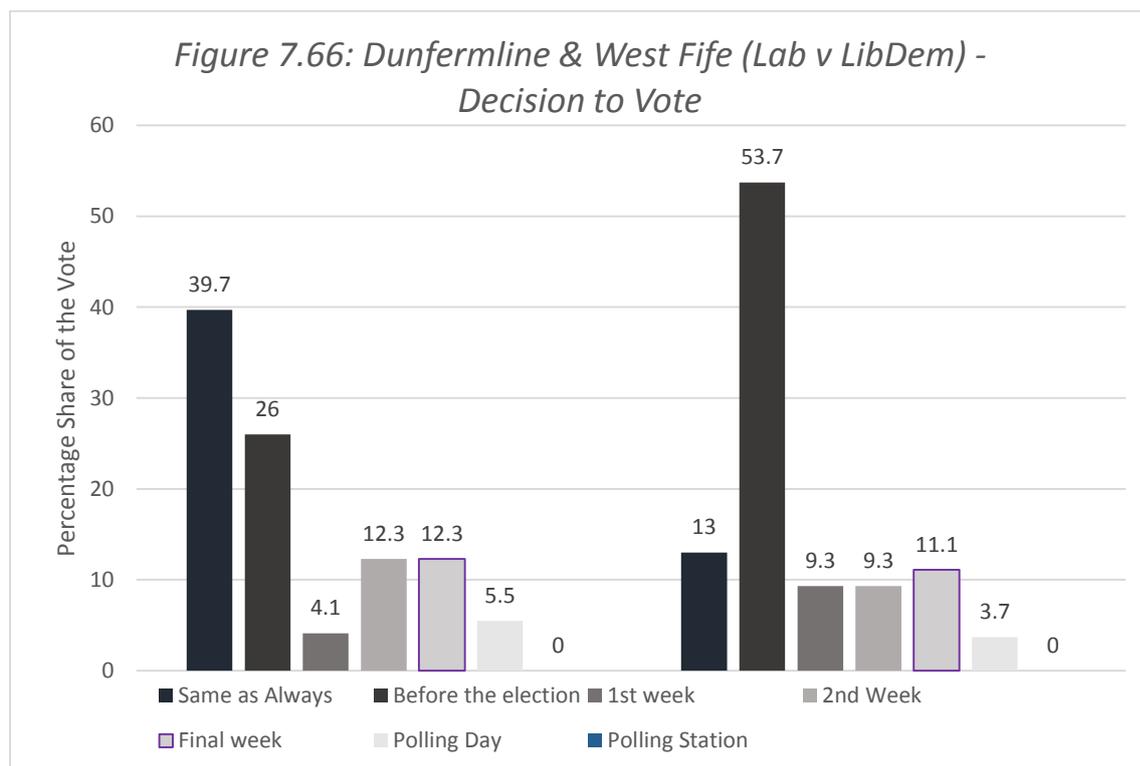
⁵⁸² Campbell M., *My Autobiography*, (London, 2008)



In Dunfermline, perhaps unsurprisingly, the effect of the 2006 by-election seems to have changed the local political dynamic. Similar to Westmorland, if less extreme, the largest group decided how to vote since the last election, suggesting the relatively recent victory of Rennie has changed the local political landscape. Although it was not sufficient to save the seat for Rennie he did increase the support

he received compared to the by-election. However, when one compares the two main contestants it is clear that Labour's vote is much more deeply entrenched than the Liberal Democrats.

Although Labour has more traditional support, it is interesting that Rennie had managed to maintain his support from the by-election. It simply seems to have been much more difficult to break into the Labour support which was traditional in its nature. As was shown earlier, the Labour candidate was not a significant attractant to the electorate and Gordon Brown, though locally popular, was only a peripheral help this seat. Like by-elections in previous parliaments this seat returned to Labour, as part of a more general swing to Labour in Scotland in 2010. It was the only part of the UK to see a swing to Labour at this election, presumably, at least to some extent, because the party was the main bulwark against the possibility of an incoming Conservative government and the indigenous leadership of a Scottish Prime Minister.



North East Fife is similar to the safe Conservative seat of Penrith suggesting a lack of movement between the parties, based on a lack of campaigning from the other challenging parties. However, it does also seem to follow the pattern of the Cornish seats where the voting behaviour of both of the main contestants is similar. This

could indicate a number of possible things. Safer seats, or 'heartland seats' as Russell and Fieldhouse⁵⁸³ call them, behave in a relatively uniform way. As the Liberal Democrats have gained the benefits of incumbency with their sitting MP, they have seen their local electorates settle into fairly consistent groups. After the initial upheaval of winning the seats, the work they have done has built and entrenched their local credibility. This perhaps explains why Westmorland is so out of kilter with the other Liberal Democrat winners. As the narrow victor in 2005 Farron continued campaigning throughout the next parliament and building a local reputation⁵⁸⁴. This even chimes with Annette Penhaligon's view of the 1979 general election that David Penhaligon's marginality in 1974 was a benefit compared to the safer John Pardoe in North Cornwall who voters felt would win.⁵⁸⁵ Marginality maintains a level of constructive organisational activity, safeness would seem to afford greater organisational inertia . As such, Conservatives switched directly to him in 2010 - which would explain why they were not 'voting for the party they always supported'. However, it does not seem to explain why the Liberal Democrats failed to win South East Cornwall, when the party had a fairly strong hold on the seat from 1997-2010. When the two Cornish seats appear to have similar voting patterns as each other this would presumably suggest that their electorates would behave similarly in 2010. Yet one elected a new Liberal Democrat to replace Matthew Taylor in St Austell and Newquay (the most popular local politician in Cornwall) and the other rejected the replacement of Colin Breed (who, though very popular, did not achieve the same levels of support as did Taylor). Thus if the culture of Cornwall did not save the party from defeat in South East Cornwall, and logically the loss of a more popular personality in St Austell and Newquay did not terminally damage the party's prospects in that seat, then this would seem to suggest that at least some of the reason must come down to the campaign that the parties ran in these seats in 2010.

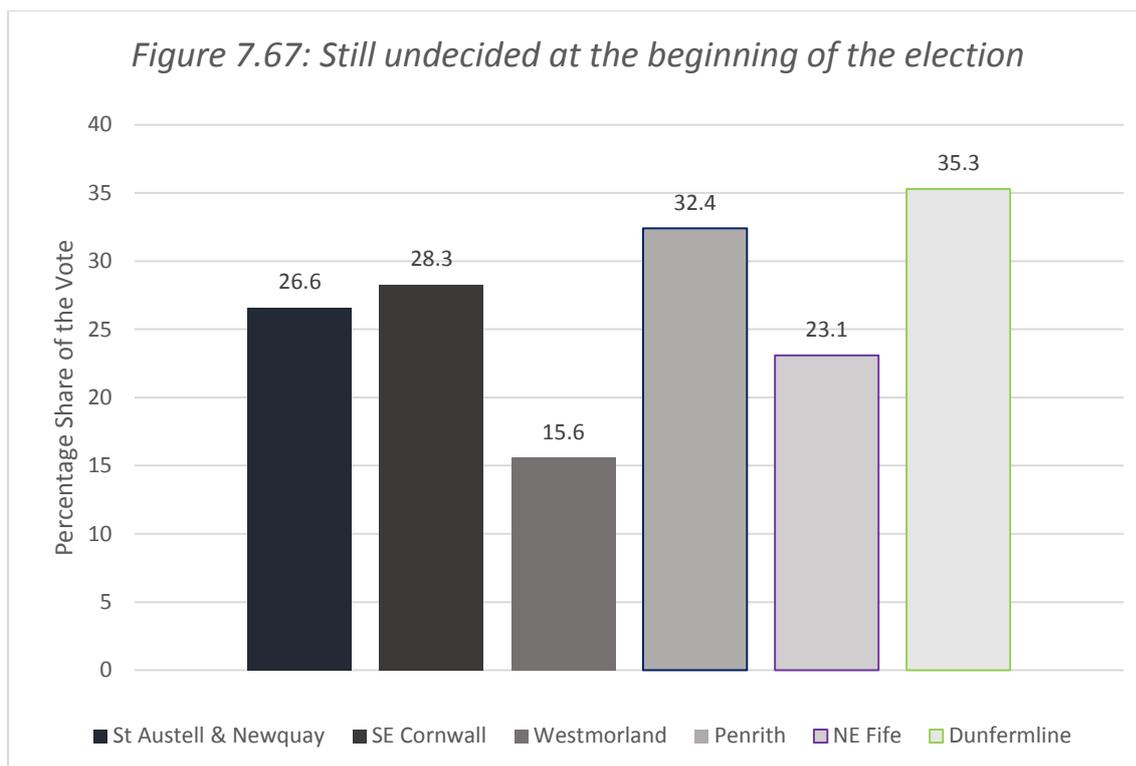
The Local Election Campaign Activity

Although a great deal of the voters surveyed, either voted as they always had, or had decided in the pre-election period, a significant number of them had not decided who they were finally going to support until the election campaign itself.

⁵⁸³ Russell A. & Fieldhouse E., *Neither left nor right?* (Manchester, 2005)

⁵⁸⁴ <http://www.conservativehome.com/platform/2013/03/gareth-mckeeever.html>

⁵⁸⁵ Penhaligon A., *Penhaligon* (London, 1987) p.55

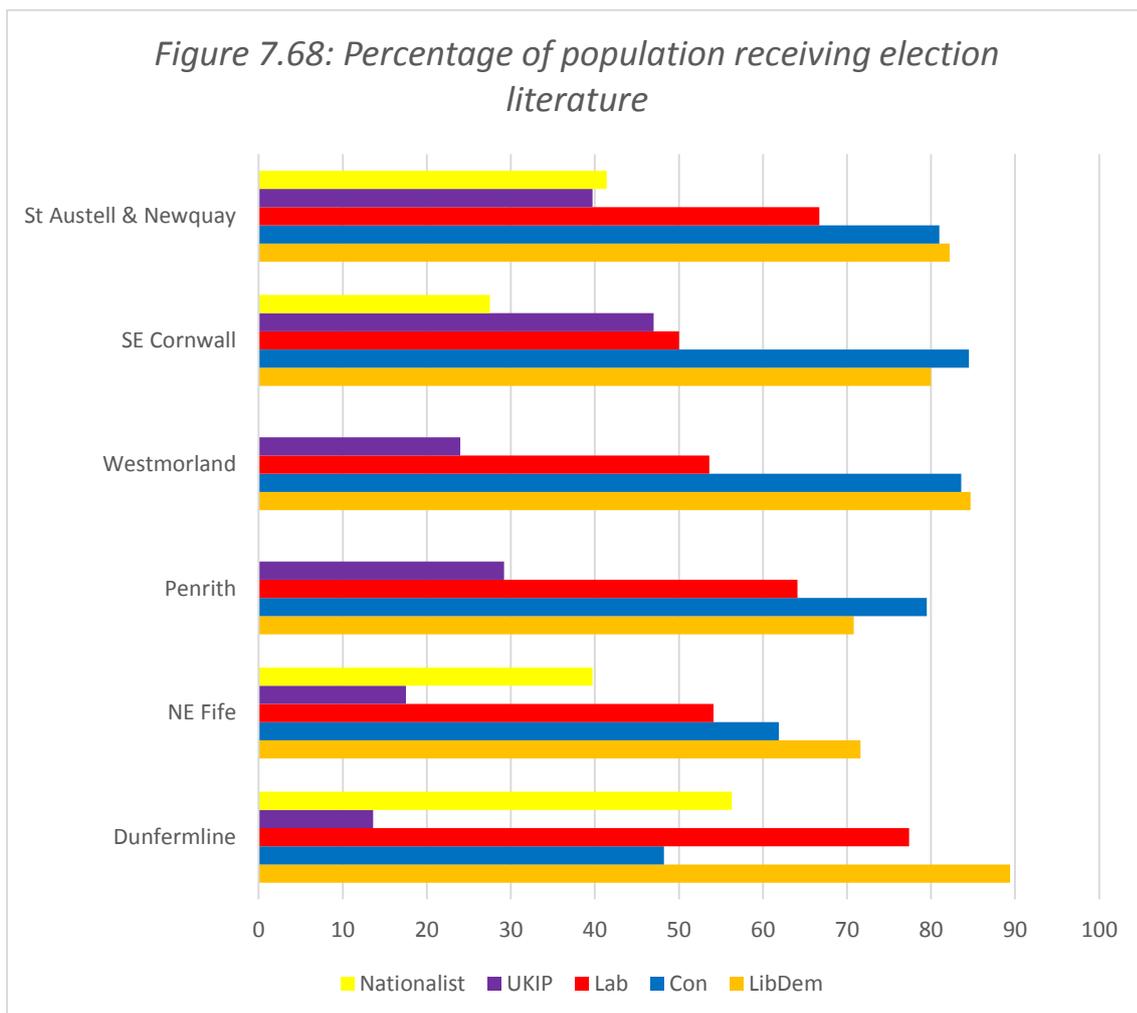


This varied from 15.5% still being undecided in Westmorland and Lonsdale and 35.3% in Dunfermline and West Fife. The two Cornish seats were both in the middle of this spread being 25.6% in St Austell and Newquay and 28.3% in South East Cornwall. With the exception of Westmorland and Lonsdale, this technically meant that in all of these seats there was no clear winner before the election started. Although this may seem to suggest that elections are quite open, it also conceals the reality that a great number of voters have a predisposition to vote one way or another or are open to the tactical argument, which the parties will deploy strongly during an election campaign. Of course some of the electorate will be convinced by a national campaign message, especially in the absence of a local one, as we might expect in Penrith and the Border.

However, assessing the strength of the local campaign might help to explain whether the Liberal Democrats, in particular, are able to affect the result locally by the work they do in the constituencies. As Rennard puts it, 'the secret of successful communication is always to get a few powerful messages across repeatedly.'⁵⁸⁶ Logically, as a consequence of this Liberal Democrat test of a successful campaign, evaluating the repetition of the campaign messages is important in evaluating the

⁵⁸⁶ Rennard C., *The Campaign Manual – 2nd Edition* (Hebden Bridge, 1995) p.15

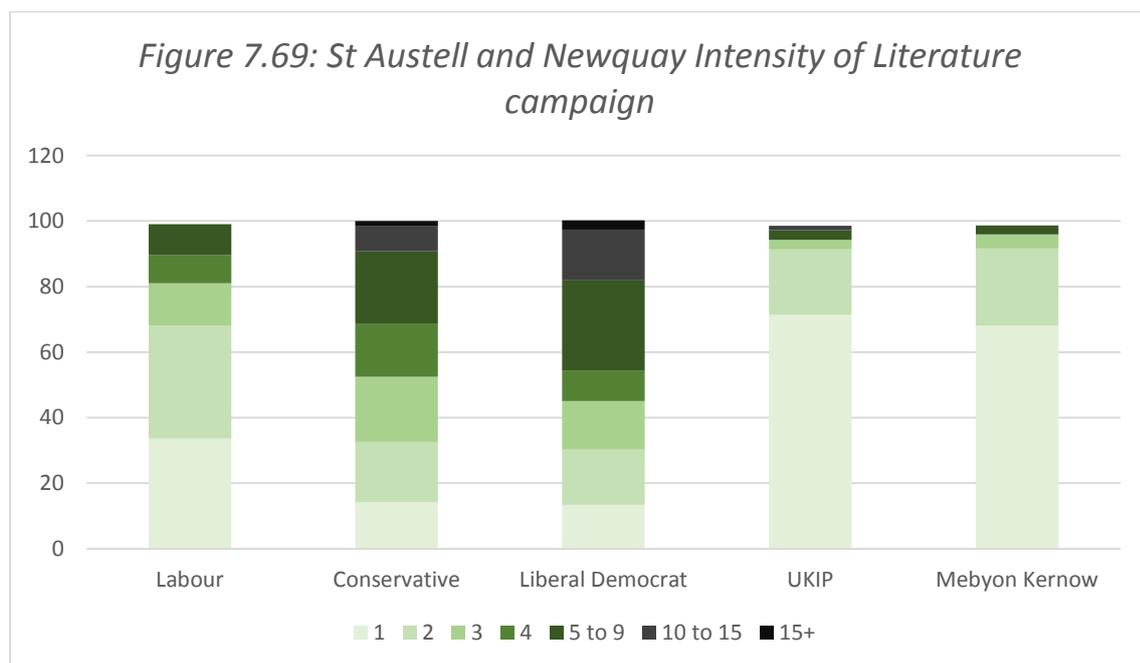
foundation of Liberal Democrat success. As so many Liberal Democrat voters say that they vote based on local issues and the local candidate this seems a logical conclusion. As a consequence of the party's own campaign strategy and the evidence that, in 1997, the party successfully won more seats on a smaller national percentage by breaking down this local campaign⁵⁸⁷ - it may be possible to assess which of the parties was successful in winning the local campaign. First the surveys asked which of the parties had contacted, through leaflets and newspapers, the voter and then the intensity of this engagement was also assessed.



The above table, Figure 7.68, suggests that the parties are active in terms of local campaigning. Of course this is a geographic spread of the breadth of the campaign activity of the parties in each constituencies. Unlike the other parties there is also evidence that 'the Liberal Democrats distributed many fewer centrally-produced leaflets on average, concentrating on the marginal seats, where it also circulated

⁵⁸⁷ Ault J. & Stephenson H., *The Campaign Manual – 3rd Edition* (Hebden Bridge, 2000) p.7

very large numbers of locally-produced items.⁵⁸⁸ This would fit in with the assertion that the Liberal Democrats benefit when the campaign is localised. The highest percentage receiving literature from the Liberal Democrats is in Dunfermline (which the party lost) and the highest for the Conservatives is in South East Cornwall (which it won). Because the parties receive an election communication from the Home Office to every voter, delivered by Royal Mail,⁵⁸⁹ it is not surprising that even the minor parties appear to be active in these statistics so the respondents were asked a supplementary question – *how often did the parties do this?*

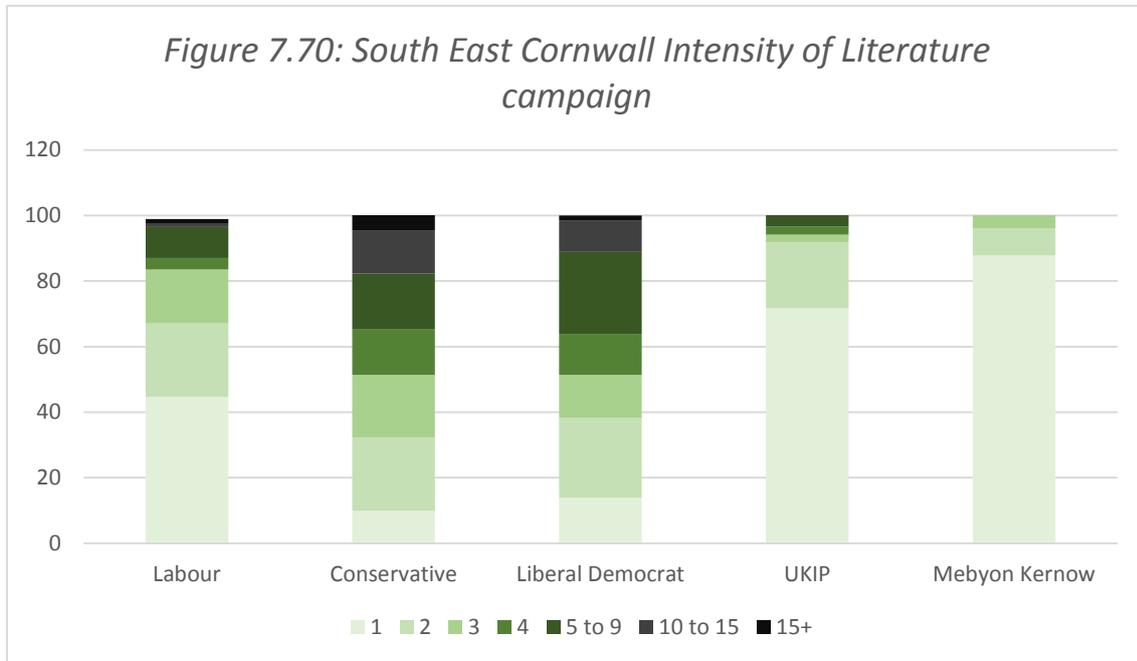


The intensity of the campaign is reflected in this table by the darkness of the colour: although Labour may have delivered to a high percentage of doors, the main battle is between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. As can be seen the Liberal Democrats do have a more intensive campaign with over 45% of the population receiving 5 or more campaign leaflets compared to 30% receiving a similar number from the Conservatives. The comparison is even clearer when the parties get to the 10+ area with the Liberal Democrats doubling the Conservatives in this section. Although this does not prove the party convinced people, it does suggest that they are attempting to affect the local result more than their opponents, at least in terms of the literature campaign.

⁵⁸⁸ Johnston R., Cutts D. et. al., 'We've got them on the list: contacting, canvassing and voting in a British general election campaign' *Electoral Studies* 31 (2012) p.325

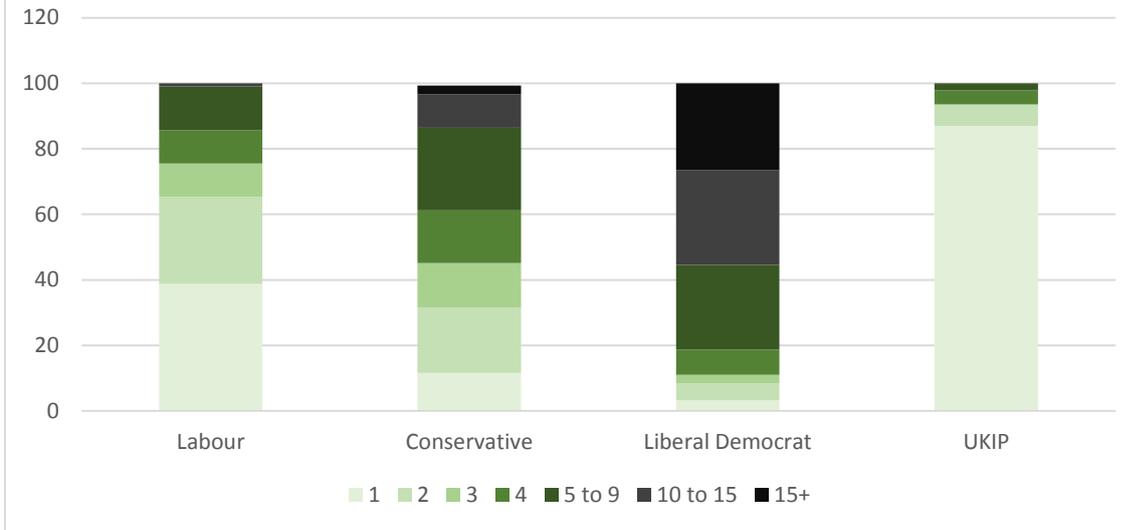
⁵⁸⁹ www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN06434.pdf

When looking at South East Cornwall, the campaign appears to have been won by the local Conservatives. Both of the two main contenders have delivered 4 or more leaflets to the electorate but at the higher levels (10+) the Conservatives have beaten the Liberal Democrats by 17.8% of the electorate receiving Conservative literature compared to 11.1% from the Liberal Democrats.



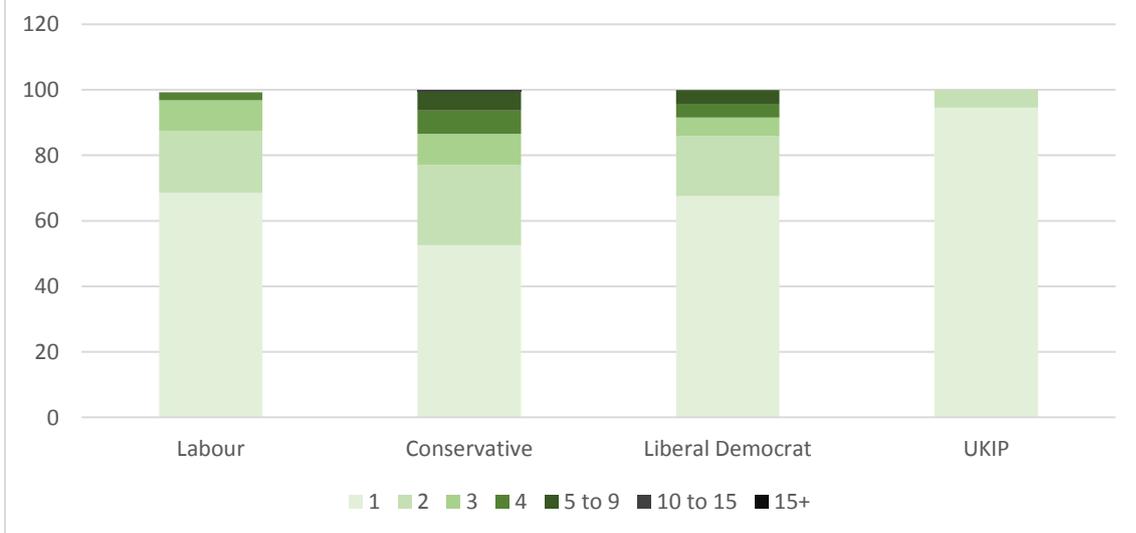
Although these may seem small differences it does suggest that the Liberal Democrats no longer have the historic monopoly they had on constituency campaigning to differentiate them from the Conservatives and insulate them from the national campaign.

Figure 7.71: Westmorland & Lonsdale Intensity of Literature campaign



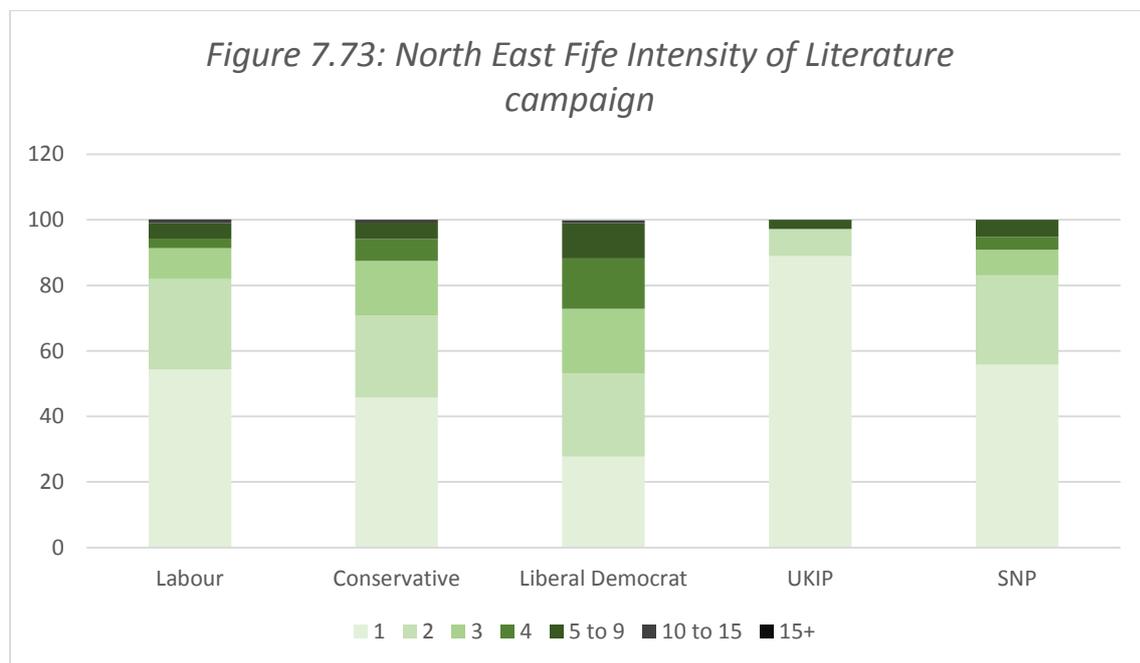
As can be seen from the Westmorland the Liberal Democrat campaign was much more intensive than the very intensive Conservative campaign. The Conservatives ran a very similar, even stronger, campaign as was seen in Cornwall but the Liberal Democrats have successfully delivered more than 10 items of literature to 60% of the population. This is an impressive logistical achievement but bearing in mind only 15.6% of the population was still open to being convinced by the election campaign it probably did not achieve anything other than to maximise Farron's majority in Westmorland and Lonsdale.

Figure 7.72: Penrith and the Border Intensity of Literature campaign

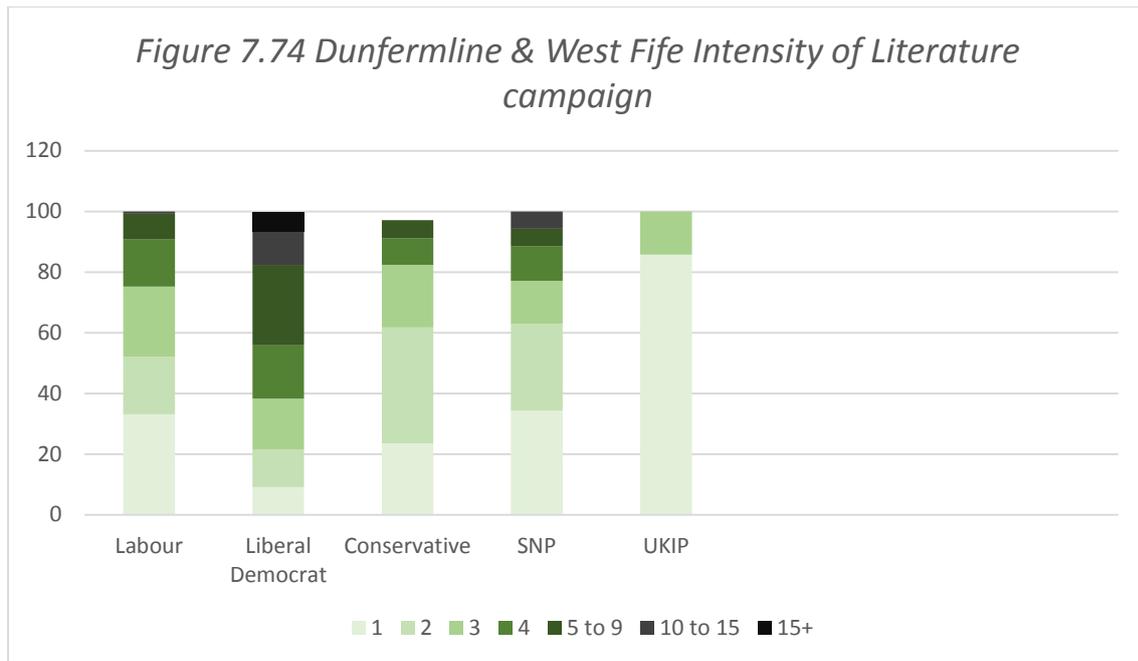


As can be seen from the Penrith and the Border survey, there is virtually no campaign similar to that in the neighbouring constituency – Westmorland and Lonsdale. The Liberal Democrats have a modest literature campaign and 67.6% of the population only received one piece of literature from the party suggesting that their local campaigning unique selling point is not active in this constituency. Although 32.4% of people are open to being convinced during the election in this constituency, the Liberal Democrats are not doing a great deal of that convincing. It presumably falls to the election stimuli that the voters receive from the press and media to which these voters turn in the absence of a local campaign in this constituency.

Although the campaign in North East Fife lacks the intensity of that in Westmorland it does show a modest lead in terms of campaigning for the Liberal Democrats but, presumably because the party adjudges the seat to be safe the campaign has nothing of the scale of the Westmorland campaign or even those in the two Cornish seats.

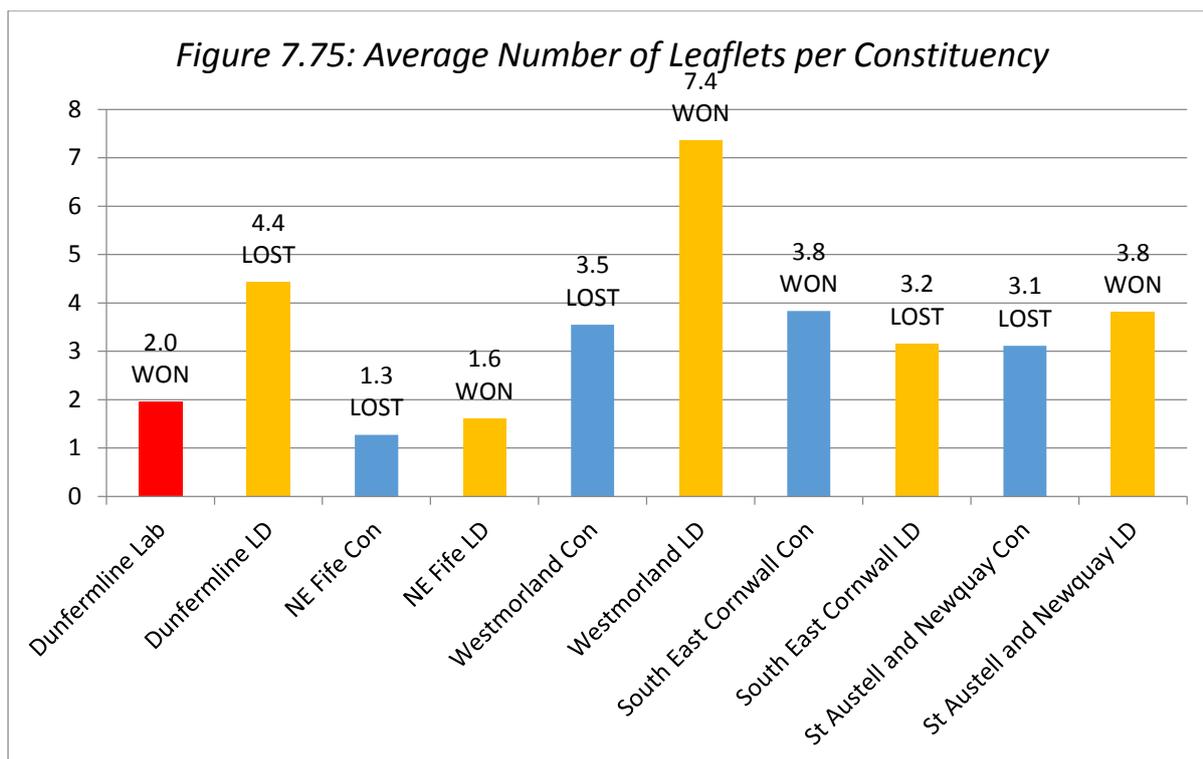


In Dunfermline the campaign had the largest spread of campaigning seen in any of the post-election surveys but nonetheless this did not insulate Willie Rennie from defeat.



Again the Liberal Democrats have won the literature campaign but not to the same intensity as they did in Westmorland and only to similar levels as the party achieved in Cornwall. Labour does not really compete with the Liberal Democrats in terms of the campaign so their support must depend on other factors rather than the short campaign of the election. However, as Chris Rennard puts it, ‘Focus style leaflets, newspapers...are all part of what is sometimes called a “blunderbuss” approach...you can’t always rely on this approach hitting the right target at the right time.’⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁹⁰ Rennard C., *The Campaign Manual – 2nd edition* (Hebden Bridge, 1995) p.22



Of course, the premise of Liberal Democrat campaigning is that the level of localised effort can offset the national campaign of the other main parties and deliver victory for the party. Because of targeting the party has become very adept at this tactic. However, despite having four years of incumbency and a very active campaign, compared to those seen in most of the Liberal Democrat campaign areas, the party failed to hold Dunfermline and West Fife.

This would seem to contradict the party's ideas and one of the main thrusts of this research: campaigning did not make the difference. Nor, for that matter, did the importance of a popular local candidate, in Willie Rennie. The local political culture of Dunfermline seems to have returned a Labour MP, who was by no means popular. The benefits of a locally popular Labour Prime Minister and a deep-rooted culture of Labour, or at least left-wing support, bearing in mind nationalist voters would seem to have voted Labour in this seat, has seen the party home to victory.

It seems that however good and repetitious a Liberal Democrat campaign might be it needs to have at least the foundation of a locally supportive political culture on which to build its campaign.

Targeting the Message

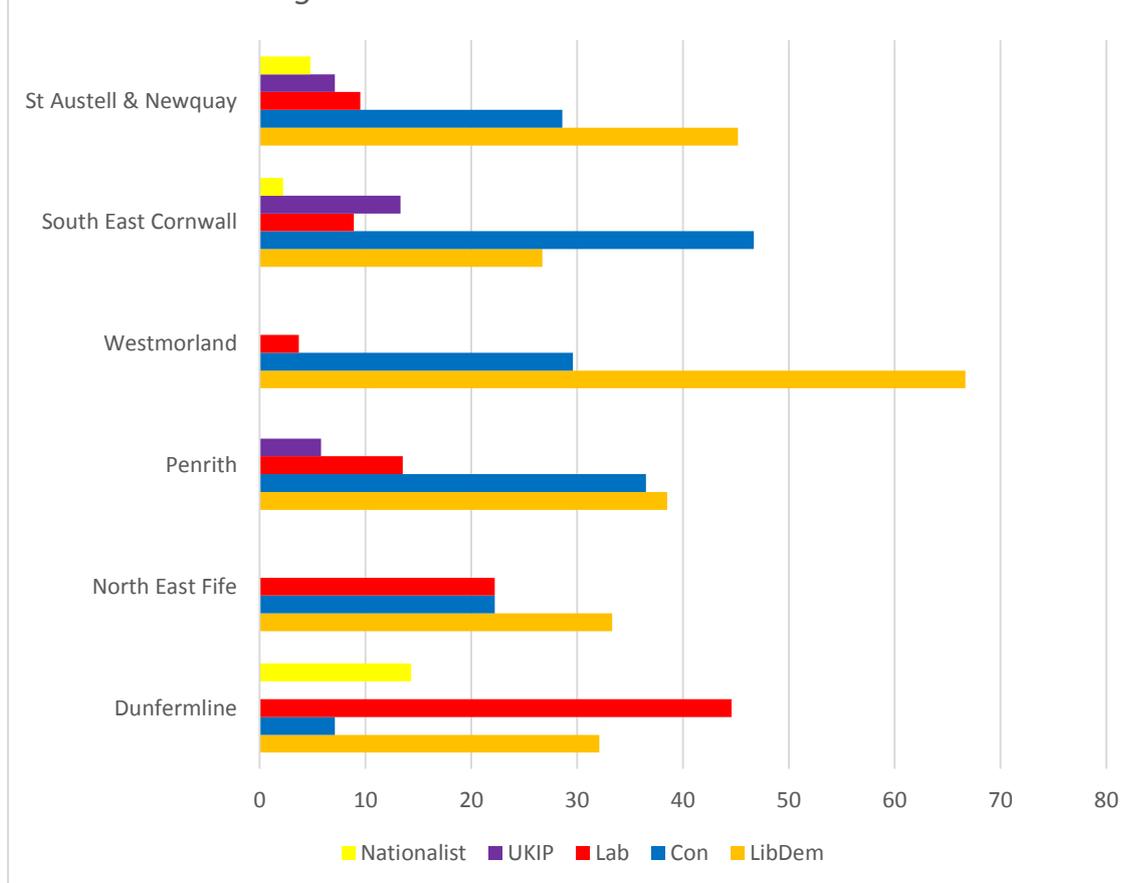
Of course just delivering literature is not the only test of an effective campaign. With the use of modern technology and the profiling of voters electronically these statistics can be broken down further to assess two things: did those willing to change their vote during the campaign swing one way or another? And did the parties target literature at these people specifically to convince them to support them. According to Denver and Hands the Liberal Democrats have been slow to adopt target literature compared to their Labour and Conservative opponents.⁵⁹¹ The so-called 2010 'direct mail election... [would see] more paper delivered to more houses than any campaign in British history.'⁵⁹²

Those voters who were convinced during the election, bearing in mind the discrepancies in those that were open to being convinced during the election broke down as follows.

⁵⁹¹ Denver D. & Hands G., 'Post-Fordism in the constituencies,' *Do Political Campaigns Matter?* (eds. Farrell D. & Schmitt-Beck R.) (London, 2002), p.116

⁵⁹² Kavanagh D. & Cowley P., *The British General Election of 2010* (Basingstoke, 2010), p.232

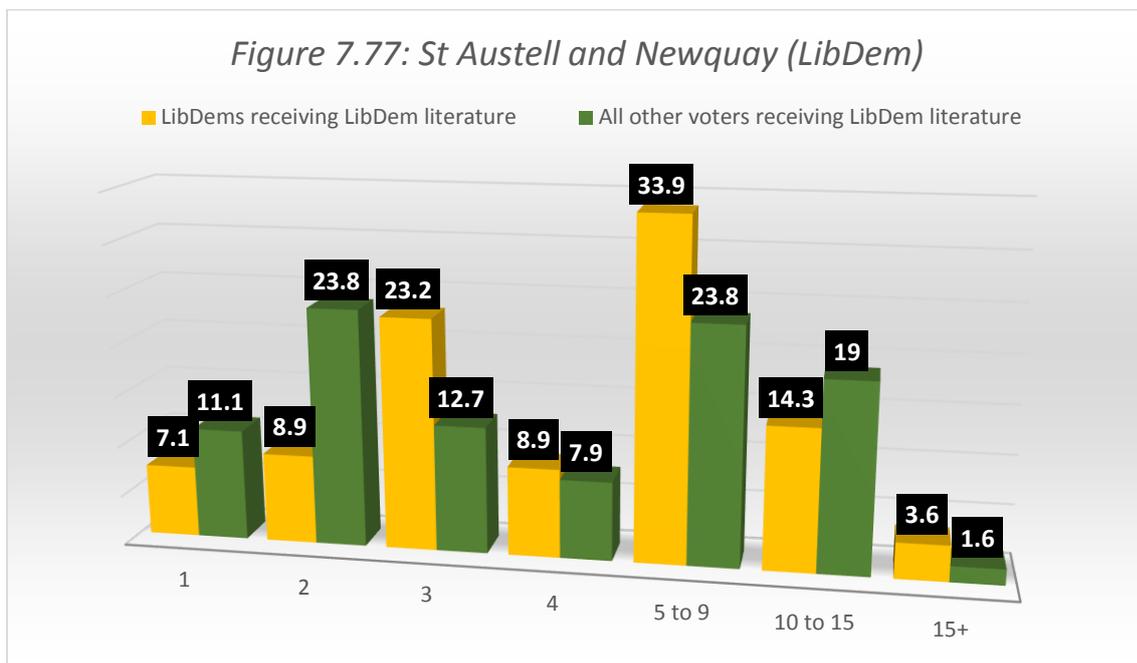
Figure 7.76: How undecided voters voted



This seems to indicate that the Liberal Democrats have, on balance, succeeded in converting the largest proportion of voters during the campaign in the election period in St Austell and Newquay, Westmorland, North East Fife and Penrith. However, as has been shown there was no local campaign to speak of in Penrith and the Border so in this seat this must have been a national influence which suggests a slight lead for the Liberal Democrats. If this were to be considered a control sample, any improvement on this could be attributed to the local campaign activity. In Westmorland and St Austell and Newquay the local campaign does seem to have had an impact and in the case of the Cornish seat this could have had an impact on the final result. Most noticeably the Liberal Democrats have failed to pick up a majority of the undecided voters in South East Cornwall during the election and have lost by margin of 46.7% to 26.7% amongst this group. This gap must have proved significant in the party's failure to win the seat in 2010. The Liberal Democrats would appear to have lost the local campaign to their Conservative opponents. However, as previously shown the apparent gap in terms of general local literature does not seem to suggest why this gap is this large. By breaking down the statistics further it

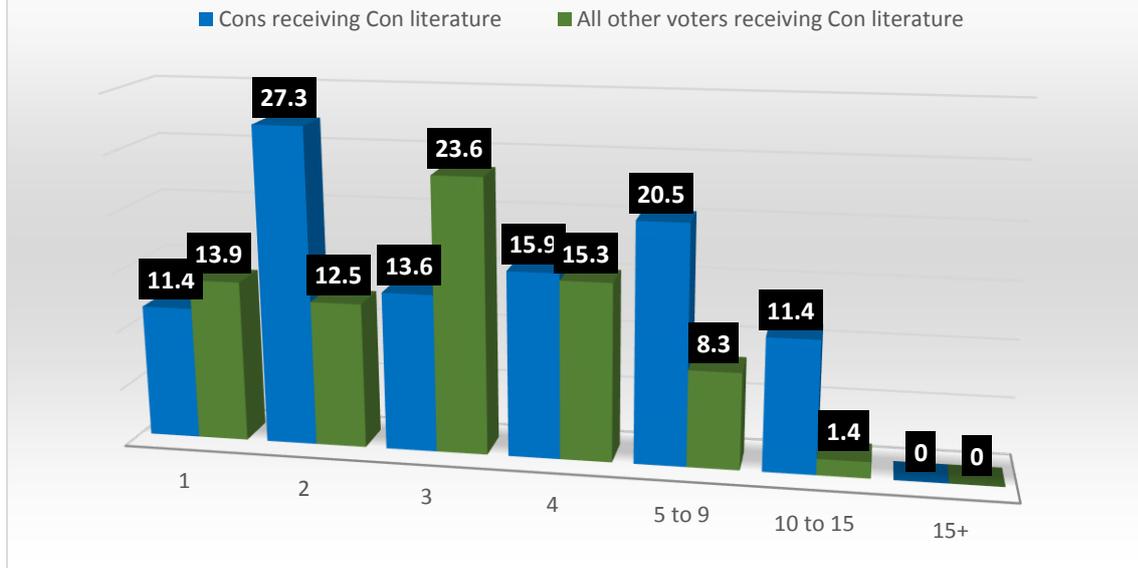
is possible to see the degree of sophistication that the Conservative campaign has achieved in comparison to their Liberal Democrat opponents.

Of course, the undecided voters form a vital part of assessing which party won the campaign for changing minds during the election. However, another test is whether the parties formed a dialogue with their own supporters and maintained their support and motivated them to actually cast their vote during the election - 'get out the vote', or, at least, the votes for you. As the percentage of the population who vote reduces, the importance of differential turnout cannot be understated.



The Liberal Democrats in St Austell and Newquay appear to be slightly targeting their messages as those people who actually voted Liberal Democrat and did tend to receive more than the general electorate. However, when Liberal Democrats are excluded from all those voters receiving literature, Liberal Democrat voters do tend to receive more literature between the 5-9 range but other voters receive more in the range of 10-15. This might suggest that the Liberal Democrats are targeting those voters to squeeze them to support them to defeat the Conservative.

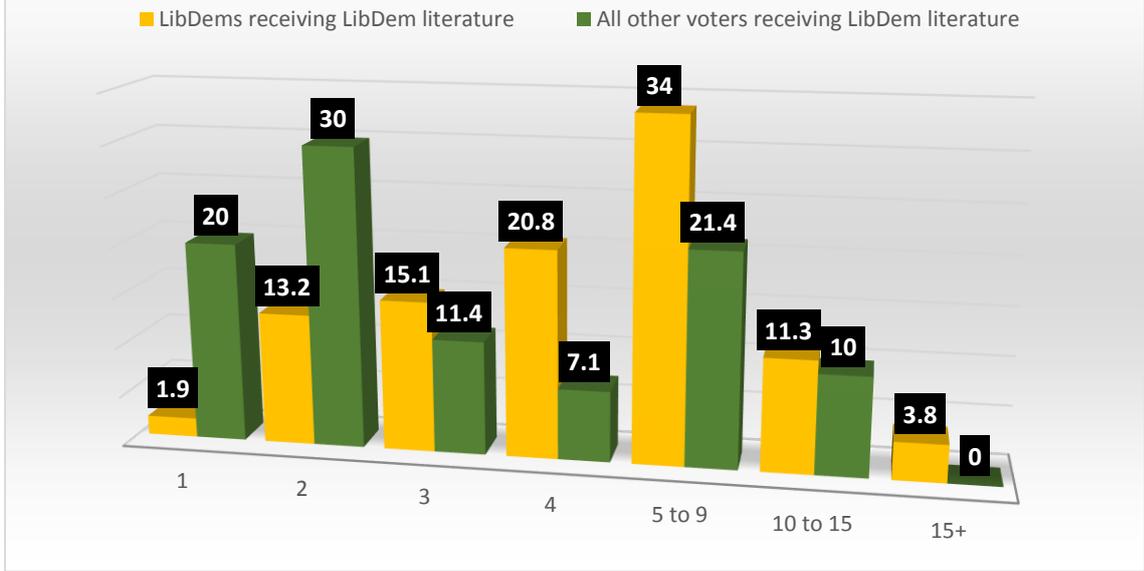
Figure 7.78: St Austell and Newquay (Con)



When looking at Conservative party activity it is quite clear that targeting of their message occurred. There appears to be evidence that the general electorate receive up to four leaflets from the party, but those who ended up voting Conservative, tend to be the only group receiving anything in the range of 5 to 9 or from 10 to 15 leaflets. This suggests that the Conservatives are speaking to their supporters more actively – targeting their supporters to firm them up and to motivate them to vote. As mentioned earlier the Conservatives were perceived, by Kavanagh and Cowley to have the ‘ground war campaign advantage... although relatively slight.’⁵⁹³

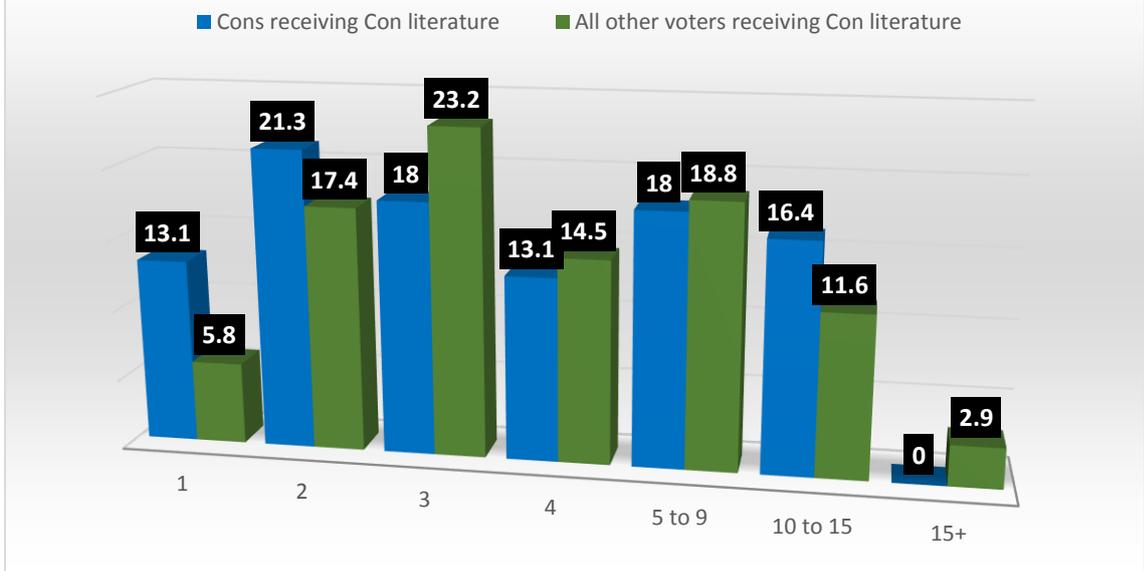
⁵⁹³ Kavanagh D. & Cowley P., *The British General Election of 2010* (Basingstoke, 2010) p.230

Figure 7.79: South East Cornwall (LibDem)



What is interesting in South East Cornwall is that the Liberal Democrats have not run a significantly, or even noticeably, worse campaign than in St Austell and Newquay.

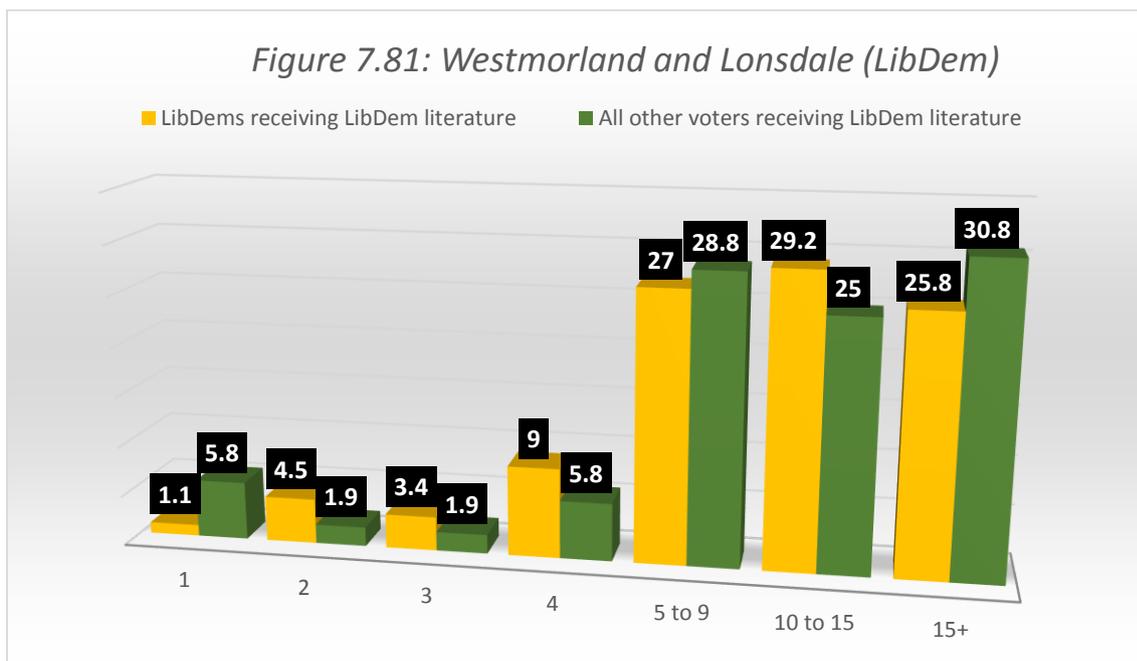
Figure 7.80: South East Cornwall (Con)



However, what is interesting looking at the graph, figure 7.80, for the Conservative campaign in South East Cornwall is that it does not seem to be particularly more active than the Liberal Democrats' or for that matter the Conservatives in St Austell and Newquay. Although there does seem to be a little more activity at the upper end it might not be that significant in delivering the large swing the Conservatives achieved in this seat in 2010. Looking at the other four seats might give a

comparison to the work that Liberal Democrats might expect elsewhere and its potential impacts on the local electorate.

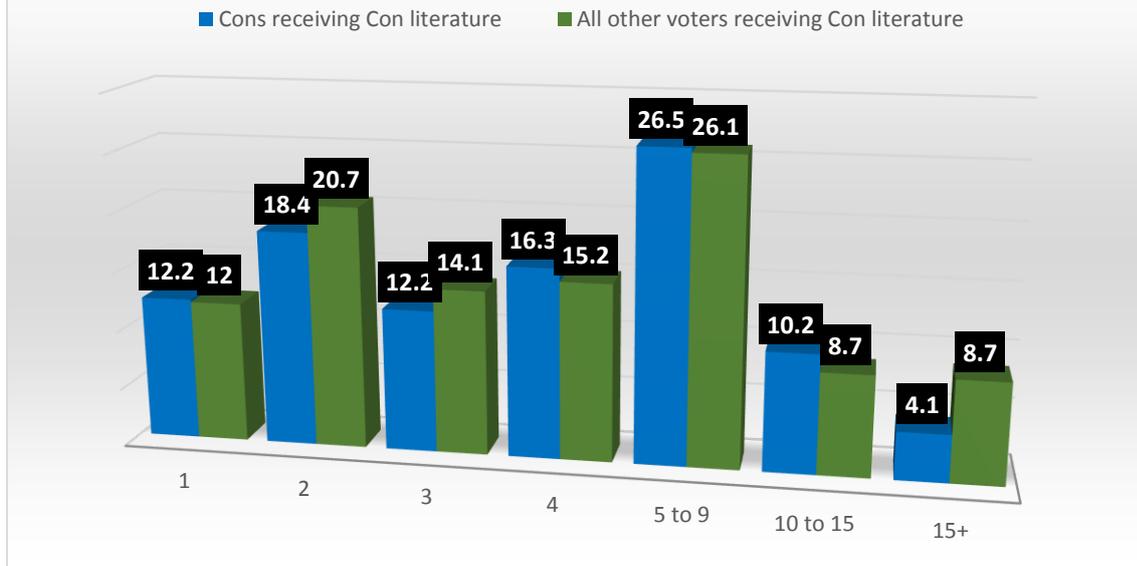
What is very clear from the Liberal Democrat campaign in Westmorland and Lonsdale is the scale of the party's leafleting operation is of a different order of magnitude to that of the Liberal Democrats in Cornwall. It would also seem to lay to rest the view, from a more recent form of Liberal Democrat campaigner,⁵⁹⁴ that it is possible to conduct a literature campaign that is too intensive. Although the party had essentially delivered victory in this constituency before the election was even called, the vast majority of those voters who still remained undecided were convinced by the party to support it. It is very difficult to decide how much to attribute this to the campaign the party ran locally but it would seem some of it should be as over 50% of the population received over ten leaflets from the party during the election, and over 30% received over 15.



What is very interesting about the Conservative campaign in Westmorland is the apparent equality between the campaign the eventual Conservative voters received as the one that the general electorate received.

⁵⁹⁴ Morrissey H., *Processes and Culture within the Liberal Democrats and Recommendations for change* (London, 2013)

Figure 7.82: Westmorland and Lonsdale (Con)

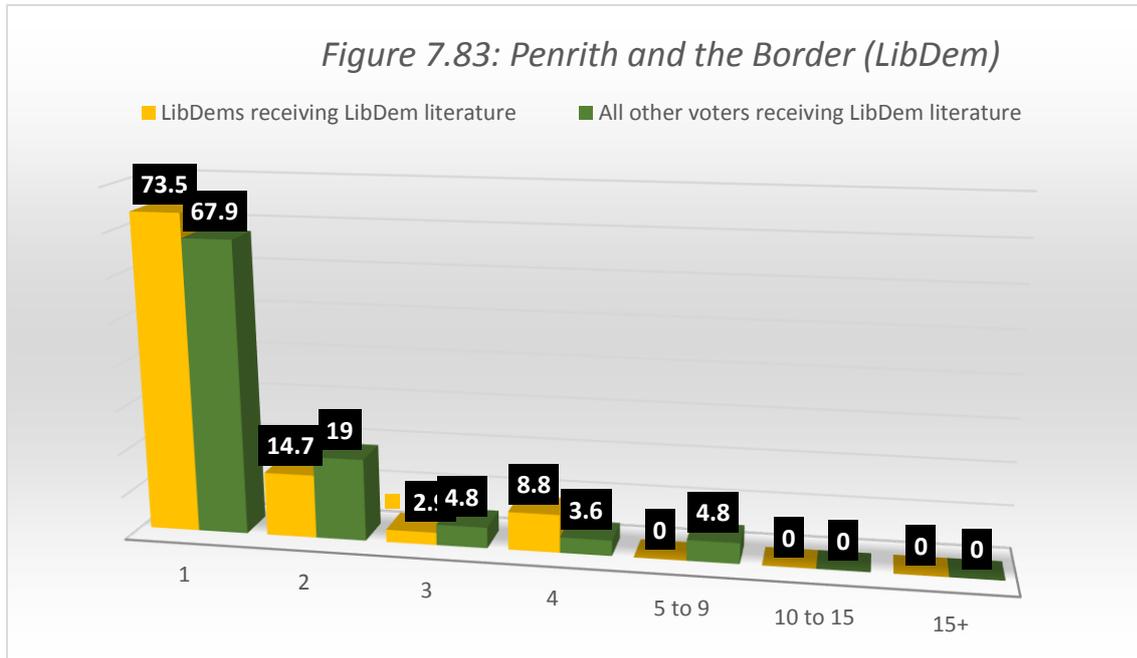


In both the case of the Liberal Democrat and Conservative campaigns this survey fails to identify that both used targeted literature to the electorate, but because of the scale of it and the intensity of the campaign it does not show through on this survey. Although based on the literature from the constituency⁵⁹⁵ there is a great deal of evidence that the campaign used target mailings there is little way for the electorate to know, or to pass on, this information to those surveying. They simply know the scale of the campaign they received. Nonetheless of those constituencies surveyed Westmorland saw the most intensive Liberal Democrat campaign, and for that matter the most intensive Conservative campaign, and this comparative activity did clearly affect the scale of the Liberal Democrat victory even if the seat was clearly decided before the election campaign itself started.

As can be seen from Penrith and the Border, the Liberal Democrat campaign was anything but intensive. The average elector received just one piece of literature from the party, however the party managed to pick up the majority of those voters that had yet to make up their minds at the beginning of the campaign in this seat. Logically, if one accepts that other seats are affected by the local campaign, then this seat, because there was no local campaign from the Liberal Democrats to speak of, must

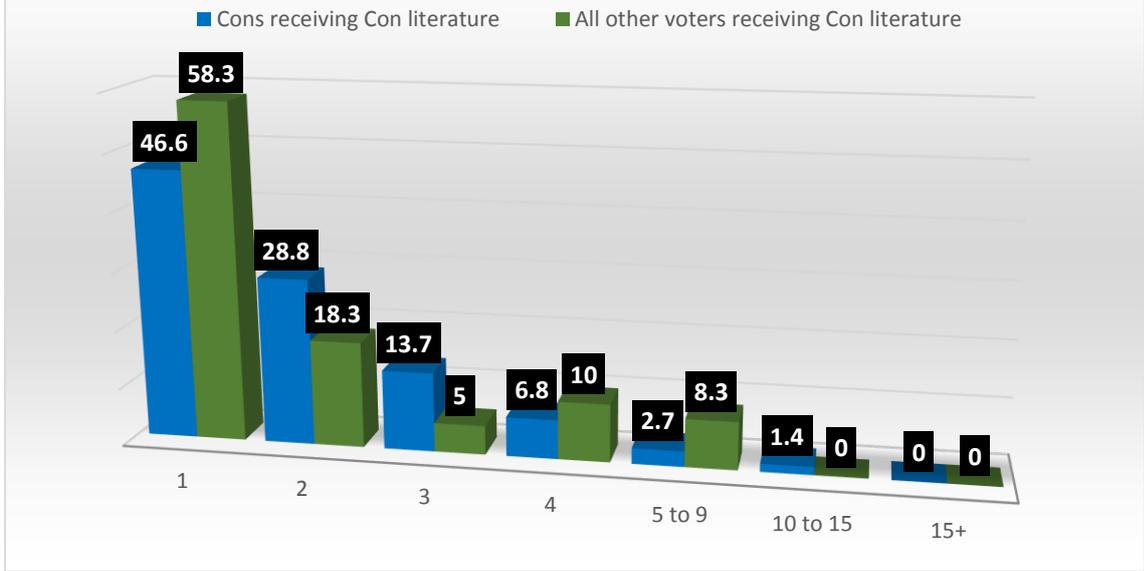
⁵⁹⁵ LSE Coll Misc GE2010/3/226

have been affected by the national campaign, which saw the party slightly pip the Conservatives in the constituency, although it did not help them to overall victory.



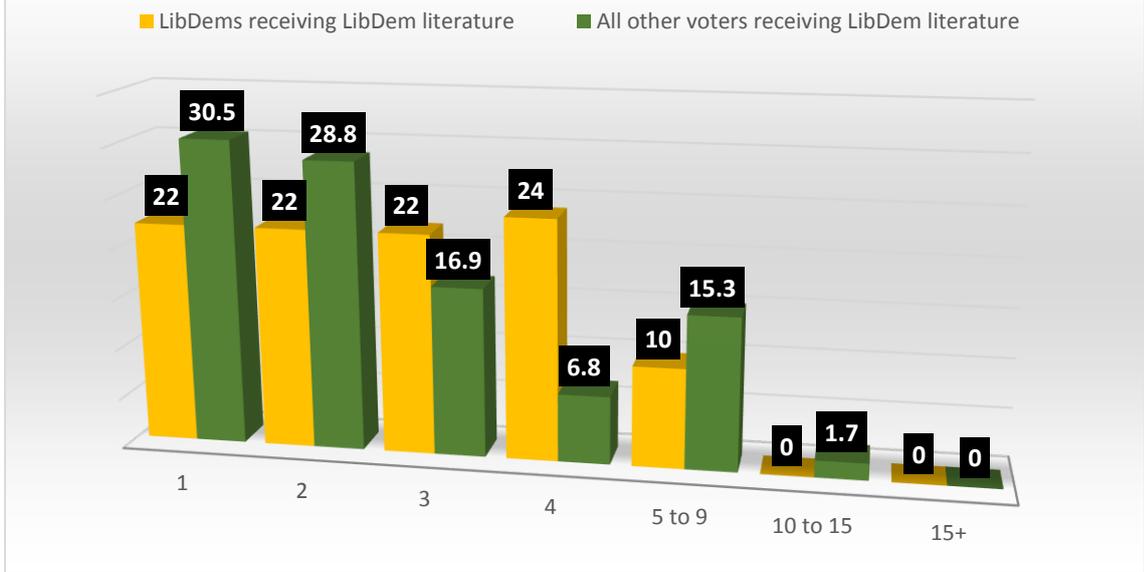
However, the Conservatives also managed to out-campaign the Liberal Democrats in this constituency. This was not on a substantial scale, which might suggest that the intensity of the local campaign is essential if it is going to have any substantial effect on the outcome of the election. The local campaign in Penrith and the Border does not seem to have an effect as is it minimal compared to other seats. This election was decided by a combination of the electorate being fairly decided before the campaign started and the narrative of the national campaign, which may have helped the Liberal Democrats achieve a small lead amongst those undecided at the beginning of the campaign, but this was not enough to affect the outcome locally.

Figure 7.84: Penrith and the Border (Con)



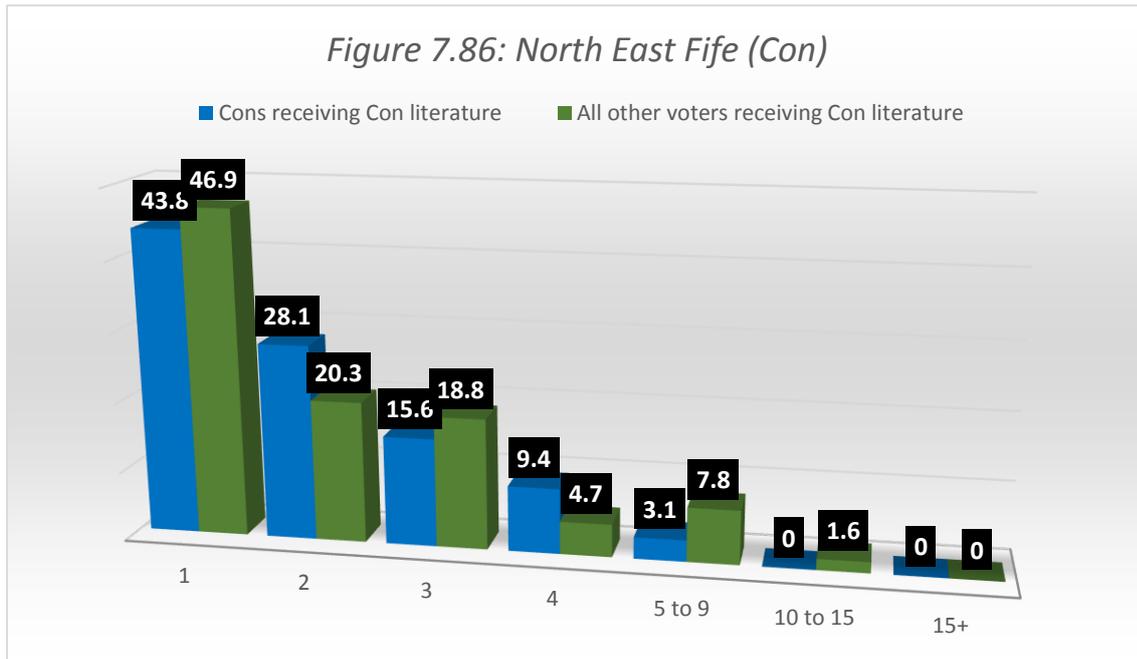
In North East Fife, the Liberal Democrats appear to have achieved a relatively modest local campaign, compared to apparently more marginal constituencies and there does seem to be some evidence of targeted activity in the 5 to 9 category. This does make sense in a political context of four party politics where squeezing third and fourth party support makes even more sense than in England's three party structure.

Figure 7.85: North East Fife (LibDem)



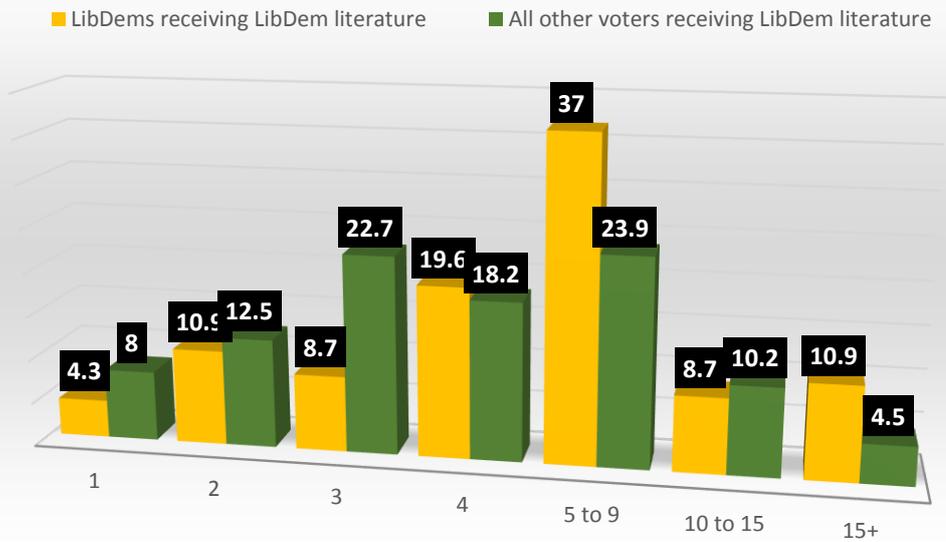
What is clear from the comparison in North East Fife of the Conservative campaign is the apparent similarity to the spread of the literature to that in Penrith and the

Border, as if the campaign is 'standard'.



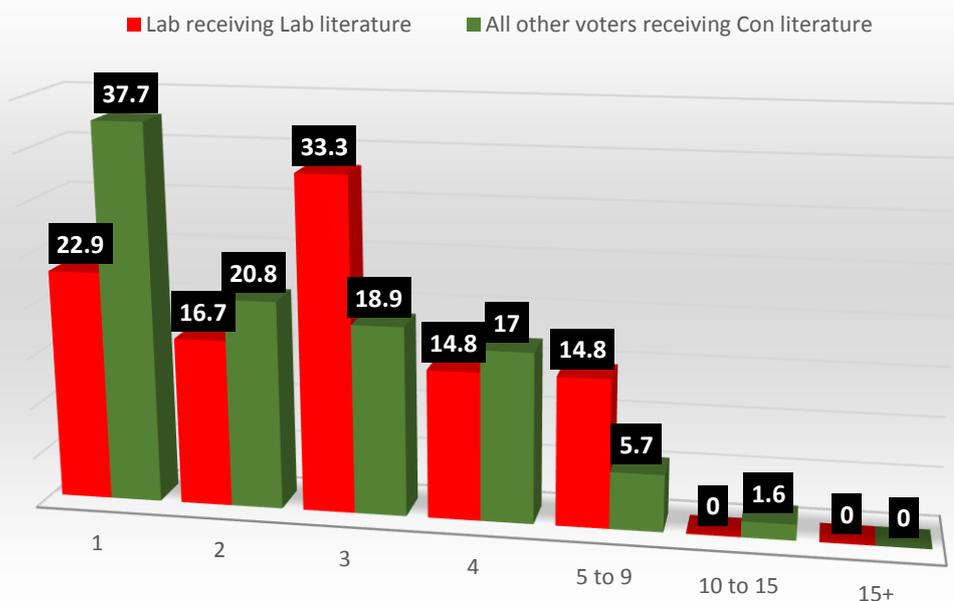
This would fit with the party using the election communication facility that is delivered by the Royal Mail and financed by the Home Office as part of the election process. This would also help to explain the lack of disparity between those who are Conservative voters and those who are not. As the election communication can be either unaddressed (one per house) or addressed (one per elector) these two Conservative campaigns would seem to fit the profile of this breakdown: the more people in the house the more leaflets they receive but with diminishing amounts as households of large multiple occupancies dwindle.

Figure 7.87: Dunfermline and West Fife (LibDem)



As can be seen from the Liberal Democrat campaign in Dunfermline and West Fife, although the party managed to deliver to more doors than the party did in Westmorland and Lonsdale, it failed to achieve the same level of intensity. There is little evidence that the local campaign was what won the seat, in terms of literature for the Labour Party.

Figure 7.88: Dunfermline and West Fife (Lab)



Although more intensive than the other Conservative campaigns in Penrith and North East Fife, this is hardly a high profile local campaign. Of course this ignores the fact

that community campaigning, such as the high intensity campaign delivered by some of the Liberal Democrats in these surveys had historically been the preserve of that party, and the Conservative and Labour parties have relied on other methods of communicating their message, which the Liberal Democrats have not had access to, such as the national media. However, in the case of the Conservative Party, especially in the marginal seats such as those in Cornwall, it has adopted the technique to counteract the campaign effectiveness of the Liberal Democrats. Despite the view from Johnston and Pattie that 'a majority of those who switched during the campaign favour[ed] the Liberal Democrats,'⁵⁹⁶ this does not always seem to be the case. In the case of South East Cornwall the Conservatives would even seem to have slightly overtaken the Liberal Democrats in campaign intensity, blunting the party's unique selling point of being the only party interested and campaigning on local issues that seem to affect Liberal Democrat voters more than others.

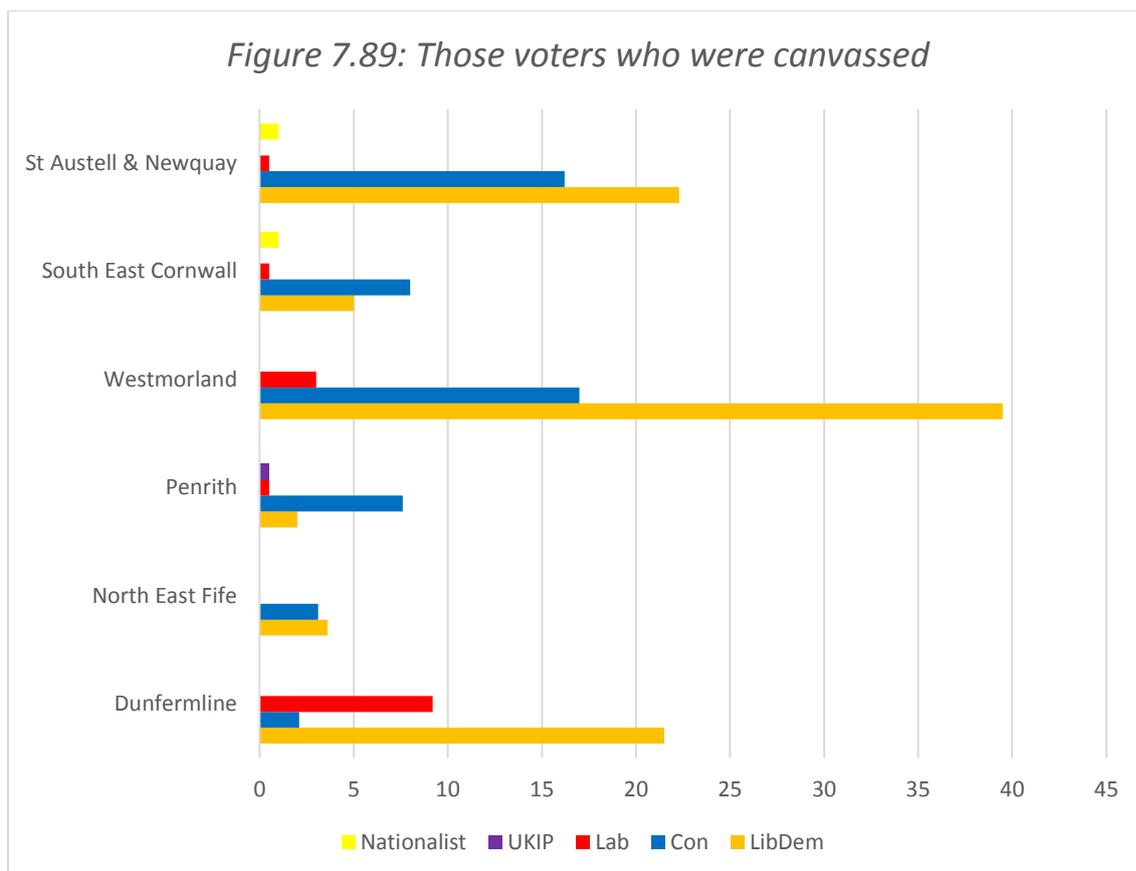
Speaking to the Voters

Historically, canvassing has been an important part of campaigning for the parties to speak to voters, identifying supporters and those third or fourth supporters that the party could possibly squeeze as part of an intensive campaign. Denver and Hands have identified that canvassing as a 'form of face-to-face communication with electors is largely now confined to some rural areas.'⁵⁹⁷ As part of the surveys respondents were asked other questions about campaign activity in their constituency assessing whether canvassing was still an important part of campaigning and whether telephone canvassing was becoming more important.

⁵⁹⁶ Johnston R. & Pattie C., 'Where Did Labour's Votes Go? Valence Politics and Campaign Effects at the 2010 British General Election', *BJPIR: 2011 VOL 13*, p.285

⁵⁹⁷ Denver D. & Hands G., 'Post-Fordism in the constituencies,' *Do Political Campaigns Matter?* (eds. Farrell D. & Schmitt-Beck R.) (London, 2002) p.114

Figure 7.89: Those voters who were canvassed



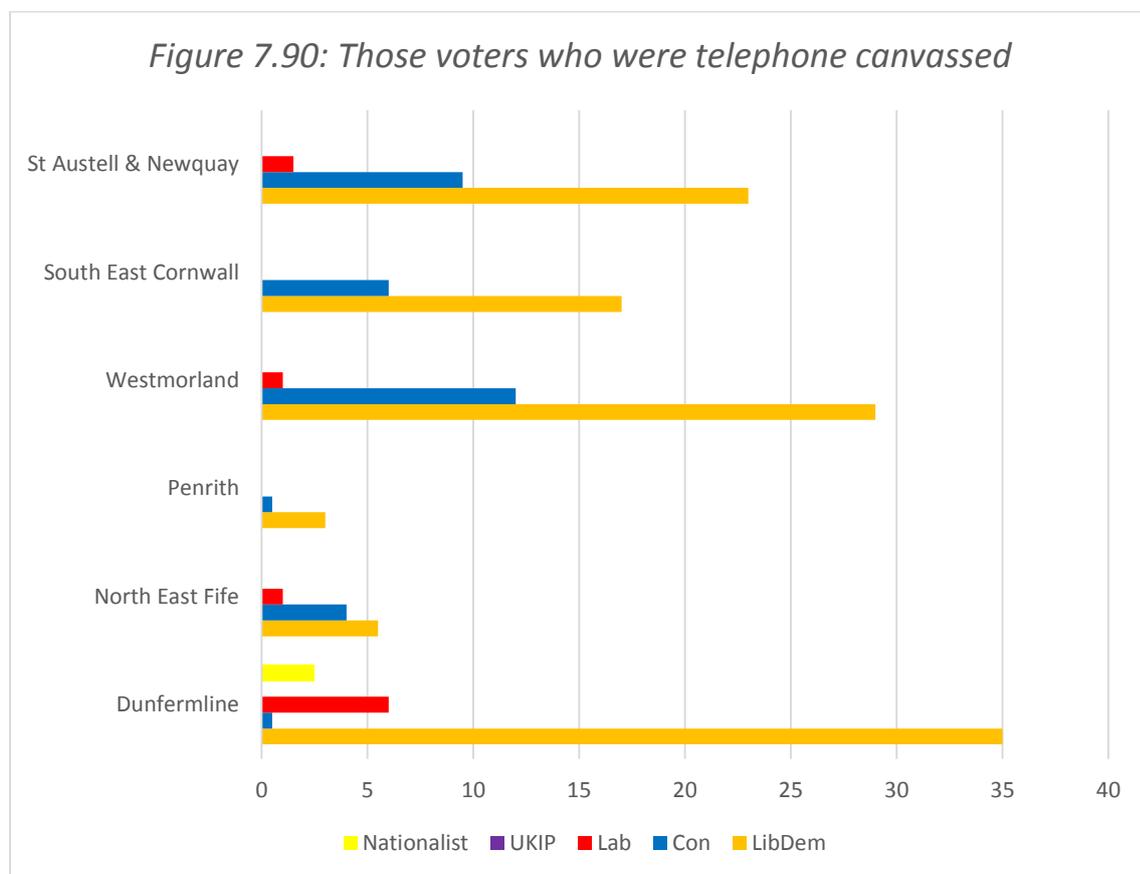
This would seem to illustrate the canvassing campaign is much less intensive than the literature campaign. In fact, with the exception of Westmorland it is arguably negligible. So much so that breaking down the statistics any further would become statistically questionable as the numbers are so small from those who were contacted.

Although the Liberal Democrats have achieved a notable lead in terms of those doors canvassed in St Austell and Newquay and Westmorland and Dunfermline - once again they have allowed themselves to be beaten in this regard in South East Cornwall. Perhaps this also adds to the list of areas in which the party was overtaken in this constituency.

As Pattie and Johnson have argued, 'partly in response to declining local party memberships, and partly as a feature of the growing modernisation and centralisation of constituency campaigns, Britain's major political parties have in recent elections turned to telephone canvassing methods to contact voters.'⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁸ Pattie C. & Johnson R., 'The growing efficacy of telephone political canvassing at the 2005 and 2010 British general elections', *International Journal of Market Research* Vol. 54 Issue 1 p.49

Despite Denver and Hands arguing that the Liberal Democrats adopted telephone canvassing later than the other two parties, there appears to be evidence that by 2010 the party had become efficient at using it, at least in target areas.⁵⁹⁹ Of course, modern campaigning also uses telephone canvassing as a more efficient means of communicating with the voters. Perhaps it is a logical outcome of reduced party memberships that using a more efficient means of speaking directly to voters will be used and this might give evidence of where the parties are increasingly putting their sparse resources.



What appears to be clear is that the Liberal Democrats have become very active, when targeting their campaigns, compared to the other parties in these six seats, in their use of telephone canvassing. Of course the primary objective of telephone canvassing was not to convince voters to support a party but to identify who they were supporting.⁶⁰⁰ This process has changed to so-called voter identification rather than canvassing.

⁵⁹⁹ Denver D. & Hands G., 'Post-Fordism in the constituencies,' *Do Political Campaigns Matter?* (eds. Farrell D. & Schmitt-Beck R.) (London, 2002) p.117

⁶⁰⁰ Ault J. & Stephenson H., *The Campaign Manual – 3rd Edition* (Hebden Bridge, 2000) p.78

Thus, just because the Liberal Democrats contacted more people in Dunfermline and South East Cornwall did not mean that the process switched any support to the party, it probably simply identified that the Liberal Democrats were not winning. As the Liberal Democrats say themselves, 'few converts are made by...canvassing in General Elections.'⁶⁰¹

The Poster Campaign

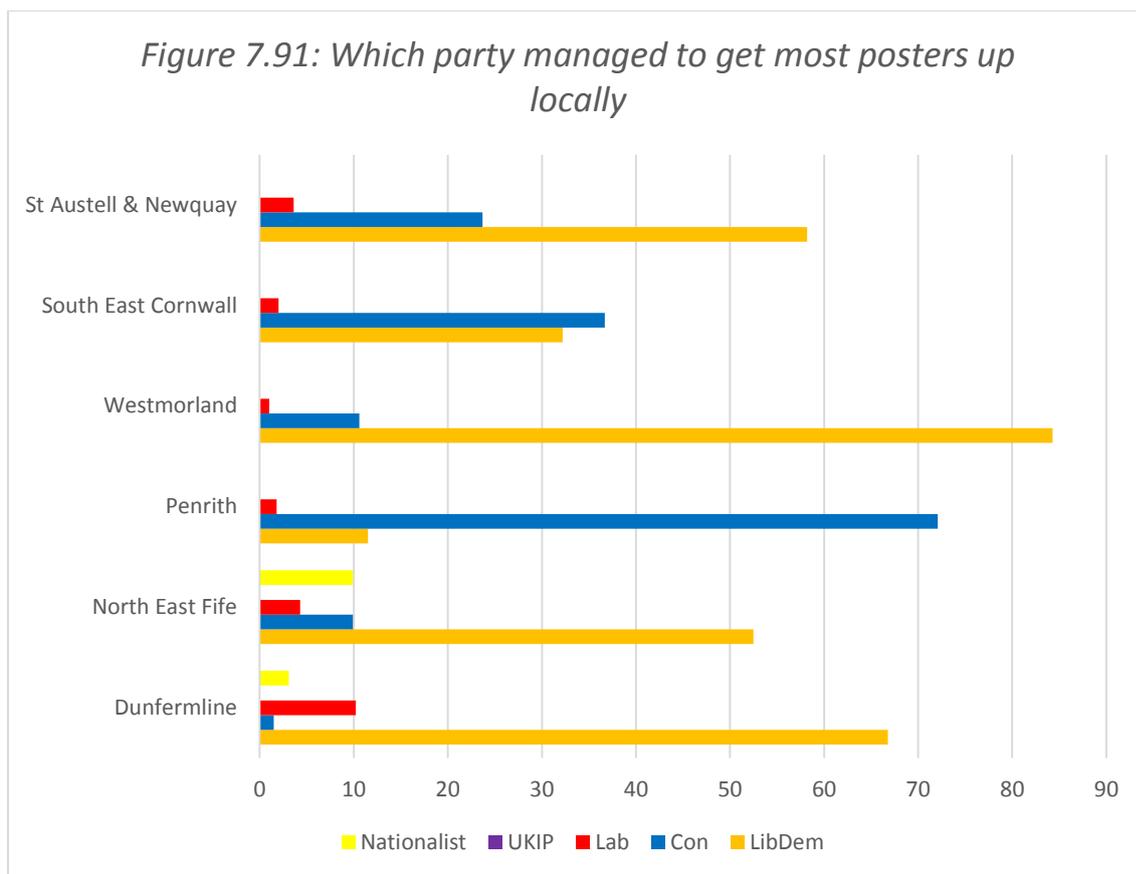
Some research was conducted for the 2010 election assessing the impact of the local poster campaign.⁶⁰² To raise the profile of the local candidate there is often a contest to try to erect as many poster boards as possible by the main contestants to add credibility to the local campaign. Thus, assessing who wins this part of the campaign might also give evidence as to which of the parties is winning a less subtle, but much more publically obvious, part of the campaign. If posters add credibility, then the winner of this campaign should have placed themselves as the potential winners, or at least significant contenders. As Baines et. al. argue 'the majority of Liberal Democrat posters were local, in support of individual MPs. Those [voters] expressing positive views were mostly impressed by the evidence of winnability that the display of posters by their neighbours suggested.'⁶⁰³ However, they also identify that a less professional, even amateurish, campaign can act as a brake on an otherwise active campaign as they believe that many voters are risk averse and reject campaign, especially a Liberal Democrat one, if it does not appear to be winning.⁶⁰⁴ This would suggest that they do add credibility to a local campaign that already has a sense of momentum, delivered by the locally active literature campaigns which have already been discussed.

⁶⁰¹ Rennard C., *The Campaign Manual – 2nd Edition* (Hebden Bridge, 1995) p.49

⁶⁰² Baines P., Macdonald E. et.al., 'Measuring communication channel experiences and their influence on voting in the 2010 British General Election', *Journal of Marketing Management Vol. 27, Nos. 7–8*, (July 2011)

⁶⁰³ Ibid p.710

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid

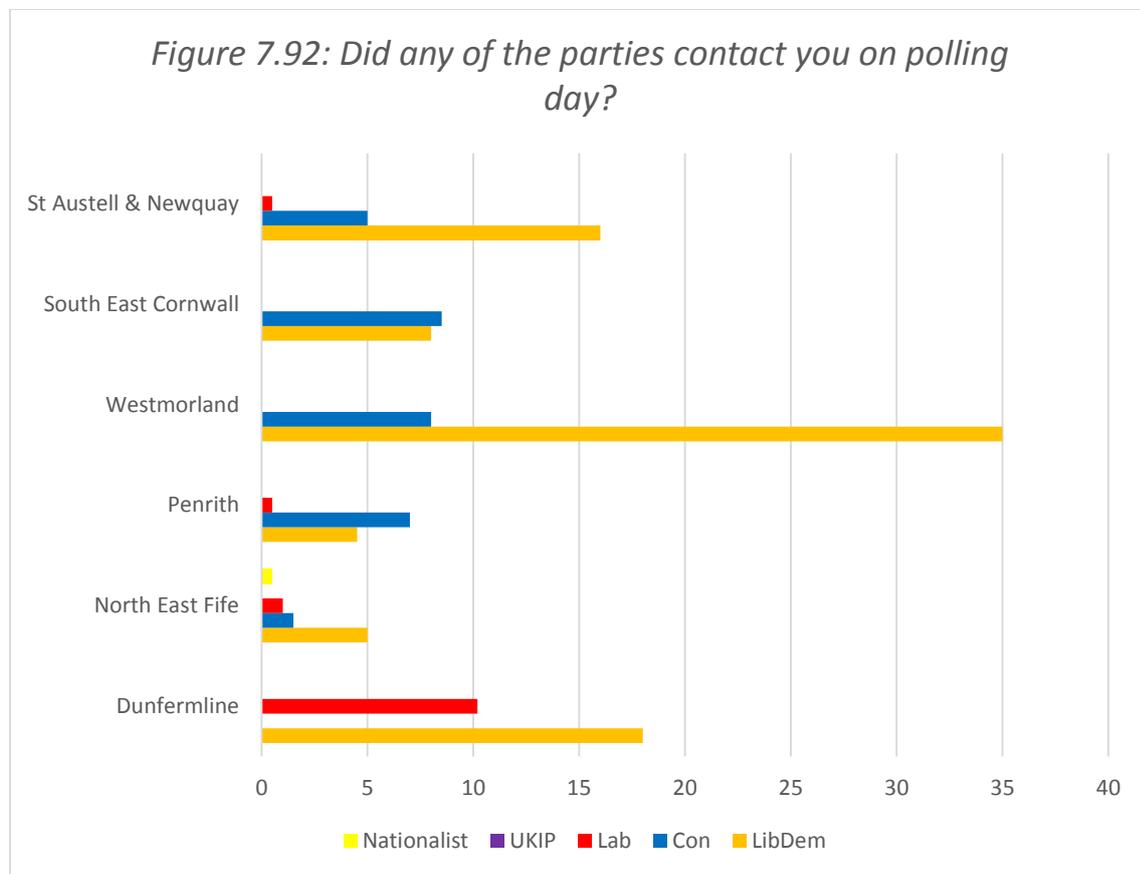


Although it is difficult to give a great deal of credibility to the significance of the poster campaign as a major factor in the convincing of voters to support one party or another it does seem to be at least indicative of the main contestants in a seat. In fact, with the exception of Dunfermline and West Fife, the surveys conducted for this research show this part of the campaign to be a strong litmus test for which of the parties is actually going to win. This, once again, gives more evidence for the failure for the Liberal Democrats in South East Cornwall. The party did not win this aspect of the local campaign either, again it only lost marginally but enough to suggest that the party was in for a serious contest with the Conservatives.

Polling Day activity

Although polling day activity is the final part for the push votes and the surveys showed a few people in each constituency did decide which way to vote on polling day - the objective of this part of the research was to assess the effort the parties put into their activities and to what extent this was targeted activity to attempt to achieve differential turnout as the general turnout at elections decreases. As Johnston et. al. argue, the Liberal Democrats, even more than the other two parties, 'concentrated

the last stages of the campaign on re-contacting their core supporters, with over three-quarters of those committed to one of the other parties getting no more than one type of communication from them.⁶⁰⁵



The impact the parties can have on polling day may be fairly limited with none of the parties managing to speak to more than a third of the population.

Quite clearly, only in Westmorland and Lonsdale did the party appear to have a large scale polling day operation. Once again the party managed to lead in campaigning terms in St Austell and Newquay, by a substantial margin over the Conservatives, but in South East Cornwall again the Liberal Democrats lost out in terms of polling day activity to the Conservatives, even though both campaigns were fairly modest compared to other areas. In terms of polling day activity the party beat Labour in Dunfermline without a victorious outcome. Again despite the Liberal Democrat campaign in Dunfermline being significantly larger than that of the Labour Party it failed to deliver victory. This may be a quirk of by-election areas where

⁶⁰⁵ Johnston R., Cutts D. et. al., We've got them on the list: contacting, canvassing and voting in a British general election campaign, *Electoral Studies* 31 (2012), p.325

infrastructures have to be built rapidly in the absence of previous organisation. What seems clear from the Dunfermline experience is that, whatever the party had done, it was always going to fail to overtake the latently high levels of Labour support in the constituency which had failed to turnout in the by-election, as the effect on the national situation was minimal, but by the time of the 2010 general election the voters were keen to return a Labour MP to resist the likely incoming Conservative government, which had not been an issue at the time of the 2006 by-election, which could not change the national government.

Conclusion

In Cornwall, 'the political landscape of Cornwall has altered dramatically after [the 2010] general election left an even split of parliamentary representation between Conservatives and Liberal Democrats.'⁶⁰⁶ The loss, at least notionally, of three seats to the Conservatives, was a major disappointment for a party that held every seat in Cornwall when the election started.

The Liberal Democrat campaign was highly targeted in several of the seats surveyed in the post-election surveys and as Fisher et. al. state 'the Liberal Democrats were again successful in this respect, the intensity of the campaigns in their target seats being slightly higher than that of Labour and equal to that of the Conservatives. Nevertheless, this represents something of a change for the Conservatives, who have historically struggled to focus their efforts effectively.'⁶⁰⁷ This increased effectiveness of the Conservative campaign would seem to have paid dividends in South East Cornwall.

St Austell and Newquay and South East Cornwall both entered the election in similar circumstances with popular local MPs retiring. Both were replaced with relatively young and unknown candidates to succeed them and yet in one the Liberal Democrats were able to hang on and in the other the party was fairly comfortably beaten. What is clear from this stage of surveying is that the Liberal Democrats do apparently benefit significantly from running a high visibility localised campaign as is abundantly clear from the overwhelming campaign the party managed to run in

⁶⁰⁶ *The Cornish Guardian*, 14th May 2010

⁶⁰⁷ Fisher J., Cutts D. & Fieldhouse E., 'The electoral effectiveness of constituency campaigning in the 2010 British general election: The 'triumph' of Labour?' *Electoral Studies* 30 (2011) p.820

Westmorland and Lonsdale. When asked why the Liberal Democrat MP had retained his Westmorland seat, his Conservative opponent said, ‘the main reason we lost was the sheer size and scope of the local Lib Dem machine and an extremely popular local MP.’⁶⁰⁸ What is clear, however, from these surveys is that the size and scope of the campaign in South East Cornwall was not sufficient to fend off a recovering Conservative Party, which only fell just short of securing an overall majority in parliament. South East Cornwall had only been won in 1997 and the party had represented it throughout the period of a Labour government with a Conservative Party in the electoral doldrums, nationally and locally. The decision of Colin Breed to retire, though he did give the party plenty of notice, announcing this in 2007,⁶⁰⁹ lost the party the benefits of incumbency. This was compounded by being out-campaigned by the local Conservatives, however marginally, as the party was beaten on several key counts by the local Conservatives. This combination of factors must have contributed to the eventual failure of the party to retain the seat. This failure was not replicated in St Austell and Newquay because the Liberal Democrats led on the key tests of the volume and spread of literature and other campaigns metrics that these surveys assessed. This evidence indicates, even if it remains moderately difficult to assess to what extent, that the size and scope of the campaign does play a factor in deciding the outcome of a local constituency election. Westmorland and Lonsdale shows that a high profile campaign can place a candidate, and his campaign, in a winning position for the Liberal Democrats. However, a failure to do so can also rob a Liberal Democrat of victory. Of course, Farron was helped by incumbency in Westmorland, but then so was Julia Goldsworthy in Camborne and Redruth, slightly questioning the view, at least in Cornwall, that ‘Conservatives were much more likely to defeat a new candidate than an incumbent.’⁶¹⁰

A local campaign may matter less for a Conservative or Labour candidate where they can win, but the evidence seems to suggest that just by competing on equal terms with the Liberal Democrats it can be enough for those parties to succeed.

⁶⁰⁸ <http://www.conservativehome.com/platform/2013/03/gareth-mckeever.html> Last Viewed 7th December 2013

⁶⁰⁹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/cornwall/7034025.stm> Last Viewed 7th December 2013

⁶¹⁰ Johnston R. & Pattie C., ‘The Local Campaigns and the Outcome’, *Britain at the Polls 2010* (eds. Allen N. & Bartle J.) (London, 2011), p.232

Dunfermline seems to suggest that there are in fact circumstances where even a high profile campaign cannot overcome external forces. As Kavanagh and Cowley discovered when looking at Liberal Democrat/Labour contests, 'Labour is effective at getting their ducks in a row in places where they know they're in a fight.'⁶¹¹ It was perhaps unlucky for Willie Rennie to have found his effective opponent, not in Thomas Docherty who became MP for Dunfermline whose personal influence on the campaign was low, but in Gordon Brown, who remained popular in his local fiefdom of Fife and saw Scotland swing towards Labour rather than the parties that entered government in 2010.

⁶¹¹ Kavanagh D. & Cowley P., *The British General Election of 2010* (Basingstoke, 2010), p.237

Chapter 8: Conclusions

This research thesis has sought to weigh up the relative importance of three distinct issues on the areas of Cornish political culture, the personalities that contest elections in Cornwall and the use of community politics campaigning that the Liberal Democrats have used since the 1960s and 1970s. This campaigning developed into what has been called *Rennardism* by both its exponents and its detractors.

The first two questions were:

- Is the political culture of Cornwall different from the other parts of Britain, or the Celtic fringe, which makes it more likely to support the Liberal Democrats?
- Do the political figures in Cornwall have greater significance than in other areas?

However, as has become clearer as the research progressed and as this thesis discusses, the question that has been a subject of little empirical analysis is:

- Has the use of community campaigning techniques in Cornwall been the factor that elected the Liberal Democrats between 1997 and 2010?

Answering this question has become the focus of this thesis as it is the most significant contribution to academic debate on the topic of how the Liberal Democrats have been successful since the election of 1997.

By necessity, this research has a broad span, in order to assess some of the cultural and character aspects. As a result, a substantial part of the analysis relies on less empirical evidence than the surveys which were conducted between 2008-2010. However, strong themes do show through the research which, even if they are not conclusive, do suggest that Cornwall's political culture is different from other parts of the United Kingdom, even if they align with other parts of the Celtic Fringe - however loosely that is defined.

The use of constituency based surveys, across thirteen 2010 seats does appear to have augmented the academic debate. As much as some aspects of the subject

areas is primarily historical research, such as the culture and character chapters the primary benefit of taking this interdisciplinary approach has been to identify some apparent discrepancies in the way that the Liberal Democrats do appear to try to effect, on a localised basis, the outcome of their target seats. This sort of campaign detail, especially the intensity of the local activity has not previously been identified and builds on work done by the British Election Survey which does not ask questions about the persistence of a campaign, merely its existence.

Dealing with the three questions in order. Is Cornwall predisposed to be more supportive of the Liberal Democrats than other parts of the country?

Culture

There seems little doubt that politicians, especially those who fled the political decimation of the Liberal Party in the 1920s and 1930s were convinced that abandoning even their Welsh and Scottish constituencies meant that they had a greater chance of success in Cornwall rather than those other parts of the country that still retained credible levels of Liberal support. Candidates like Walter Runciman, MP for Swansea, and Donald MacLean, a Scottish Borders MP, were urged by their colleague, Isaac Foot, to come to Cornwall to find a safe political haven that would support the leading names of the party such as themselves.⁶¹² This is even further made clear by the deep desire of the Runcimans not to lose their prize of St. Ives as a consequence of the 1928 by-election. The fact that Hilda Runciman was used as the so-called 'warming pan'⁶¹³ meant that, although she kept it warm for her husband, she also managed to freeze out any other potential Liberal Party opponents who might otherwise have contested the seat in 1928, thus losing Walter Runciman the prize he was so keen to retain, in the 1929 general election.

This desire for external candidates to find electoral success in Cornwall has continued long after the Runcimans left Cornwall, as is proven by the reality that the first genuine Cornishman to be elected for the Liberals was David Penhaligon in 1974. Figures like John Pardoe equally sought to start and sustain their political careers by contesting Cornish seats, despite contesting the slightly less promising seat of Finchley (the seat of Margaret Thatcher) before attempting to enter Cornish

⁶¹² MacLean Papers, Dep. a.50 Quoting Isaac Foot (Western Evening Herald 18th June 1932)

⁶¹³ Vallance E., *Women in the House – A study of Women Members of Parliament* (London, 1979)

politics. Thus the political class must see Cornwall as being an area where the Liberals, and then the Liberal Democrats, have levels of support beyond what they can achieve elsewhere. Logically this must be cultural and it seems to have been founded in the historic links and legacy of Methodism in the county. Methodism was the leading faith in Cornwall and, although many Liberals who fought seats in Cornwall were not themselves Methodist, the capacity of the party to maintain its links with the Methodist church as 'recruiting stations'⁶¹⁴ was an important constituent of the party's survival in Cornwall. Although the years between 1935 and 1964 earned the party little success in Cornwall, this residual level of cultural support would seem to have been the primary cause for the party's survival, if not success.

This religious cleavage, which Rokkan and Tregidga have both identified as being key in remote areas, is heightened by Cornwall's peripheral nature compared to the metropolis. Whether it is reasonable or accurate for areas like Cornwall to feel antagonism towards Westminster is almost unimportant. If the voters decide, and are encouraged to believe, that choosing a political force that is opposed to both metropolitan parties, then it follows that the Liberal Party could maintain support in regions like Cornwall - as the other parties are considered equally unelectable by this disenfranchised and distant minority. This sense of difference in Cornwall should not be underestimated as a factor in voting behaviour as just as 'for the English, the boundary [of the Celtic Fringe] is marked by irresolution, uncertainty, incongruity, derogation or humour,'⁶¹⁵ it is fiercely defended by those that live the other side of that boundary. The sense of difference, remoteness and even isolation is supported by a different faith which acted as a bulwark to the political cataclysm that hit the Liberal Party in the 1920s and 1930s, which it only really began to recover from, in Cornwall, in the 1960s. Thus, although the Liberals and Liberal Democrats have a lot to thank Cornish identity for - not least for maintaining it during its period of electoral irrelevance – however it cannot be seen as anything other than a residual effect. This identity did not deliver great success for the party in Cornwall, from the 1930s to the 1960s, even if the Cornish performance was significantly better than other parts of the country. The success of the 1990s and 2000s must be dependent on other factors.

⁶¹⁴ Rowse A.L., *A Man of the Thirties* (London, 1979), p.55

⁶¹⁵ Cohen R., *Frontiers of Identity: The British and the others* (London, 1994), p.12

Character

One of the simple arguments to deploy about Cornish politics is that somehow it is different from other parts of the country and, as such, the characters that it generates, such as Isaac Foot and David Penhaligon, somehow embody that difference. There is, of course, some truth to this view. But, if Cornish politics is so dependent on significant figures - it is strange that more of these characters do not emerge more often, though presumably the nature of politics suggests that the extraordinary is something rare. One every half century does not suggest that this is a main attribute of Cornish politics from the Liberal tradition, but this trait is not unique to the Liberals as politicians such as Harold Hayman for Labour and David Mudd and Robert Hicks for the Conservatives have emerged as significant local personalities. If anything this independent aspect to Liberal politicians in Cornwall appears only to have really become a major aspect of their electoral support with David Penhaligon, who was able to buck national swings, unlike many of his Liberal Party colleagues.

If these two, in particular, are so exceptional, then logically one might anticipate seeing an outstanding election record. In the case of David Penhaligon he failed to be elected in the February 1974 election, despite it being a significant improvement in the fortunes of the party in Truro. This does suggest that his personality, though clearly an important weapon in his political armoury, was not as important as other factors that he himself identified. Foot's electoral history was much more chequered - losing more elections than he won and, despite his unquestionable longevity in Westcountry politics, his legacy was to maintain the party by being the living embodiment of what Rowse called 'simply a fossilised survival...in a backward area like Cornwall.'⁶¹⁶ However unkind, his harking back to Methodism and campaigning on free trade does suggest a brand of Liberalism that was different from those looking to answer the new social problems that had come to national attention between the wars. These new ideas were more likely to back the ideas of Lloyd George rather than Foot's choice of Asquithian Liberalism. Nonetheless, this Liberal retrospective served the party well and as he passed on the baton to his two Liberal sons, Dingle and John, in North Cornwall and Bodmin respectively there was

⁶¹⁶ Rowse A.L., *A Man of the Thirties* (London, 1979), p.55

probably a credible hope that the party might survive, and even prosper. However, this is where the personalities of the Liberal Party seem to differ on how to maintain Liberal support. It is worth re-emphasising the attitude of Cornish Liberals like John Foot who quite clearly said they believed that the future of the Liberal Party was based in national issues and campaigns as 'there were too many MPs already who were more concerned with the welfare of their own constituencies than with the wider and more important national and international issues.'⁶¹⁷ A view it is difficult to believe community politicians like David Penhaligon would have had much sympathy with.

Other than these two historic figures, about whom it was impossible to conduct surveys, the 13 constituency surveys did shed some light on the importance of candidates and their capacity to draw votes to the party. What is clear from the surveys is that for sitting MPs, especially those that have been in place for more than two general elections, incumbency becomes a major benefit to re-election. This being the case for long-standing Members of Parliament like Matthew Taylor, Charles Kennedy and Menzies Campbell. But this was also the case for politicians in other parties, such as Fergus Ewing for the SNP. It is clearly neither unique to Cornwall or, for that matter, to the Liberal Democrats. More importantly, there does seem to be evidence that personality is in no way a uniform test of voting behaviour and the surveys revealed two important opposites in this regard: in Westmorland and Lonsdale and in St. Austell and Newquay.

Tim Farron's capacity to have achieved a positive rating of +88% is impressive compared to other candidates, comparative first term incumbents such as Willie Rennie but also compared to more established MPs such as Menzies Campbell. This suggests that both his 100% recognition and almost universal popularity in Westmorland and Lonsdale must have contributed considerably to his success in 2010. It also indicates that personality politics does matter, but it is doubtful this would have quite so much of an impact without the campaigning machine that is also evident in his constituency. A great deal of this personal popularity must depend on the party delivering a campaign which is significantly more expansive and intensive than any other of the other constituencies that were surveyed.

⁶¹⁷ *Western Morning News* 31st January and 22nd February 1950

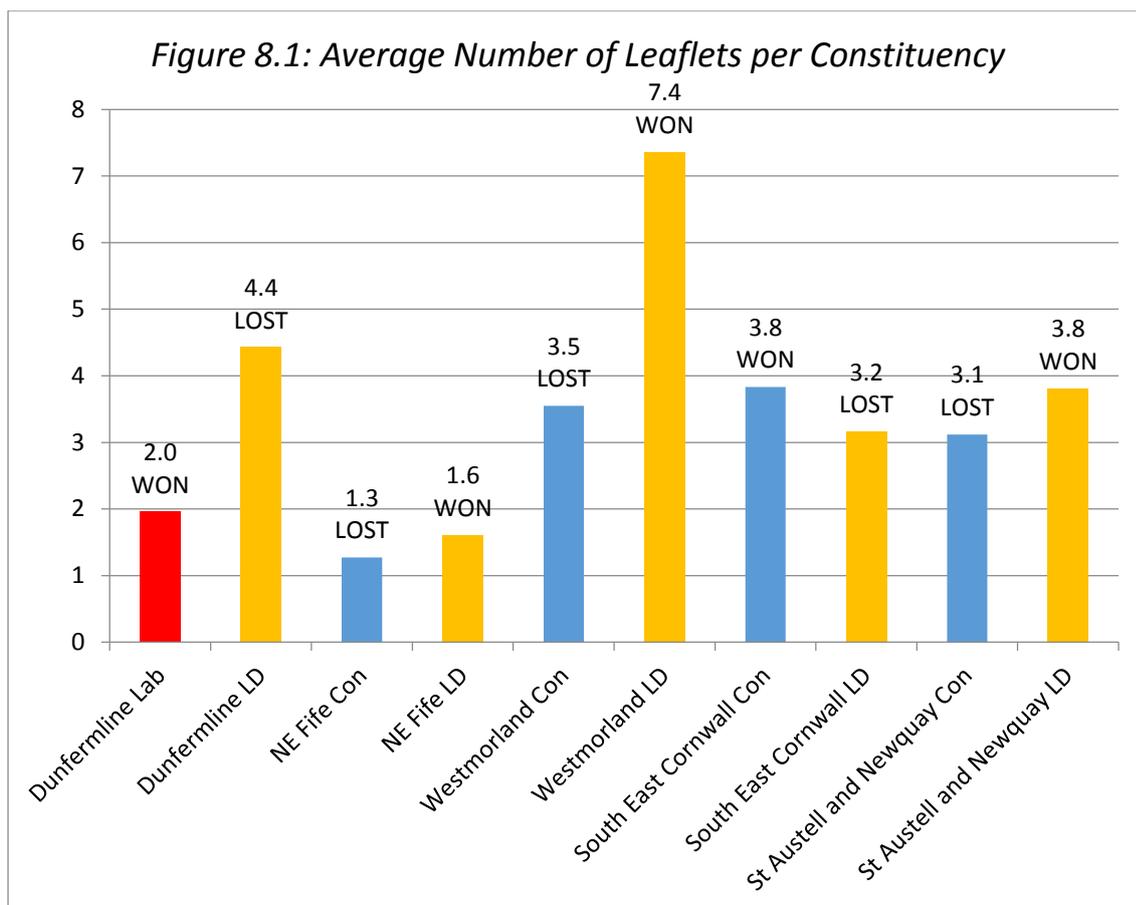
The other factor is somewhat hidden in the first of the surveys concerning St. Austell and Newquay. It concerns Dick Cole, the then local councillor and PPC for Mebyon Kernow in that seat in 2010. Despite him being the most popular of the candidates, at the start of the campaign, his popularity did not result in electoral success for Cole. In fact, he lost his deposit in the 2010 general election. Although not running for a major party, it would seem sensible to assume that if personal popularity was important in choosing MPs then Cole would have achieved at least a better result. Logically, it follows that personality may matter at the extremes of electoral fortune, but character is not the key to electoral success, it is a bonus. With the likes of Isaac Foot and David Penhaligon in Cornish politics it would be easy to fall into the romantic trap of assuming Cornwall is somehow different. At times all areas generate local personality politicians who are notable and even achieve fame but the surveys suggest that this just is as true in areas like Westmorland and Lonsdale and Ceredigion as it is in Cornwall.

Campaigns

It follows, after deploying the above arguments concerning culture and character, that one might argue that the Liberal Democrats' success in Cornwall from 1997 to 2005 was dependent on campaigning, and indeed to some extent this is apparently true. The deployment of community politics campaigns philosophy, or *Rennardism*, was an important aspect of why the Liberal Democrats were successful in Cornwall, building on the support they had both historically for cultural reasons and the individuals that maintained it before it became a locally electable force again from the 1960s onwards. But this localised credibility did not deliver the results that the party saw in the 1990s and 2000s, so evidently something else must have been delivering success where it did not before. As has been suggested this is where political scientists differ: some arguing that local campaigns have little or no impact on elections, such as Butler and King, whilst others such as Denver, Kavanagh and Cowley argue that they do. The evidence would seem to support the latter group as the important step forward for the Liberal Democrats was in 1997 which saw the party advance from two to four, out of five, seats in Cornwall whilst actually declining in national share of the vote.

However, this localised situation does not make it unlike other parts of the country. In fact, what seems clear from the surveys conducted for this thesis, is that Cornwall relies rather less on campaigning than other areas where the party has broken through in this period. Compared to the scale of the campaign that was deployed in Westmorland and Lonsdale the one in Cornwall tends to be more limited, but nonetheless more often successful.

As can be seen from figure 8.1 (a repeat of figure 7.75) it is clear that, with the exception of Dunfermline and West Fife, the party delivering the most concentrated campaign in terms of volume tends to win. In seats where incumbency is clear, such as North East Fife, the campaign still favours the incumbent, Menzies Campbell, but because the Conservative opposition also ran a low key campaign it was successful. In the Cornish context, the party was out-campaigned in South East Cornwall and won the literature campaign in St Austell and Newquay. Whilst it would be an oversimplification to state that this proves campaigning is the deciding factor, these statistics do suggest that losing the local campaign to the opposition will undermine the chances of victory. What Dunfermline would seem to prove is that there are circumstances in which, however much a party wins the campaign in the constituency, in terms of volume and spread, it is sometimes not possible to offset the cultural aspects of a constituency, however much the party might try.



Vitally, as Kavanagh and Cowley indicate, most election studies do ‘not take into account the *volume* of literature.’⁶¹⁸ This research has gone a considerable way, by having thirteen constituency case studies, to rebalancing this problem in academic discourse, on campaign activity. Particularly through the surveys that were conducted following the 2010 election.

This is most significantly explained by the Liberal Democrat success, in the person of Tim Farron, which has shown itself to be as a result of the localised constituency campaigning in Westmorland and Lonsdale. There is limited evidence of significant historic support for the Liberal Democrats in Cumbria, so victory logically depends more on campaigning but the research done outside Cornwall. Although the primary focus of the original research had the intention of comparing Cornwall with other areas of Liberal Democrat success, Westmorland and Lonsdale has proven that campaign activity can work in the absence of significant cultural support for the party. As well as achieving this objective it has also shown evidence of how the Liberal

⁶¹⁸ Kavanagh D. & Cowley P., *The British General Election of 2010* (Basingstoke, 2010) p.230

Democrats have broken out from their traditional regions and achieved electoral success based on local government support and the expansion of the party's credibility following the 1997 election which saw the party double its representation in parliament.

However, what is also clear from the election surveys is that the other parties are becoming much more aligned in terms of their campaign activity. The Conservatives most notably as they are the main opposition in these surveys, especially in South East Cornwall, seem to have won the 2010 election through their local campaign activity. The party delivered literature more frequently and more effectively, and seems to have won the door-knocking campaign - although the Liberal Democrats did win the telephone canvassing campaign, if the objective of this is voter identification it presumably identified that the party was losing locally. Importantly, the Conservatives also won the poster campaign, building local credibility in a very public way.

One thing does seem to have been discovered, in comparison to the Liberal Democrat campaign in Westmorland and Lonsdale, the Liberal Democrats require less of a campaign in Cornwall to win than they do in seats like Westmorland. This gives a strong indication that it is as a consequence of the inherent support that the party still retains in Cornwall, in comparison to other parts of the country. Even on the evening of the party's worst election result since 1989, the European elections of 2014, which saw the Liberal Democrats almost removed from the European Parliament, Cornwall was still described, by the BBC political editor, Nick Robinson, as 'Liberal Democrat heartland.'⁶¹⁹ Indeed the party still retained third place in Cornwall, losing to UKIP (53,943) and the Conservatives (37,698). Labour still came fifth (16,122) behind the Green Party (16,398), despite this being the worst election in Cornwall for the Liberal Democrats (17,840) since they were founded and a relatively positive result for Labour.⁶²⁰ This support would indeed seem to be cultural, in order to maintain the county's support for the Liberal Democrats. But it is also worth noting that the Liberal Democrats only won one council area in England in the

⁶¹⁹ BBC Election Night Special 25th May 2014

⁶²⁰ <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/elections/election-results-and-information/2014-european-parliamentary-election/2014-european-parliamentary-election-results> Last viewed 12/06/14

same election: South Lakeland District Council – the council which has almost exactly the same boundaries as Westmorland and Lonsdale.

Campaigning is clearly the key to unlocking both historical support and cultivating new support for Liberal Democrats - it is just simpler to do so in areas that have a level of predisposition to the idea of voting Liberal Democrat.

Cornwall, being a heartland area for the Liberal Democrats has generally had a predisposition to supporting the party - based on its remoteness from the centre of government and its atypical heritage, founded on Celtic tradition and Methodist faith. Leading local figures have been both the beneficiaries and encouragers of the Liberal faith, which had long since died out in other parts of the country. However, to attribute Cornish politics as being different because of these personalities, would seem to be overstating the case for character being a fundamental difference in Cornish seats, at least compared to those others that have been surveyed as part of this research.

Finally, campaigning is evidently the difference between winning and losing for the Liberals and then even more so for the Liberal Democrats. By embedding a candidate in a community and building an effective, high profile and intensive campaign the party was able to move away from electoral oblivion, towards the successes of the 1960s and 1970s. This eventually became the national party's strategy, enshrined in so-called *Rennardism*, which allowed the party to turn a few local successes into a national party strategy, which made it possible for the party to become the dominant party in Cornwall in 1997 and to take every seat in 2005.

However, the 2010 election in Cornwall strongly suggests that the Conservatives have learnt the campaign tactics of the Liberal Democrats - choosing local candidates and running a similar campaign to the ones the Liberal Democrats usually excel at. The party's comparative success in the 2014 European Elections in Cornwall, apparently still showing this pre-disposition of Cornwall to support the Liberal Democrats may be cultural. When comparing this result to the 2013 local elections in Cornwall this support may focus in the most traditional of Liberal strongholds in North Cornwall, which was the most loyal to the Liberals throughout the leaner years of the mid-twentieth century.

The 2015 general election might show that if the Liberal Democrats are to survive that election, following their experiment with coalition government, this might be the area most pre-disposed to maintaining this Liberal tradition. As this thesis suggests only time will tell if the Conservatives have completely learnt the lessons of community campaigning when the 2015 election comes and whether the Liberals Democrats have forgotten the secret of their success – community politics.

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Constituency Surveys

(Thirteen constituency surveys were conducted across the UK between September 2008 and March 2010 for the pre-election period and another six surveys were conducted following the election from May 2010 to September 2010. In each case the sample size per constituency was approximately 200.)

Camborne and Redruth

Ceredigion

Chippenham

Dunfermline and West Fife

Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey

North East Fife

Penrith and the Border

Ross, Skye and Lochaber

St. Austell and Newquay

South East Cornwall

Torrington and West Devon

Truro and Falmouth

Westmorland and Lonsdale

Newspapers

The Courier

Liberal Democrat News

New Statesman

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The Guardian

The Independent

The Nation

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APPENDIX A – Survey Fieldwork Samples and Dates

In total thirteen constituencies were surveyed. Six of which were surveyed again immediately after the 2010 election. The second figure, in sample size, indicates the post-election survey.

CONSTITUENCY	SAMPLE SIZE	FIELDWORK DATES
ST AUSTELL AND NEWQUAY	242 & 200	26/06/08 to 04/07/08 & 13/05/10 to 17/05/10
SOUTH EAST CORNWALL	201 & 200	29/06/08 to 10/07/08 & 18/05/10 to 25/05/10
TRURO AND FALMOUTH	200	25/05/09 to 06/06/09
CAMBORNE AND REDRUTH	200	25/06/09 to 04/07/09
TORRIDGE AND WEST DEVON	206	23/07/09 to 05/08/09
CHIPPENHAM	302	20/05/08 to 09/06/08
CEREDIGION	200	20/10/08 to 01/11/08
WESTMORLAND & LONSDALE	200 & 200	09/09/08 to 15/09/08 & 27/05/10 to 02/06/10
PENRITH AND THE BORDER	199 & 205	25/03/10 to 01/04/10 & 12/06/10 to 19/06/10
INVERNESS, NAIRN ETC.	201	20/01/09 to 03/02/09
ROSS, SKYE AND LOCHABER	200	20/02/09 to 03/03/09
DUNFERMLINE AND WEST FIFE	200 & 200	21/11/08 to 02/12/08 & 04/06/10 to 10/06/10
NORTH EAST FIFE	200 & 200	20/02/10 to 01/03/10 to 03/06/10 to 11/06/10

2,751 voters were contacted across thirteen constituencies in phase one of the telephone surveys and 1,205 in phase two (post-election) surveys.

APPENDIX B – Raw Data on Party Allegiance

Table 1 covers the pre-election surveys and Table 2 covers the post-election surveys.

TABLE 1

Constituency	LD	Con	Lab	Nat⁶²¹	Other
St. Austell & Newquay	82	100	48	4	4
South East Cornwall	58	102	23	2	9
Truro & Falmouth	52	92	26	4	9
Camborne & Redruth	51	75	45	5	6
Torrige & W. Devon	40	123	16	-	12
Chippenham	63	100	63	-	6
Ceredigion	37	62	32	48	4
Westmorland & Lonsdale	91	75	13	-	4
Penrith & The Border	45	102	41	-	6
Inverness, Nairn etc.	38	49	67	31	-
Ross, Skye & Lochaber	75	39	36	38	8
Dunfermline & W. Fife	48	44	69	21	6
North East Fife	79	42	34	13	9

TABLE 2

Constituency	LD	Con	Lab	Nat	UKIP
St. Austell & Newquay	73	65	13	4	6
South East Cornwall	61	83	9	1	10
Westmorland & Lonsdale	115	55	4	-	2
Penrith & The Border	44	97	23		3
Dunfermline & W. Fife	54	15	73	20	2
North East Fife	74	46	23	14	-

⁶²¹ Whether Scottish Nationalist in Scotland, Plaid Cymru in Wales or Mebyon Kernow in Cornwall.

APPENDIX C (sample pre-election survey)

Opinion Poll for South East Cornwall Constituency

A. Political Names

This is a list of political names and we are assessing whether voters have a favourable, unfavourable or no opinion of them.

- 1. I am going to ask you a serious of questions about people and organisations nationally and in the area and can you tell me if you have a favourable, not favourable or no opinion on them. If you've never heard of them just say so, that's fine.**

Gordon Brown	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them
David Cameron	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them
Nick Clegg	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them
Colin Breed	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them
Sheryll Murray	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them
Karen Gillard	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them
Bill Stevens	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them
David Whalley	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them

- 2. And now for some organisations:**

The Conservatives	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them
The Liberal Democrats	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them
The Labour Party	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them
Mebyon Kernow	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them
UKIP	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them

B. Opinions of Institutions

- 3. I'm now going to ask you some questions about various organisations. Can you tell me if you think they are doing an 'Excellent' job, a 'Very Good' job, a 'Good' job, a 'Fair' job, a 'Poor' job, a 'Very Poor' job, or again if you have no opinion, or haven't heard of them that's fine.**

The Government	Excellent V.Good Good Fair Poor V.Poor No Op. Not Known
Cornwall County Council	Excellent V.Good Good Fair Poor V.Poor No Op. Not Known
Caradon District Council	Excellent V.Good Good Fair Poor V.Poor No Op. Not Known
Local Parish/Town Council	Excellent V.Good Good Fair Poor V.Poor No Op. Not Known

C. General Election Voting Intentions

4. OK, now some questions about how you might vote if there were an election. If there was a General Election tomorrow which party would you vote for?

- Liberal Democrat
- Conservative
- Labour
- Green Party
- Mebyon Kernow
- UKIP
- Would not vote
- Don't Known
- Other

5. Which party did you vote for at the last General Election?

- Liberal Democrat
- Conservative
- Labour
- Green Party
- Mebyon Kernow
- UKIP
- Did not vote
- Don't Known
- Other

6. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 meaning you are certain, and 1 meaning you definitely will not vote, how likely are you to actually cast your vote at the next general election?

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

7. If you didn't vote for your first choice party, which other party would you consider voting for?

- Liberal Democrat
- Conservative
- Labour
- Green Party
- Mebyon Kernow
- UKIP
- Would not vote
- Don't Known
- Other

D. Party affiliation

8. When it comes to a General Election people decide how to cast their vote for a number of different reasons. Which of the following reasons is most important to you when deciding which party to vote for?

- What each of the national political parties stand for in terms of values and priorities.
- The specific detailed policies offered by each of the political parties
- The leaders of the national parties and which one I think will make the best Prime Minister for the country
- The local candidates put forward in my constituency and I think will make the best MP
- The local issues in my constituency, and what local parties say they will do about them
- Don't Know

9. Thinking about NATIONAL issues which do you think are the most important at the present time? (Please pick THREE – caller does not prompt)

Education

The Economy, Unemployment, Pension Provision, Animal Welfare, Drugs, Climate Change
Energy Provision, Health Provision, Terrorism, Inflation, Immigration, Europe,
Political Sleaze, Transport, Civil Liberties, Law & Order, Defence, Taxation, Farming,
Poverty, Devolution, Housing, Other (please state)

10. Thinking about LOCAL issues what do you think are the most pressing issues in your local area at the present? (Please tick THREE)

Bus services, Car Parking, Unemployment, Crime, Rubbish Collection, Train Services
Lack of Housing, Schools, Planning decisions, Council Tax, Road Traffic, House prices
Health, Immigration, Farming, Other (Please state)

E. The Local MP

11. Thinking about what you want from your local MP, which of the following are most important to you? (One Answer Only)

- Being a local person with roots in the area
- Having lots of real world experience to bring to the job
- Being an ordinary person, who is in touch with what people think
- Being friendly and approachable
- Being willing to put their constituency above their party
- Being a senior MP, with good contacts with the party leadership so they will be listened to by the people who matter
- Keeping in touch with constituents through newsletters and leaflets

F. The Political Parties

12. And thinking about the different reasons people vote, which of the main parties do you think stand for what you believe in terms of values and priorities?

- Labour
- Conservatives
- Liberal Democrats
- Don't Know

13. And which of them do you think have the best policies?

- Labour
- Conservatives
- Liberal Democrats
- Don't Know

14. And of Gordon Brown, David Cameron and Nick Clegg who do you think would make the best Prime Minister?

- Gordon Brown
- David Cameron

Nick Clegg

Don't Know

15. And thinking of the LOCAL issues that affect your own constituency which party do you think would best deal with them?

Labour

Conservatives

Liberal Democrats

Don't Know

16. And – if you happen to know anything about the candidates who are standing in your local constituency at the next election who do you think would make the best MP?

Labour

Conservatives

Liberal Democrats

Don't Know

G. Local Political Activity

17. Can you tell me if any of the local political parties get in touch directly with you through newspapers or leaflets through your door?

Labour

Conservatives

Liberal Democrats

Other

None of them

Don't Know

18. Can you tell me in each case roughly how many times per year you think they do this?

Labour

Conservatives

Liberal Democrats

Other

None of them

Don't Know

19. Can you tell me if any of the local political parties have ever paid you a personal visit or used a telephone call to contact you?

- Labour
- Conservatives
- Liberal Democrats
- Other
- None of them
- Don't Know

20. Can you tell me in each case roughly how many times you think they have done this? (Options: 0,1,2,3,4,5,6+)

- Labour
- Conservatives
- Liberal Democrats
- Other
- None of them
- Don't Know

H. Demographic Information

21. Can you tell me which of the following age categories you fall into?

18-25 26-35 36-50 51-65 66-80 Over 80

22. Sex

Male Female

23. Polling District

24. Please provide the electors complete polling number.

Thanks the voter for their time and patience.

ENDS

APPENDIX D (sample post-election survey)

Re-poll for St. Austell and Newquay Constituency

A. Political Names

1. I am going to ask you a serious of questions about people and organisations nationally and in the area and can you tell me if you have a favourable, not favourable or no opinion on them. If you've never heard of them just say so, that's fine.

Gordon Brown	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them
David Cameron	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them
Nick Clegg	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them
Matthew Taylor	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them
Stephen Gilbert	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them
Caroline Righton	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them
Lee Jameson	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them
Dick Cole	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them
Clive Medway	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them
James Fitton	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them

2. And now for some organisations:

The Conservatives	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them
The Liberal Democrats	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them
The Labour Party	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them
Mebyon Kernow	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them
UKIP	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them
BNP	Favourable Unfavourable No Opinion Don't Know them

B. General Election Voting Activity

3. OK, now some questions about how you vote. Can I ask how you voted in the recent General Election?

- Liberal Democrat
- Conservative
- Labour
- Green Party
- Mebyon Kernow
- UKIP
- BNP
- Would not vote
- Don't Known
- Other

4. Which party did you vote for if there were a General Election tomorrow?

- Liberal Democrat
- Conservative
- Labour
- Green Party
- Mebyon Kernow
- UKIP
- BNP
- Did not vote
- Don't Known
- Other

5. If you didn't vote for your first choice party, which other party would you consider voting for?

- Liberal Democrat
- Conservative
- Labour
- Green Party
- Mebyon Kernow
- UKIP
- BNP
- Would not vote
- Don't Known
- Other

C. Party affiliation

6. During General Elections people decide how to cast their vote for a number of different reasons. Which of the following reasons was most important to you when you decided which party to vote for?

What each of the national political parties stood for in terms of values and priorities.

The specific detailed policies offered by each of the political parties

The leaders of the national parties and which one I thought would make the best Prime Minister for the country

The local candidates put forward in my constituency and I thought would make the best MP

The local issues in my constituency, and what local parties said they would do about them

Don't Know

7. When did you decide which party to vote for?

- I voted for the party I always vote for
- I decided before the election started
- I decided in the first week of the election campaign
- I decided during the election
- I decided in the last week of the election
- I decided on polling day
- I decided when I was in the polling station

D. Local Political Activity

8. Thinking back to the General Election campaign earlier this year can you tell me if any of the local political parties got in touch directly with you through newspapers, leaflets or circulars through your door?

- Liberal Democrat
- Conservative
- Labour
- Green Party
- Mebyon Kernow
- UKIP
- BNP
- Other

9. Can you tell me in each case roughly how many times you think they did this during the election? (Options: 0,1,2,3,4,5-9,10-15,15+)

- Labour
- Conservatives
- Liberal Democrats
- Other
- None of them
- Don't Know

10. Can you tell me if any of the local political parties paid you a personal visit during the election campaign?

- Liberal Democrat
- Conservative
- Labour
- Green Party
- Mebyon Kernow
- UKIP
- BNP
- Other

11. Can you tell me in each case roughly how many times you think they did this during the election? (Options: 0,1,2,3,4,5+)

- Labour
- Conservatives
- Liberal Democrats
- Other
- None of them
- Don't Know

12. Did any of the political parties contact you via the telephone during the general election? (Options: 0,1,2,3,4,5+)

- Liberal Democrat
- Conservative
- Labour
- Green Party
- Mebyon Kernow
- UKIP
- BNP
- Other

14. You may have seen the parties organising the putting up of posters across your area during the election? Which party do you think managed to get more up in your area?

- Liberal Democrat
- Conservative
- Labour
- Green Party
- Mebyon Kernow
- UKIP
- BNP
- Other

15. Were you reminded to vote by any of the political parties by phone or by leaflets through your door in the days before polling day or on polling day itself?

- Liberal Democrat
- Conservative
- Labour
- Green Party
- Mebyon Kernow
- UKIP
- BNP
- Other

H. Demographic Information

16. Can you tell me which of the following age categories you fall into?

18-25 26-35 36-50 51-65 66-80 Over 80

17. Sex

Male Female

18. Polling District

19. Please provide the electors complete polling number.

Thanks the voter for their time and patience.

ENDS