



## South Shropshire Green Party

Officers 2004/5



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Articles for next edition of Grapevine due with the editor by Dec 16th. Please send by email if possible.

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### BOOK REVIEW

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need to re-establish our stake in the land. Clearly, responsibility for our food production and an interest in where it comes from and how it is produced will move us towards a greater sense of ownership - something we can all participate in. He closes his book with the words " *With the healing of the land will come our healing as a nation*" - a thought provoking statement that connects our natural environment with ourselves.

*The Killing of the Countryside*, by Graham Harvey, published by Random House (£7.99) (218pp paperback) ISBN0099736616



# Grapevine



Newsletter of the South Shropshire Green Party

Issue 43

Autumn 2004

## ELECTIONS ELECTIONS ELECTIONS

Grapevine readers could be forgiven for wondering (still) how the Green Party did in the local and European elections on June 10th. With all the national media fuss centring on the success of UKIP, it was really rather difficult to find out how we'd done.

by a surprising number of non-Green Party supporters! Although we failed to gain new MEPs, our national share of the vote stayed the same at 6.25%. We were therefore the only party not to either lose seats or our share of the vote in the face of UKIP's gains.

### EURO ELECTIONS

You probably know that we held on to the two MEPs we had before the election - big sigh of relief. By any standards Caroline Lucas and Jean Lambert are great MEPs for this country, as is widely acknowledged

In the West Midlands our share remained the same at 5.15%, sadly not enough for Chris Lennard to get in, but this reflected a big increase in the number of people voting for us because the overall turnout went up by 50%.

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### GENERAL ELECTION 2005 ?

The questions for South Shropshire Greens are;

Do you think we should have a Green Party candidate on the ballot paper for Ludlow constituency in the forthcoming election?

Would you like to contribute in any way to running a campaign?

Would you consider standing as a candidate?

If your answer to any of these questions is "YES!", please let Jim Gaffney or John Lloyd know. A lot of voluntary work goes into a general election candidacy, and most of it gets done by the same people. Do you think it's worth it? Please let us know what you think. Silence will be interpreted as apathy! Come and discuss these questions in Church Stretton on November 1<sup>st</sup>.

# ELECTIONS ELECTIONS ELECTIONS

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## GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

Darren Johnson and Jenny Jones retained their seats on the GLA but Noel Lynch didn't quite make it so we're down from 3 members to 2. Again, the loss of vote-share was slight.

Our chances of influencing GLA policy, however, have actually increased, because the Labour Party can no longer prevent the other parties from mustering two thirds of the votes, and thus amending the Mayor's budget. So no reason to be downhearted there!

## LOCAL ELECTIONS

There weren't any elections in South Shropshire but there were in many parts of the country. We did very well - we now have 61 "principal authority" councillors compared with 52 before the election. We got an average of 10% of the vote, confirming the consistent upward trend we've experienced in local elections over the last few years. Green Councillors are now involved in the administration of 4 councils - Leeds, Norwich, Oxford, and Kirklees in Yorkshire.

## THE LIFESPAN OF TREES

### And a challenge to Church Stretton's Tree Conservation Group

In response to Jill Evans' article on Church Stretton's trees in the spring edition Anne Dyer from Westhope College wrote to Grapevine to sound a few words of caution.

"Majestic firs are probably well over 80 years old and may be beginning to pose a threat. They could be showing signs of rot, and might drop branches on people, or, more likely, the root ball is looking insecure, so the trees might, in the next high wind, come crashing down."

Although local people in Madeira Walk would not accept that this was the case in the instance Jill Evans wrote about, it is an important reminder that trees have a natural lifespan. Anne Dyer continued with some useful information and an important call to action.

"Firs, spruces and Douglas are all shallow rooted, but pines are not and will stand much worse winds. However, cutting the firs may leave nearby trees wind-vulnerable.

"I hope the Tree Conservation Group will put as much pressure on early planting of replacement trees round all those they want preserving, so that when the old tree eventually dies, there will be another to take its place. It would be especially nice if the replacements were natives, rather than imported exotics like firs and spruces, and that the seed was English, rather than the commonly planted East European oak and beech."

were well advised to buy this system, and by this route, is questionable.

The safety guidelines for such systems are inadequate. They focus exclusively on the thermal effect of exposure to electromagnetic fields even though there is research available which shows that the non-thermal frequency-specific effects are highly significant. There have been no specific biological tests on the police system because it is claimed that Tetra doesn't pulse.

This is not the story coming from the people who live near these masts. The police tell you that they are working within the standards and guidelines set by government for this type of communications equipment but these guidelines have been set on the basis that "if it can't heat you then it can't hurt you". Long term side effects are also unknown.

A report commissioned by Caroline Lucas, the Green Party MEP for SE England, was presented to the government back in 2001. It was entitled "The Physiological and Environmental Effects of NonIonising Elettromagnetic Radiation" and is very critical of the UK National Radiological Protection Board. The research was undertaken by Dr Gerard Hyland of the International Institute of

Biophysics who has been active supporting challenges to the siting of Tetra masts in Sussex. Their campaigning is a model for others who share these concerns.

Meanwhile Caroline Lucas continues to challenge both European and UK governments on the issue.

You don't have to have a particularly long memory to recall that asbestos and tobacco were regarded as completely safe for many years and even when warnings were being sounded, government was tardy in responding. More recently BSE caught the government unawares - ministers seen feeding beefburgers to their children being one publicity stunt to 'reassure' the public.

It is high time the 'precautionary principle' kicked in but there is no enthusiasm to move in this direction. One reason might be that if Tetra is found wanting the police may need to abandon the whole system.

It will create a costly dilemma because the government would have to make the decision but the police forces who pay the annual rental would have to compensate the company providing Tetra under the terms of the contract.

And we pay the police through our Council Tax, which would rocket yet again.



Police handsets - new alongside old

Dr Hyland's research report can be found at [http://www.carolinelucasmep.org.uk/interests/pdf/Hyland\\_TETRA\\_May2003.pdf](http://www.carolinelucasmep.org.uk/interests/pdf/Hyland_TETRA_May2003.pdf)

## HEALTH CONCERNS WITH POLICE TELECOMS MASTS

*A most disturbing story is emerging which the government seems hell-bent on keeping under wraps.*

Dotted here and there throughout the country groups of people are under stress. Not just the stress of everyday 21<sup>st</sup> century living but something more. Sleepless nights, headaches, skin rashes, inability to concentrate, - and sometimes their TV is on the blink. What is it ?

The cause is microwave radiation emitted from phone masts. So serious is the problem in one village in Gloucestershire, Dursley, that some villagers are having to leave every few days because the symptoms become so acute.

The problem is the arrival of a new national telecommunications system for the police which uses a technology called Tetra. This is due to spread across the whole UK including Shropshire.

While it is laudable for the police to have good and efficient

communications the system they have adopted, costing the taxpayer millions of pounds a year, requires masts whose presence and whose emissions impinge on the lives of those who live in proximity to them.

The mobile radio sets which come with this technology and are used by the police themselves are also a cause of concern. Word has it that there are health problems in the force and instances of their own cars being immobilised by emissions from their Tetra systems.

This proliferation of telecoms capability has helped the police precept rocket - this is the proportion of the Council Tax which goes to police forces. They don't own the system, it is rented, so the costs are in their revenue budget rather than paid out up-front by the government as capital. Whether they

### DIARY DATES

Sun 24 <sup>th</sup> Oct	11:00	Apple Fair, Silvester Horne Institute, Church Stretton
Sat 30 <sup>th</sup> Oct		West Midlands Region, Coventry
Mon 1 <sup>st</sup> Nov	10.30	Acorn Restaurant, Church Stretton
Mon 6 <sup>th</sup> Dec	10.30	Acorn Restaurant, Church Stretton
Sat 18 <sup>th</sup> Dec	7.30	Christmas Part, Tan House, Little Stretton
Sat 29 <sup>th</sup> Jan		West Midlands AGM, Birmingham
Mon 7 <sup>th</sup> Feb	10.30	Acorn Restaurant, Church Stretton
Sat 26 <sup>th</sup> Feb	2.30	Annual Meeting with Guest Speaker, Feathers Hotel, Ludlow
Mon 7 <sup>th</sup> Mar	10.30	Acorn Restaurant, Church Stretton

## CHURCH STRETTON APPLE FAIR

**Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2004**

**11.00am to 4.30pm**

**Silvester Horne Institute, High Street**

A big thank you to everyone who has volunteered to help with the Fair, but we could still do with helping hands on the day.

Whether you will be there on the 24<sup>th</sup> or not do see if you can help with one of the following:

- Make toffee apples (we can supply the apples and the recipe)
- Supply very large apples for our Longest Apple Peel Contest
- Make a cake or pastry turnovers (we can supply recipes)
- Donate items for the Tombola – preferably with some apple connection (eg apple soap)
- Research the background of apple varieties – using the Internet or the library

**We need to have the Fair set up by 10.30am. The Silvester Horne Institute will be open for us at 8.00am. Please allow plenty of time to get your stall set up.**

### Something to Celebrate

Whilst the arable farmers of East Anglia have been complaining about this summer, the commercial fruit farmers (the few that are left) have enjoyed a wonderful season.

The quality of apples and pears has never been better. A combination of rain at the right time and clement weather when it was necessary has done the trick.

This is a belated shot in the arm for a livelihood which has been sorely damaged by the global market, notwithstanding the idiotic legislation of the Government and the European Community to encourage farmers to grub up their orchards.

Hopefully, the tide is turning and some greater appreciation of the English apple is emerging in government, among retailers and consumers. But this is no easy task.

As so often the Green Party is well ahead of the game and has long called for recognition of the distinctiveness of local products. This holds particularly true of apples which grow well in the British Isles and have hundreds of local variants, to which names such as Cornish Pine, Herefordshire Beefing and Claygate Pearmain testify. Back in 1992 we held our first Apple Fair in

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## FLUORIDE IN WATER COMPULSION OR CHOICE ?

The Government is consulting on the compulsory fluoridation of water supplies. Water companies will be legally obliged to fluoridate the water supply if the local health authority wants this. Most or all health authorities in the UK support fluoridation (unlike health authorities in most other countries).

The pro-fluoridation lobby has a well-resourced propaganda campaign stating that fluoridation will be "safe and effective". Their objective is to cut out tooth decay, even though the evidence is arguable and there is evidence that fluoride can be harmful, even in quite small quantities.

The Green Party wants consumer choice. It believes that mass

medication without consent is unethical and contrary to the European Convention on Human Rights and Medicine and it is concerned that the whole truth is not being made public.

The "fluoride" that's added to drinking water is hexafluorosilicic acid - a hazardous toxic waste product of the phosphate fertiliser industry derived from the pollution scrubber liquor from its factory chimneys. Fluorosilicates are listed under the Poisons Act 1972, and cannot be prescribed by a doctor. The "fluoride" added to drinking water is not pharmaceutical grade and has never been safety-tested for human consumption.

Mass studies from Canada,

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## Something to Celebrate

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Church Stretton, one of two or three throughout the country, in response to an appeal by Common Ground (the creators of Apple Day) to help save the English Apple. In much the same way CAMRA did an equally good job bringing to the notice of the public the need to save 'real ale' in our pubs.

Things have moved on, but the marketing of English top fruit, as it is called in the trade, is still precarious. The large supermarkets dominate the retail scene. What they look for is not how the apple will taste but how it will look on the shelf, regardless of how many miles it has

had to travel to get here. This dominant role has to be addressed.

These are not benign organisations serving the needs of the public, as they would like us to believe, they are forging a way of life which is anathema to anyone with the slightest green aspirations.

So at this year's Apple Fair we can look beyond the rows of local apple varieties which will grace the hall, and the supporting stalls - many showing just how wonderful apples are in so many ways, and we can think about a more fundamental question "Are you off your trolley?"

**Come along on the 24<sup>th</sup>, you might find the answer.**

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New Zealand and USA have shown little or no difference in levels of tooth decay between fluoridated and non-fluoridated areas. In New Zealand teeth have been shown to be slightly better in non-fluoridated areas. In India doctors have concluded that tooth decay increases as fluoride intake increases. Ireland is Europe's most fluoridated country, but doesn't have Europe's best teeth. In England, fluoridated Gateshead has as much tooth decay as non-fluoridated Liverpool.

Scientific papers from around the world have linked fluoride with problems including increases in cancer and thyroid disorders, brittle bones, problems with the immune system, irritable bowel syndrome, genetic disorders, low IQ levels in children, early onset of puberty, premature ageing, the breakdown of collagen in bone, tendon, muscle, skin, cartilage, lungs, kidney and trachea, as well as dental fluorosis, and pitting and cavity formation on the surface of tooth enamel.

There is a safe and effective way to reduce tooth decay. It relies on a well resourced dental service in the NHS, and the education of children and adults about dental hygiene, the need for a healthy diet, and the effects of excessive consumption of sugar.

Of course, you could always eat an apple a day ...

The deadline for comments on the Government's plans is October 29<sup>th</sup>. The full details are on the Department of Health website at: <http://www.dh.gov.uk/Consultations/LiveConsultations/>

## BOOK REVIEW The Killing of the Countryside by Graham Harvey

Images of the British countryside conjure up scenes of haymeadows and patchwork fields, hedgerows and moorland. In the past 50 years however, this image is a far cry from reality, with intensive farming and mechanisation the mainstay of food production.

Graham Harvey clearly holds dear the British countryside and in his book *The Killing of the Countryside* he portrays the devastating effect that the quest for high yields and increasingly lower consumer prices has had on the land. A land that he believes is to be guarded for us all. The custodians however are driven out, or influenced and exploited by politics, a powerful agronomic industry and the strength of the supermarkets. All governed by EU subsidies that have controlled food production since the Second World War.

It is a bleak tale of a countryside in turmoil, that is a burden to the taxpayer. Food contamination is a serious problem and erosion of the land, and its consequences, are brought to the attention of the reader in a blunt fashion, amongst the many other issues facing the countryside.

All is tragically revealed and yet there is still a flicker of hope due to Harvey's passion for the British countryside. He believes that we

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