

Monday 13 April 2015



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Tue	11°C 3°C	
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Greens Reveal Stella Herbert as Thanet Candidate

Jack Herbert's daughter "determined to win" as polls show BIP surge

by Shirley Knott for Canterbury Gazette Online



The Green Party sensationally announced this morning that London philosophy professor Stella Herbert will battle British Independence Party leader Nicholas Formio for the South Thanet seat at this May's general election.

The Westminster rumour forge has been at full bellows since the sudden withdrawal of previous Green candidate Olivier Davies last week. A glittering array of stellar names have been linked with the vacant Thanet candidacy – but few foresaw that the stellar name would be Stella. Until now, Professor Herbert has not sought the limelight, and there was much scratching of heads in East Kent this evening. A BIP source referred to "some frantic Googling".

Professor Herbert's father, Labour MP Jack Herbert, was one of the towering figures of late-twentieth-century British politics. A champion of social liberalism, a fervent Europhile and a hero of the intellectual left, Herbert held his West Swindon seat for 31 years until his death in 2012. He was a supreme political manoeuvrer – even Margaret Thatcher referred to him as "Grandmaster Herbert" – who relished his roustabout Commons clashes with the Conservatives on the opposite benches.

Stella Herbert shares her father's vision, if not his profile. She has been a passionate political commentator and a powerful voice on the liberal left. Unlike Jack Herbert, though, Stella has preferred to remain cushioned in academia. Many are predicting a mauling at the polls for someone with no experience of political dogfights. Why has she now decided to descend from her ivory tower?

The answer may be simple: to join swords with Nicholas Formio. "The Green Party has a substantial policy agenda that promotes Britain's active place within the family of peaceful nations in Europe," Herbert told BBC Radio 4's Today Programme this morning. "The BIP has no policies to put forward on major issues. Nicholas Formio's misleading and divisive focus on immigration has damaged our public discourse."

A student of Stella's who wished to remain anonymous suggested that there might be another factor at play. "John Dove has inspired us all," he said, referring to the celebrated poet and guest lecturer in Stella's department. "The grandeur of his vision encompasses the tiniest of human interactions and the greatest sweeps of humanity. He'll be a game changer for Stella, you wait and see."

Dove's latest collection, *Twilight Minglings* (Burning Tree, 2014) is available from the Canterbury Gazette bookshop for £8.99.



Political novice Stella Herbert: blaze of glory or baptism of fire?