

Born in Motherwell in 1944 and brought up in the Borders, Chris attended Kelso High School, then Edinburgh, where he was a pupil of the Royal High School at the same time as Robin Cook. He went on to receive a first class honours degree in history from the University of Edinburgh then tutored 1966-69 before joining Arthur Marwick's pioneering history department at the Open University in 1969.

Chris completed his PhD in 1972. By 1976 it had appeared as his first book, [*The Lights of Liberalism 1860-86*](#), followed in 1977 by the acclaimed [*Scotland and Nationalism*](#), (now in its fourth edition). In 1979, Chris was offered the chair of British and Irish studies at the University of Tübingen, and left the Open University and the UK for a new life in Germany, where he stayed until 2007. Other books followed, including (1991) on political fiction, [*The Centre of Things*](#), [*The Rise of Regional Europe*](#) (1993), and [*Floating Commonwealth*](#) (2008), of which Pat Kane said 'Harvie has provided a new mental and historical map for these islands, which could have more than scholarly consequences'.

Chris was a member of the Labour Party from 1962 to 1988, and was involved in the campaign for a Scottish Assembly in 1979 (penning the pamphlet 'The Scottish Assembly and why you must vote for it' with another young buck from Edinburgh University's history department, Gordon Brown). As the eighties drew to a close, however, his CND loyalties led him to leave the Labour party and move to the SNP. He has a home near Aberystwyth and is a member of [*Plaid Cymru*](#): his vote was one of the 7000 which won the Welsh Assembly in September 1997.

In late 2005, Chris received a phone call from Alex Salmond, asking him to stand in the forthcoming Scottish Parliamentary election. The future First Minister hooked him in with a quote from the Marquess of Montrose:

He either fears his fate too much,

Or his deserts are small,

Who dares not put it to the touch,

To win or lose it all.

and eighteen months later, on 3rd May 2007, Chris was elected.

As well as undertaking significant constituency work from his Kirkcaldy office, Chris served on the [Economics, Energy and Tourism Committee](#) which undertook the inquiry into banking and financial services following the 2008/09 crisis.

Chris combined his parliamentary and constituency work with academic work. Though officially retired, he continued to supervise students, using weekends and recesses to give seminars and advise and examine doctoral candidates (unpaid).

Whilst an MSP, Chris found himself a target of the tabloids on more than one occasion for his outspoken views, often on the tabloids themselves (though when the *Daily Record*'s Magnus Gardham published ‘

[Christopher Harvie's Best Bits](#)

’, Chris was heard to proclaim: ‘He is my Boswell!’). In 2008, he was voted ‘Free Spirit of the Year’ in the

Herald

newspaper Scottish Politician of the Year awards. This turned out to be the last year of that award, now replaced with ‘Councillor of the Year’...

Chris won't drive and is a railway enthusiast. As Honorary President of the [Scottish Association for Public Transport](#)

, his

pièce de résistance

is his critique of Scotland's transport,

Deep-Fried Hillman Imp

(2001). Other interests include painting, reading, cooking, music and walking.

Chris met Virginia Roundell in 1977 and was married to her from 1980 until she died in 2005. He has one daughter, Alison, who works for a think-tank in London.

Chris did not seek re-election in 2011 as an MSP, instead retiring to his home in Melrose, caring for his 92-year-old parents in the Borders and continuing to write. On 12 March 2012, he was awarded the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit of the German Federal Republic in recognition of his lifelong contribution to German-Scottish understanding.