

Angela blames disunity

SENIOR writer JOHN ATKIN visited the count in Tory marginal Erewash, and spoke to Angela Knight about her losing battle for re-election.

THIS morning, another single mother has been added to the 2,962 unemployed of Erewash.

But, of those, few will be 46-year-old chemistry graduates, metallurgical engineers by profession, with a history of running their own company and a nice little career in the Treasury.

When Angela Knight got up and washed her hair at 6am yesterday, the Commons seat she held with a majority of 5,703 was 59th on Labour's wish-list.

Now it ranks as just another Labour gain after a night which saw the most dramatic General Election since 1945.

For Mrs Knight, an inability among the dissenting Tory ranks to keep their squabbles behind closed doors has resulted in the Government's annihilation.

Without revealing a favoured leadership candidate, she said: "What would be good for the party



● OUT OF OFFICE: Beaten Tory Angela Knight

is to become more united.

"I believe there will be some fundamental changes and it will become a much younger party."

If political heartbreak is to be met with dignity, there must be many more auspicious places in which to acknowledge it than the stuffy, unventilated bar of Long Eaton's West Park Leisure Centre.

But, clad in a pallid blue suit reflecting her party's fortune, Mrs Knight remained determined as counting got under way.

The party faithful somehow managed to fix smiles on their faces as, with self-deprecating humour, they relayed details of the latest Tory humiliation.

Meanwhile, those with the red rosettes excitedly announced the arrival of Labour's Liz Blackman.

Stylishly later than the rest, and a product of Labour's women-only shortlists, she was greeted with the hushed and reverent tones you might expect for a minor royal.

For Mrs Knight, the long, slow hours waiting for the count provided time for endless coffee, reflection - and prediction.

For her, there will no longer be four days a week, 30 weeks of the year, away from her children.

No more dashing back for sports days, childhood crises and the other traumas of bringing up boys of eight and 11.

Her next priority is a long weekend away from the spotlight - and some time with the children.

Her selection as Erewash parliamentary candidate in 1992 followed initial rejection in High Peak.

Five years later, she is in the position of sole breadwinner with two children, a father and an aunt to help support - and no job.

Knight vanquished

Labour's Liz is the new darling of Erewash

by Catriona Cummings

EREWASH turned red as years of Tory dominance ended in spectacular style.

Labour's Liz Blackman swept to a resounding victory to oust Angela Knight (46) with a 9,135-vote majority.

Jubilant Mrs Blackman (47) said: "I feel very privileged to be elected as the Labour MP for Erewash.

"I think that people have realised the structural damage that Tories have done."

Junior Treasury minister Mrs Knight, who took the seat in 1992 with a 5,703 majority, went down fighting.

She said: "I may have lost this round, but I will continue to fight for my party.

"I will be back."

The count at West Park Leisure Centre in Long Eaton was conducted with a high police presence.

Erewash was 59th on Labour's target list to gain a workable House of Commons majority.

Situated on the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire border, the seat comprises mainly Ilkeston and Long Eaton.

Mrs Blackman fought a strong campaign, focusing on national issues like the state of the NHS, class sizes and rising crime.

She said: "On the doorsteps, the feedback has been positive, and people have told me they are switching to Labour.

"They feel betrayed and angry by the damage caused by the Tories."

Her majority was almost double that for Mrs Knight in 1992, despite a lower turnout of 78.15 per cent of the 78,275 people eligible to vote in Erewash.

Liberal Democrat candidate Martin Garnett (40), who polled 5,181 votes, said: "It has been a memorable night, one that will not be forgotten."

Mum-of-two Mrs Blackman, who was deputy leader of neighbouring Broxtowe Council, said she would be fighting to reduce class sizes, create jobs for long-term unemployed young people and for more spending on the health service.

EREWASH

Angela Knight (C)	22,061
Elizabeth Blackman (Lab)	31,196
Dr Martin Garnett (LD)	5,181
Stephen Stagg (Ref)	1,404
Matthew Simmons (Soc Lab)	496
Swing	12.1%
Majority	9,135
Change	Lab Gain
Turnout	77.8



● VICTOR: Labour's Liz Blackman swept in on 12.1 swing to win Erewash with a 9,135 majority.

Close call for lone Tory

CONSERVATIVE Patrick McLoughlin clung onto his seat by the skin of his teeth last night and is the only Tory MP to represent Derbyshire.

The former Tory safe seat became a marginal as voters slashed his majority from 18,769 to just 4,885.

The Treasury minister polled 23,945 while Labour candidate Steve Clamp crossed the line with 19,060.

Mr McLoughlin will now return to Westminster to represent the 350 square mile constituency, which includes the towns of Matlock, Bakewell, Belper, Ashbourne and Duffield.

Toppling

But, as the votes were counted last night at Sherwood Hall, Matlock, it became clear the result would be close.

There were long faces in the Conservative camp as news flooded in of Tory strongholds toppling across the country.

And, when the late result was announced at 4.30am today, it was clear that Mr McLoughlin would be a lone envoy from his party to represent the county in Westminster.

He said: "I'm pleased to be re-elected but I'm saddened by the overall Conservative result.

"Labour have, to a certain extent,

WEST DERBYSHIRE

Patrick McLoughlin (C)	23,945
Stephen Clamp (Lab)	19,060
Christopher Seeley (LD)	9,940
John Gouriet (Ref)	2,499
Godfrey Meynell (Ind Green)	593
Hugh Price (UK Ind)	484
Nicholas Delves (Loony)	281
Martin Kyslun (Ind BB)	81
Swing	11.6 to Lab
Maj	4,885
Change	Cons Hold
Turnout	78.1

by Nick Leslie

copied our policies and I think there was a boredom factor with us."

He added: "Perhaps the British people felt they could have Conservative policies without a Conservative government."

The result saw Labour moving from third to second place after polling 13,528 in the 1992 election.

And Mr Clamp blamed his defeat on tactical voters giving their crosses to the Liberal Democrats.

He said: "If we'd been able to collapse the Lib Dem vote more comprehensively then we would have won this seat.



● FRIGHT: Patrick McLoughlin



● CLOSE: Steve Clamp



● HIGH SPIRITS: The Monster Raving Loony Party, who were thrown out of the count.

"I'm very saddened. We were so near yet so far, but the national result means many of us are going to be uplifted by a better tomorrow."

● A dozen members of the Monster Raving Loony Party were ejected from

the West Derbyshire count at 3am.

The group supporting candidate Nicholas Delves spent most of the evening drinking outside and inside the election hall at Sherwood Hall, Matlock.