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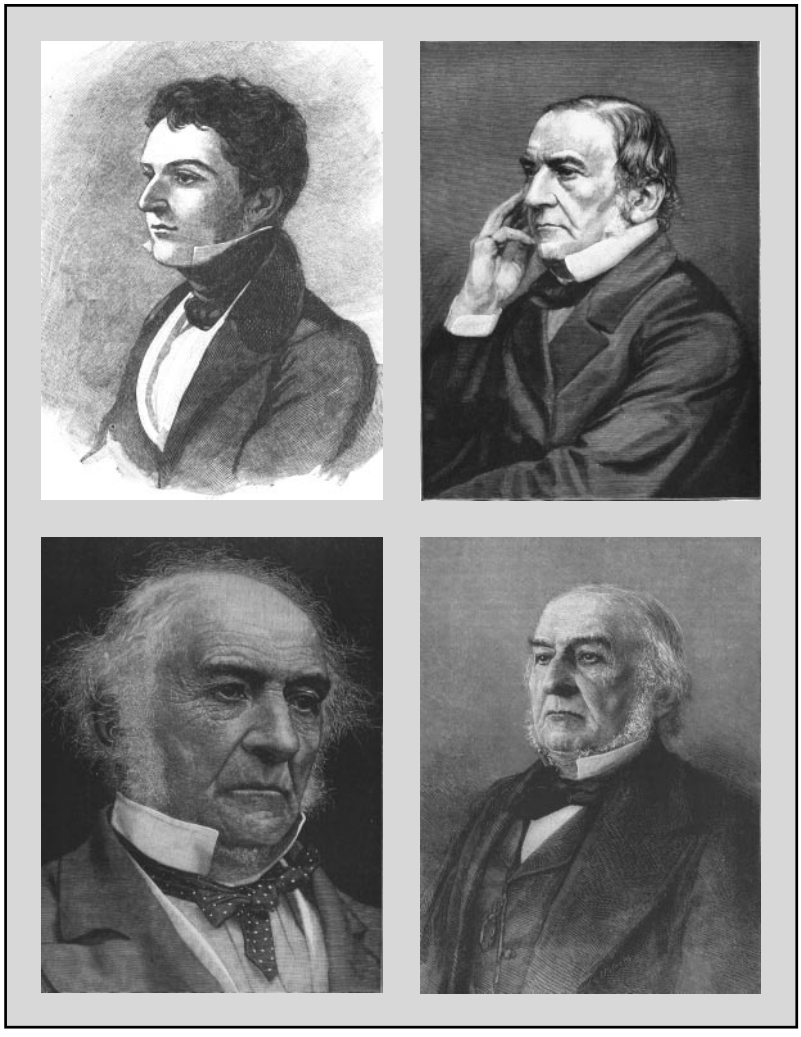
William Ewart Gladstone 1809–98



Lessons and Legacy

Conrad Russell
John Maloney
David Nolan
Colin Matthew
M. R. D. Foot
Eugenio Biagini
Roy Jenkins

'Be inspired with the belief that life is a great and noble calling, not a mean and grovelling thing that we are to shuffle through as best we can, but an elevated and lofty destiny.'
W. E. Gladstone

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT HISTORY GROUP

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Special Issue:

W. E. Gladstone: Lessons and Legacy

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Duncan Brack (Editor)
Flat 9, 6 Hopton Road,
London SW16 2EQ.
email: ldhg@dbrack.dircon.co.uk.

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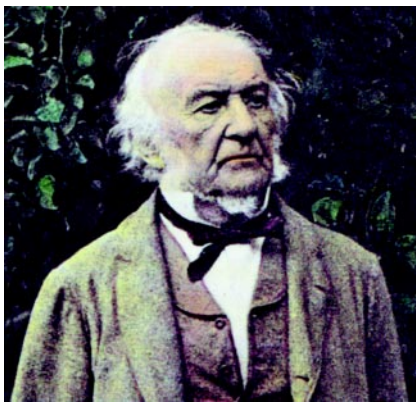


Editorial

W. E. Gladstone: Lessons and Legacy

One hundred years ago William Ewart Gladstone died. He was buried amid scenes which bore a full tribute to the place that he held in the affections of the people. He was a man of immense energies who participated in most of the major theological controversies of his time, published extensively on classical studies, rescued his wife's family's financially troubled estate and felled trees until after he was eighty.

In between times he was an MP for more than sixty years, Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time when Britain's prosperity was greater than any other nation, and Prime Minister four times as Britain approached the height of its empire. He did not shrink from tackling the major issues, whether controlling government expenditure, reforming the civil service or seeking the answer to the Irish or Bosnian questions. He stepped down from office in his eighties, ostensibly on health grounds but in reality in a squabble with colleagues over restraining military expenditure and challenging the House of Lords. His governments extended the vote, introduced the secret ballot, provided state-funded primary education and disestablished the Church of Ireland.

Chairing a meeting of the Liberal Democrat History Group in July 1998, David Gladstone noted that W. E. Gladstone's reputation had changed from being that of a piece of Victoriana like St Pancras Station, through the media interest in his rescue of prostitutes, to being again a source of political inspiration. Mrs Thatcher declared in a Keith Joseph Memorial Lecture that the Conservatism she favoured was best described as: 'Liberal in the old fashioned sense. I mean the Liberalism of Mr Gladstone.' David Gladstone noted that Gordon Brown regarded Gladstone as a role model but that the Liberal Democrats had been curiously silent on his legacy. It seemed to him that Liberals throughout the century 'have never quite known what to do with the Grand Old Man's legacy'.

This edition of the *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* cannot hope to provide a full answer to this problem, but we seek to make a start. Our aim is to show how Mr G tackled some of the major issues of his day which are still of relevance, to give some clues to his personality and, through Conrad Russell's article, to demonstrate his importance to the Liberal Democrats today.

Tony Little
Guest Editor

The **Liberal Democrat History Group** promotes the discussion and research of historical topics, particularly those relating to the histories of the Liberal Democrats, Liberal Party and the SDP. The Group organises discussion meetings and publishes the quarterly ***Journal of Liberal Democrat History*** and other occasional publications.

For more information, including details of back issues of the ***Journal,*** tape records of meetings, *Mediawatch, Thesiswatch* and *Research in Progress* services, see our web site: **www.dbrack.dircon.co.uk/ldhg.**

Hon President: Earl Russell. Chair: Duncan Brack.

Gladstone on ...

'You cannot fight against the future. Time is on our side. The great social forces which move onward in their might and majesty ... are against you. They are marshalled on our side.' (Speech on the Reform Bill in the House of Commons, 27 April 1866.)

'I will venture to say, that upon the one great class of subjects, the largest and the most weighty of them all, where the leading and determining considerations that ought to lead to a conclusion are truth, justice, and humanity – upon these, gentlemen, all the world over, I will back the masses against the classes.' (Speech in Liverpool, 28 June 1886.)

'No Chancellor of the Exchequer is worth his salt who is not ready to save what are meant by candle-ends and cheese-parings in the cause of his country.' (Speech in Edinburgh, 29 November 1879.)

'Your business is not to govern the country but it is, if you think fit, to call to account those who do govern it.' (Speech to the House of Commons, 29 January 1869.)

'Let the Turks now carry away their abuses in the only possible manner, namely by carrying off themselves ... one and all, bag and baggage, shall I hope clear out from the province they have desolated and profaned.' (*Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East,* 1876.)

'What, because a man is what is called a leader to a party, does that consitute him a censor and a judge of faith and morals? I will not accept it. It would make life intolerable.' (On being asked to condemn Parnell publicly after the divorce case. Quoted by R. Blake in *Gladstone, Politics and Religion,* ed. P. Jagger, 1985.)

'I was brought up to distrust and dislike liberty. I learned to believe in it. That is the key to all my changes.' (To John Morley, quoted in *Gladstone's Boswell,* ed. A. Briggs, 1984.)

Cover illustrations:
Gladstone in 1833 and 1868 (top); 1880 and 1892 (bottom).

Liberalism and Liberty from Gladstone to Ashdown:

Continuous Thread or Winding Stair?

In a lecture delivered at Hawarden, and in a shortened version to the Liberal Democrat History Group meeting in July, *Conrad Russell* outlined the perennial themes in the approach of Liberals and Liberal Democrats.

To be invited to commemorate Mr Gladstone must be a great honour to any historian, and another great honour to any Liberal. However, to receive both these honours at once must invite the reaction of Alec Guiness at the end of *Kind Hearts and Coronets*: 'How happy I could be with the one, were the other dear charmer away.' Whether historians are always capable of detachment is a point on which long familiarity with Common Rooms may create legitimate doubt, but at least historians should be free of obvious conflicts of interest.[1]

This is so clearly not the case with me that were I to pretend to the detachment necessary to academic history, the ghost of Geoffrey Elton would rise in anger over my shoulder. My grandfather sat on Mr Gladstone's back benches. My father, at the age of seventeen, drank port tête-a-tête with Mr Gladstone. In the course of an hour's drinking, Mr Gladstone favoured the nervous seventeen year-old with only one remark: 'this is very good port they've given me, but why have they given me it in a claret glass?' My father also, proverbially, knew Lloyd George, but that acquaintance led not to an OBE but to a prison sentence. I can still remember, at the age of ten, being taken to tea with Lady Lloyd George for the meeting at which that hatchet was finally buried. No sooner had I arrived, than I was painfully stung by a wasp. I could not understand why the grown-ups showed so little interest, but I can understand well enough now. My father's last meeting with Mr Asquith was one of the few things he still remembered in old age with excruciating embarrassment. He had gone for a country walk one very hot day when he came on a pool, and stripped off for a swim. As he swam back to the bank, stark naked, there was Mr Asquith, with whom his relations just retained courtesy, standing by the bank looking down on him. I can look on Liberal leaders with feelings well short of idolatry. In the process, perhaps, I prove myself a true Liberal, but I do not make myself a good historian. The emotions the material generates do not encourage the detachment necessary to serious history.

I have decided to devote this lecture instead to political philosophy, in which the need for a show of detachment, though real, is less immediate. In analysing a belief, holding it might be a source of strength rather than of weakness, for the question, 'what do I believe?' is the only question on which I must always know more than anyone else. The party to which I belong claims a continual and lineal descent from Mr Gladstone. It honours his memory as it trades on the power of his name. Is this claim to ideological legitimacy justified? The object of this lecture is to assess how far there is one continuous thing called Liberalism stretching from William Gladstone to Paddy Ashdown, and if so, how the cocktail of continuity and change has been mixed. In the process it will be necessary to look at a tradi-

tion which, when Gladstone came to speak for it, had already lived nearly two hundred years.

The principle for which Shaftsbury and Locke were then contending was the principle embodied in the Bill to exclude James, Duke of York, from the succession by Parliamentary action, that government action derived its title from the consent of the governed. It was to that principle that Gladstone turned in his two-sentence contribution to *Why I am a Liberal*, in 1885. 'The principle of Liberalism is trust in the people, qualified by prudence. The principle of Conservatism is mistrust of the people, qualified by fear.'[2] It is a typically extreme statement of a principle stretching back to the first Whigs. It was re-stated by Paddy Ashdown: 'The idea is very simple and the one on which all Liberal Democrat thought is based. That power comes from the people, and that all institutions should, as far as practicable reflect this'.[3] Here is a central principle, restated by Whigs, Liberals and Liberal Democrats, and now more than three centuries old. It is not just a principle of the party's great minds. In 1886 when the Marquess of Hartington, stated for a firm Liberal principle, the 'extension of popular self-government all over the country', he was speaking on the platform of the party which created elected local government, and in favour of 'an extension of the functions and authority of Local Government'.[4] The Liberal Democrat group which organised a fringe meeting at the 1993 party conference on 'How to cope when all your activists become councillors' could say Amen to that.[5]

It is not, of course, that simple. Party resemblances are like family resemblances. Parties have their equivalent of the children who contrive to resemble both parents when the parents do not in the least resemble each other. Even appearances which are the same look different under the sartorial disguises of different centuries. Sherlock Holmes, in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, once walked up to an eighteenth-century portrait, and asked Watson if he recognised the face. Watson, of course, did not. Holmes then put his hand over the brow of the portrait, obscuring the wig, and 'at once the face of Stapleton sprang out of the canvas'. A defence of nonconforming aldermen under Queen Anne may not sound like an attack on black unemployment in 1997, yet the principle of non-discrimination is the same under the wig. The ideological continuity is clearer than the change in its dress will show.

Parties, like families, also have a number of different faces, which all recur over the generations. Perhaps few of those faces differed more than those of Gladstone and Palmerston, yet both types continued to recur in the Liberal Party after their death. That the party of Gladstone is now identified by the voters primarily for its readiness to put an extra penny on the income tax may seem like a paradox of positively Gilbertian ingenuity. Yet Paddy Ashdown might take comfort from the fact that the Prime Ministership of Palmerston was marked, in Parry's words, by 'government's success in persuading Liberal MPs of the need to levy taxes'. Palmerston's decision in 1859 to make Gladstone his Chancellor led to Gladstone's success in convincing Radical MPs that 'the fight for economy no longer had to be conducted *against* the State.'[6] Parties, like families, only survive if they can learn to make compromises, and such compromises do and must end in the mixing of the ideological gene pool.

Perhaps the Liberal addiction to government by consent has changed its apparent form most conspicuously in foreign affairs. Nancy Seear once, in the middle of a boring committee meeting, shot into my ear the question: 'why were we so much in favour of the nation state in the nineteenth century and so much against it now?' The answer is that in the nineteenth century nationalism was the periwig worn by government by consent. This is now regularly associated with the phrase, 'a nation rightly struggling to be free', or as Gladstone said about the Muslims of the Sudan, 'a people rightly struggling to be free.'[7] The link is particularly clear in a letter written by the six-year-old Herbert Gladstone to his father in October 1860: 'Mama has been telling me about good Garibaldi. Did you really go down the dungeon? ... I hope Garibaldi will get Naples because he is good. And I want the king of Naples to go, because he is wicked, and shuts up people'.[8]

Yet the key contribution here was made by Russell, drawing on his philosophical roots in the seventeenth century. He made the seventeenth century roots much clearer in his despatch to the British Minister in Turin in October 1860, declaring support for 'a people building up the edifice of their liberties', and comparing the resistance to the Bourbons with the revolution of 1688.[9] This may have been the occasion of an exchange with the Queen which Lord John treasured enough to rehearse it to his grandson in old age. She: 'am I to understand you to say, Lord John, that under certain circumstances subjects may resist their lawful sovereign?' He: 'Speaking to a sovereign of the House of Hanover, Ma'am, I think I may say that I do'.[10]

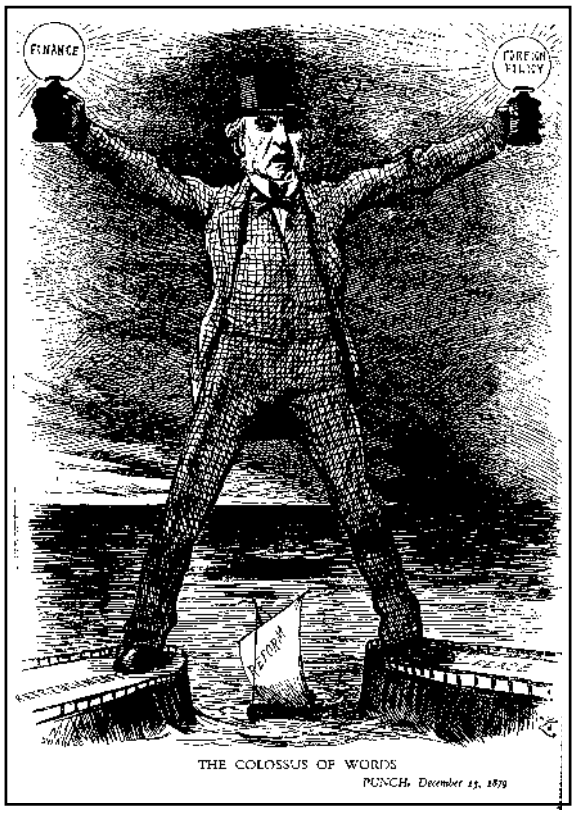
As the passage of time has made it clear that nations, like dynasties, are transient, it has become increasingly clear, in cases such as that of the Kurds or of the break-up of the Soviet Union, that the doctrine of consent may operate as much against the so-called nation state as for it. Perhaps one of the most unfortunate academics of all time was the man who wrote a book on *The Yugoslav Federation: a Success Story*. After the normal delays of academic publishing, it appeared in 1991. Can Paddy Ashdown, the champion of Bosnia, properly appear as the heir of Gladstone, the champion of the nation state?

It was Gladstone himself who made clear that the answer was 'yes', and did so in a speech generally taken as one of the greatest indiscretions of a long career. Speaking

on the American Civil War at Newcastle in 1862, he said: 'we may have our own opinions about slavery; we may be for or against the South, but there is no doubt that Jefferson Davies and other leaders of the South have made an army; they are making, it appears, a navy; and they have made what appears more difficult than either, they have made a nation'. John Bright complained: 'he is for union and freedom in Italy and for dissension and bondage in America'.[11]

John Bright's comment was made from a position of commitment to an extension of the suffrage far more extreme than anything Gladstone had yet contemplated. My grandfather, standing as a Radical candidate for Leeds in 1865, reflected that if there were an 'essential opposition' between the interests of rich and poor, 'the injustice of giving no representation whatever to the latter because they are more numerous than we are would be far more hideous than even Mr Bright had ever represented it to be'.[12] To Gladstone, who had not yet learned to identify consent with the consent of a mass electorate the matter was far less clear. His 'pale of the constitution' speech, which would have made his position clearly inconsistent, was still two years in the future. His opinion was already politically incorrect, as he learnt from the storm which he provoked, yet it was not (quite) intellectually inconsistent. What Gladstone did show in this remark is the realisation that nations are not eternal absolutes, but human constructions capable of change. In the vital reference to making a nation, he showed that he understood that nation states were subject, like all other human creations, to mutability. In that realisation, he opened the way to most of the changes in his party's thinking about the nation state since then.

The rest of the changes in the party's thinking about the nation state are the result of changes which have happened in the nature of world power and world conflict since Gladstone's day. When Paddy Ashdown, speaking at Chatham House on 6 March 1996, said that, 'the idea that the sovereign nation state can remain the basis on which the world is managed is one of the nostalgic myths from which we are going to have to break free', he was speaking in a world in which seventy-nine out of eighty-two current conflicts were not between states, but between ethnic groups within or across national borders. He was speaking for a world in which water may become as scarce as oil, and 'the wars of the twenty-first century will increasingly be resource wars'. He might have added, as he has done on many other occasions, that he was speaking in a global market which cannot be controlled from within national boundaries, in which the amount of money which crossed our exchanges on Black Wednesday was more than our gross national product, and in which the gross corporate product of some multinational companies is more than the gross national product of some of the medium-sized countries of the European Union. To say that his version of the nation state is not the same as Gladstone's is to say, simply, that he does not live in the same world.



THE COLOSSUS OF WORDS
PUNCH, December 13, 1879

Paddy Ashdown, in his Chatham House speech, turned to the instinctive readiness to identify law with liberty, and called for a 'framework of international law which is effective and enforceable'. He understands that sending a million refugees into another country, or diverting the Euphrates' headwaters, may be an act of aggression even if it takes place entirely within domestic boundaries, and that Article 2 of the UN Charter, which forbids interference in the internal affairs of another country, is therefore out of date. After talking to troops in Bosnia, he said they were pioneers in a new form of warfare, 'in which British soldiers will be asked to risk their lives not just in defence of individual British interests, but also to uphold international law'.[13] Yet even here, in his Don Pacifico speech, Gladstone was before him. Mocking Palmerston's claim that a British subject, like a Roman citizen, was entitled to 'an exceptional system of law', a claim now repeated in the United States doctrine of extra-territoriality, he said that the Foreign Secretary's duty was 'studiously to observe, and to exalt in honour among mankind, that great code of principles which is termed the law of nations'.[14] This is one of the passages in which the great statesmen of Liberalism have left their creed room to grow.

Liberalism, from its seventeenth-century roots, was a creed of non-discrimination. Jo Grimond traced this back to Colonel Rainborough's famous speech at Putney in 1647: '"the poorest he that is in England has his life to live as the greatest he.' That is one Liberal text ... It asserts it without envy'.[15] In Gladstone's day this creed of non-discrimination was largely directed to the abolition of

religious tests for entry to Oxford and Cambridge, and in most cases it was, for practical purposes, a creed calling for civil equality between the Dissenters and the Church of England. It is to the honour of the party that this call was not anti-Church of England, since perhaps as many of those who uttered it came from the Church of England as from Dissent. It was not a cry of hatred: it was a call for equality before the law. It was also, as the Liberals saw it, a call for the abolition of monopoly privilege. It was this discrimination against Dissenters in defence of an ecclesiastical monopoly which was at the heart of the Llanfrothen burial case, which began the career of Lloyd George. The Rector of Llanfrothen, without legal authority, locked the doors of the churchyard to prevent the burial of a Dissenting quarryman, and Lloyd George, the rising local solicitor, roundly defeated him in the ensuing court case. Community politics would have held no novelty to Lloyd George. Lloyd George's Liberalism was not in daily evidence after he entered into the wartime coalition, yet when Kitchener forbade the regiments to have Nonconformist chaplains, and the men to speak Welsh in their billets, it is no surprise that when Lloyd George came to hear of it, Kitchener retreated in bad order.[16]

It was perhaps this attack on privilege, monopoly and discrimination which was the daily cement of Liberalism. It was normally conducted, as Grimond said, 'without envy', because that was the way which led to success. It was perhaps the key principle of 1832 that this attack on discrimination and privilege was led by those who were themselves privileged, but, as a good Liberal might put it, preferred not to exercise their talents from behind the protection of a political tariff barrier. How much this remains part of the intellectual furniture of Liberalism is illustrated by Jo Grimond's 1959 criticism of trade unions: 'Liberals are in favour of trade unions: they think it is a good thing that they are industrially strong. But the political results of their privileged position are bad. Just as we would not now tolerate landlords or churches who claimed special privileges under the law ...'[17] Who but a Liberal would have thought to criticise trade unions by comparing them to landlords or to the Church of England?

The key to any call for non-discrimination is the capacity to universalise. Here some of the greatest Liberals have failed, and will always fail, as Rainborough's reference to 'the poorest *he* that is in England' illustrates. We are all human. Yet it is to the credit of British Nonconformists that they have shown far more capacity to universalise the grievance of discrimination than most other groups which have suffered it. It is very hard to think of a continental equivalent of British Nonconformists and it is perhaps this part of the Nonconformist legacy which has done most to keep Liberalism alive through the era of class politics. Among all the contributions to *Why I am a Liberal,* in 1885, few sound as fresh a century later, as that of Millicent Garrett Fawcett:

'I am a Liberal, because liberalism seems to me to mean faith in the people, and confidence that they will manage their own affairs far better than those affairs are likely to be managed for them by others.

No section of the people has ever been excluded from political power without suffering legislative injustice. To mention only a few instances: the working class suffered for centuries from laws which attempted to fix the rate of wages, to prevent labourers migrating from place to place in search of better-paid employment, to suppress trade societies, and to facilitate the embezzlement of their funds. Women have suffered, and are still suffering from a number of unjust laws ...

Every case of injustice is a double curse, harming those it is supposed to favour, as much as those to whom it is obviously oppressive; and liberalism, notwithstanding the timidity of some fainthearted and weak-kneed Liberals, is the main force in the political world which cuts at the root of injustice; not so much by tinkering and patching up particular instances of wrong, as by giving the people the power to protect themselves. Equal justice to all, man or woman, workman or aristocrat, is the only sort of liberalism that deserves the name.'[18]

These words, written in the nineteenth century, draw on the principles laid down by Locke in the seventeenth century, and lay down an agenda for the twenty-first century. It is in this theme of non-discrimination, perhaps even more than in the often more headlined Liberal desire to control power, that the intellectual continuity of a creed is most apparent.

It is precisely this creed of non-discrimination which has kept Liberals from class politics all through the period when they have been most in fashion. As soon as we treat anyone as a member of a class, we discriminate: we treat them as a member of a category, rather than reacting to them as individuals, according to what they do. The century since the death of Gladstone has been the century of class politics, but one after the other, Liberals have rejected any such notion. Perhaps the most emphatic of all, because most aware of the pressure he was resisting, was Asquith in 1921: 'the Liberal Party is not today, it never has been, and so long as I have any connection with it, it never will be, the party of any class, rich or poor, great or small, numerous or sparse in its composition. We are a party of no class'.[19]

There have perhaps been occasional moments when Liberals have repeated the mistake of King Harold at Hastings and come down off this high ground. Gladstone's 'classes against the masses' speech at Liverpool in the election of 1886 may be an example.[20] Lloyd George's Limehouse speech is another example:

'There has been a great slump in dukes ... They have been making speeches lately. One especially ex-

pensive duke made a speech, and all the Tory press said, "well, now, really, is that the sort of thing we are spending £250,000 a year on? Because a fully-equipped duke costs as much to keep as two Dreadnoughts – and they are just as great a terror – and they last longer. Let them realise what they are doing. They are forcing a revolution – and they will get it.'

That was one of our greatest ever political speeches, but it was not Liberalism, and Lloyd George was soon forced to backtrack for the good Liberal reason that what he had said contradicted the nature of his own support. Later that year, he said: 'you will find these rich men in the House of Commons sitting up night after night, risking health, some of them most advanced in years, and what for? To pass a measure which taxes them to the extent of hundreds, maybe thousands of pounds a year. All honour to them.'[21] He was back on Liberal ground. The essence of Liberalism was not that it was an attack on a class: it was an attack on monopoly. The *Leicester Daily Mercury*, listing the key issues in February 1909, named them as 'monopolies in land, in liquor, in ecclesiasticism, in electoral machinery, and in the House of Lords, which is the very holy of holies of monopoly'.[22] That may be a cartoon, but as so often, it is the cartoon which shows up the key features, and it is a good springboard from which to look at Liberal economic policy.

Nothing has been more insistent in the political cartooning of the Liberal Party than the attempt to portray it as a free market party, devoted to the principles of classical economics. In fact, there is a consensus among academics who have seriously studied the party that it was no such thing. That is backed by the unanimous agreement of Liberal politicians, and by unexpected supporters such as Sidney Webb and Lord Goschen, who left the party precisely because it was *not* such a party.[23] Can anyone consider Liberal policy on drink, to take one of the *Leicester Daily Mercury's* examples, and make out that it was based on the principles of free market economics? It was the Liberal Party, not the Tory Party, which was carried away in the 1874 'torrent of gin and beer'. Jonathan Parry suggests that even the drive for the repeal of the Corn Laws owed as much to the traditional Whig desire to avoid revolution by concession, and to avoid fighting an electorate on a class basis, as to the principles of political economy.[24]

The great mistake of attempts to base accounts of the Liberal Party on classical economic theories of the free market is the great mistake of the twentieth century about the nineteenth: the belief that its great arguments were about economics, not about religion or the constitution. Victorian politicians were not interested enough in economics to base a party division on them. There were no more votes in invoking the name of Smith and Ricardo than there are now in invoking the names of Keynes or Friedman. A cry like 'no church schools on the rates' was far more exiting to voters than any appeal to the laws of supply and demand. Even in fighting Chamberlain's tariff reform, Lloyd George found far more mileage in the good populist cry of 'stomach taxes' than in the charge that Chamberlain was 'distorting the market'. It was ecclesiastical, not economic, principles on which the Whig party had been founded, and which the Liberals inherited.

Karl Marx memorably said that Liberal ideas 'gave effect to the sway of free competition within the realm of knowledge'[25] It is arguable that Marx got it back to front, and what he should have said was: 'Liberalism gave effect to the doctrine of religious pluralism within the realm of the economy'. Putting it that way round would have had chronological realism, and also logical realism, since it was the religious issues on which the party and its electoral base were built.

This approach would also make sense of what, to a twentieth-century eye, often looks like a mish-mash of Liberal economic policy. There is no more consistency in Liberal economic policy in the nineteenth century than there is in Conservative economic policy in the twentieth, but there is perhaps a tendency to be discerned. Most of the invocations of economic theories of market freedom, and especially the key examples of repeal of the Corn Laws and free trade, tend to come where they support the traditional Liberal attacks on the power of monopoly and of privilege. It is the line of argument of those who did not see why the Anglicans should have all the best tunes. To this line of approach, Gladstone, with his High Tory past, his High Anglican religion and his Oxford University seat, is perhaps to some degree an exception. His insistence that governments should not interfere with functions 'which they are totally unable to discharge'[26] was nearer free market economic theory than many Liberals, and may have owed something to his first career as a Peelite. Yet even Gladstone and Hartington, when they found the near-monopoly economic power implicit in railways, were prepared to contemplate nationalisation.[27]

While we often find Liberals invoking free market principles against monopoly or privilege, we find a good many, from the Ten Hours Bill of 1847 onwards, in which they were prepared to jettison free market principles in order to control monopoly or privilege. The issues of hours of work is one of the clearest examples to show that nineteenth century Liberals were not Thatcherites. The first compulsory public health legislation, which made privies and drains compulsory for new houses, was Viscount Morpeth's Public Health Act of 1848. One can multiply such Acts, but that type of activity is best kept for a book.[28] One example may serve to show how debate on such an issue might be conducted: that is the Hares and Rabbits Bill of 1880, which finally reached the statute book as the Ground Game Act. To the utter fury of farmers, landlords had taken to

putting restrictive covenants into leases, to forbid farmers to shoot hares and rabbits on their land because it was a destruction of game.

The Bill which Harcourt, for the second Gladstone ministry, put before the commons voided all such covenants in leases. The adherents of strict political economy objected to the Bill on the ground that it interfered with freedom of contract. Harcourt asked: 'did the House imagine that this was the first Bill which had interfered with freedom of contract? ... All principles, however sound they might be, were subject to certain clear and well-defined exceptions'. The 'exception' Harcourt invoked was 'where bad customs had grown up, and one party had been unable to resist the force of those bad customs'. This is in effect the EU doctrine of the 'level playing field', and Harcourt very fairly quoted the Truck Acts and the Merchant Shipping Act as examples of it. State intervention was justified by the inequality of power between the contracting parties, which authorised the state to use its power to level the field.

What is even more interesting is the way Harcourt attempted to set up the image of the debate. All political speaking is a form of cartooning, and Harcourt set out to cartoon free market thinking as Conservative landlords' defence of their own privileges; he rehearsed his case and said: 'yet the noble Lord the member for Haddingtonshire declared this bill a monstrosity in legislation. Freedom of contract, according to the noble Lord, was a sacred principle only when applied to rent. Interference with it was a matter of course: but Conservative members, when dealing with land, thought otherwise'. This is an exercise in political spin-doctoring which no truly free market party could have attempted. It is the voice of a party well used to controlling economic power to protect the weak.[29]

In this context, the work of the New Liberals of the late Victorian and Edwardian period, who constructed the philosophic base for the Liberal advance after 1906 and for the foundations of the welfare state, are perhaps less new than they are sometimes taken to be. Hobhouse, one of the most famous of the New Liberals, said that legislation against monopoly was 'directed to the redressing of inequality in bargaining', and was 'not ... an infringement of the two distinctive ideals of the older Liberalism, liberty and equality. It appears rather as a necessary means to their fulfilment'.[30] This says no more than Harcourt had said in 1880.

New Liberals justified many of their advances in Liberal thinking through an individualistic notion of community in which they saw a common interest in the success of the whole, and argued for rights, not because they were natural, but because they were conferred by society for the mutual benefit of the recipient and the conceder. Herbert Samuel, in 1902, said that the unemployed, 'the helpless victims of an industrial system faulty in its workings, have a claim on the society which maintains and profits by that system, for opportunity to labour.'[31] Hobson argued that 'there is a moral duty incumbent on the State to make 'the right to live' a corollary of 'the legal compulsion to be born.' He held that this implied a 'State guarantee of a minimum standard of life'. Perhaps what is most striking about the New Liberal philosophy is that the defence of such daring new measures as National Insurance and the Old Age Pension rested on philosophical foundations which were so familiar and so traditional. Robertson, defending the Old Age Pension in 1912, said it was 'part of the generally avowed duty of doing as we would be done by'.[32] This was not just a use of that always new book, the Bible, but also a looking back to the principles of the law of nature as enunciated by Locke.

No doubt many of these New Liberal ideas would have horrified Gladstone. Indeed one has the impression that for many of the party Young Turks in Gladstone's last years, that was one of their great attractions. Yet they were securely rooted in ideas which had been current in the party all through Gladstone's period of power, and indeed in ideas which were very much older than that. The New Liberals may have turned away from Cobden and Bright but they made a determined effort to appropriate Mill, using the scope for ramification in Mill's enlarged concept of utilitarianism to do so.[33] Mill, by his insistence that 'trade is a social act', and that the case for leaving it unrestricted did not arise from his principles of liberty, deliberately left the way open for them to do so.[34] Lloyd George was not a New Liberal. He took these ideas up, as busy ministers do, because they were missiles lying to hand when he needed something to throw. It was Lloyd George, by hurling new Liberalism at the House of Lords, who wove it into a framework attack on monopoly and privilege, turned it into something which all Liberals

'A creed of non-discrimination': Gladstone attempting to help Bradlaugh despite his aversion to atheism.

would recognise, and has made it so securely part of party philosophy that it has remained there ever since.

It is since 1945, since the party has faced the challenge of socialism, that Liberalism has recovered a distrust of the state which Gladstone would have recognised. Here the key thought came from Jo Grimond, who revived a Liberal distrust of the spreading power of the state which Lloyd George, who treated the government machine like a fast car, had quite forgotten. It is a key Grimond line that 'I suspect that the slither towards dependence on the state is inherent in all democracies unless deliberate steps are taken to counter it'.[35]

It is this mixture of traditions which Paddy Ashdown has inherited. They are not incompatible, but, like a team of high-spirited horses they are not easy to drive together. In terms of his quotations, Paddy Ashdown's favourite Liberal appears to be Lloyd George. He is well aware of the power of the state to create freedom by intervening to level the playing field. Paddy Ashdown's particular nightmare is no longer the Nonconformist shut out of the burial ground: it is the lack of opportunity. It is 'young men and women sleeping in a shop doorway just the thickness of a plate-glass window away from job ads they'll never have the skills to apply for'.[36] If Paddy Ashdown has a key word it is 'trapped'. It may be literal, as in the case of Hartcliffe in Bristol, where 'even the act of mourning requires four buses'.[37] It may be metaphorical, as in the case of people trapped by poverty traps in the benefit system. There is in his desire to use the state to create opportunities, and in his dedicated defence of public services, all the Lloyd Georgian's readiness to rely on the power of the state. It is the voice of Lloyd George which denounced 'levels of poverty now immorally distant from the levels of affluence around them in many parts of the capital', and the voice of a New Liberal which said that 'we live more safely, and ultimately more prosperously, in a society that is united'.[38]

Yet at the same time there is a distrust of leaving it to the state in which we can hear the voices of Gladstone and Grimond. Ashdown warns us that things happen 'where people have the power and the responsibility and the support to do things for themselves.' In adapting Beveridge's image of the five giants, he says: 'now note the difference in language. It is not the state that slays the giants – it is the individual. The state is not the guardian angel – it is the provider of guardian angels'. This tradition of self-reliance and self-help is one Gladstone would have recognised.[39] In combining it with the more statist tradition coming from Lloyd George, Paddy Ashdown is like the proverbial child who resembles both parents, even though they do not resemble each other. Technically as well as ideologically, this blend is extremely difficult to mix in the right proportions, and there is a lot of work still to do on it, but it is clear enough that within Paddy Ashdown's Lloyd George, there is a Gladstone struggling to get out. The more work I have done on this lecture, the more glad I have been that the phrase in my title, 'Continuous Thread or Winding Stair' does not pose two mutually exclusive alternatives. There *is* a continuous thread from Gladstone to Ashdown, but it goes up a stair which is very winding indeed – and there is a lot further to climb.

The Earl Russell is Liberal Democrat spokesman on social security in the Lords and Professor of History at King's College, London. He is the author of The Crises of Parliaments: English History 1509–1660 *(1971),* Parliaments and English Politics 1621–1629 *(1979),* Unrevolutionary England 1603–1642, The Fall of the British Monarchies 1637–1642 *(1991),* Academic Freedom *(1993). He is the great-grandson of Lord John Russell.*

Notes

1 I would like to thank Paddy Ashdown both for supplying the selection of speeches on which I have drawn for this lecture and for some very helpful comments.

2 Reprinted in Duncan Brack, *Why I am a Liberal Democrat* (Liberal Democrat Publications, 1996), p. 143.

3 Paddy Ashdown, 'A Welfare State for the next Century', Friendship Group annual lecture, Birmingham, 16 June 1997.

4 Jonathan Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Victorian Government in Victorian Britain* (1993), p. 241.

5 Fringe meeting at party conference at Torquay, September 1993.

6 Parry, *op. cit.* pp. 184–86.

7 Parry, p. 291.

8 Roy Jenkins, *Gladstone* (1995), p. 199.

9 Parry, p. 189.

10 Oral history. Communicated by Lord John Russell to my father, and by him to me on many occasions during my childhood. Lord John's notorious tactlessness makes it unlikely that this was in fact a *mot d'escalier,* but even if it were it would be none the worse guide to Lord John's mind.

11 Jenkins, *op. cit.* pp. 237–39.

12 Bertrand and Patricia Russell (eds), *The Amberly Papers* (1937) I 364. For an example of Gladstone at his kindliest, see his letter of condolence to my grandfather for his defeat in the general election of 1868: 'let me take the opportunity of saying how much I regret your exclusion from Parliament, though I trust it is but temporary. When I read your able speech at Plymouth (I think) I feared the sting of the clerical bee, or wasp, would find you out, as it did me.' *Ibid.* II 157.

13 Paddy Ashdown, speech at Chatham House, 6 March 1996, and *Beyond Westminster* (1994), p. 54.

14 Jenkins, p. 119.

15 Jo Grimond, *The Liberal Future* (1959), p. 16.

16 Martin Pugh, *Lloyd George* (1988), pp. 9–10, 78.

17 Grimond, *op. cit.* p. 38.

18 *Why I am a Liberal Democrat,* p. 148.

19 G. R. Searle, *The Liberal Party: Triumph and Disintegration 1886–1929* (1992), p. 173.

20 Parry, p. 302.

21 Pugh, *op. cit.* pp. 49–50.

22 Parry, p. 302.

23 Searle, p. 109.

24 Parry pp. 145, 245; Michael Freeden, *The New Liberalism: An Ideology of Social Reform* (1978), pp. 33–35; Searle, p. 26.

25 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (ed. Engels, 1888), p. 21.

26 Parry, p. 168.

27 Jenkins, pp. 68, 249, 321.

28 Parry, pp229-223.

29 Parry, pp.243–45; *Hansard,* vol. 252, cols. 1714–15, 10 June 1880. The issue of rabbits was a strong electoral one. In the South Devon election of 1868, the Tory

concluded on page 11

A Visit to Hawarden

Tony Little describes the Gladstone family home.

Gladstone lived a somewhat peripatetic lifestyle; the index to the diaries lists some seventeen different London homes, not including the Dollis Hill home he borrowed in later life. When not in London he was often at one of the great houses of the Whig aristocracy or of other friends. But if anywhere could be called home it was Hawarden Castle.

Hawarden is a village in Flintshire in North Wales, and the Castle was the property of Gladstone's wife Catherine's family. When the family got into financial difficulties over an unwise investment in an iron and brickworks at Stourbridge, it was the resources of the Gladstone family which came to the rescue. From thereon, Gladstone and his family shared the house with Sir Stephen Glynne, and Gladstone's family inherited the estate. The house remains in the family and is not open to the public. It was a great privilege for those who attended the Chester centenary conference (see pp. 43–44) to be able to visit Gladstone's home.

The house is approached through a grand mock-castle gate entrance in the village and requires a 15–20 minute walk which passes the ruins of the medieval castle. The main part of the house is a classic eighteenth century home, not built on an unduly grand scale, which has been clad in stone with mock battlements added in a Regency Gothic style. Under Gladstone's occupation it was extended to include the Temple of Peace, and the Octagon room, which was used for the storage of state and important family papers. We were allowed to see the downstairs rooms. These were simply furnished but rich in portraits of the family – in which it was interesting to note how the features of the young Catherine just before marriage were clearly recognisable in the later portraits. The furniture in the dining room was still the original.

HAWARDEN CASTLE, FROM THE SOUTH-WEST.

The largest room was the drawing room, which had also served as the library in times past. On what must be the north wall are still the fake book cases with titles bearing witness to the family's sense of humour – *Ascent of Cader-Idris* by Anthony Strollope Esq, *An Israelite Without Guile* by Ben Disraeli. It is through the hidden door in one of these bookcases that access is gained to the Temple of Peace – Gladstone's study – which is largely unchanged since his day.

In it are to be found the desk in the window where he worked and the desk in the centre where he studied. In this room he wrote his famous pamphlet on the Bulgarian atrocities. Around the walls are some of the bookcases which he designed himself to jut out into the room, providing the maximum space for books on the two sides and at the ends facing inwards. One of these was used to record the heights of the family at various ages, and Sir William Gladstone, who acted as our guide, indicated that the GOM had been recorded as 5ft 11½". Lying scattered around are the great seal of office of 1859, one of the many axes presented to him in acknowledgment of his tree-felling, and a wheelbarrow which came from the opening of a railway. On top of the bookcases are a series of busts, including, unexpectedly, a bust of Disraeli to stare down at his rival at work. On the wall is the Millais portrait of Gladstone and one of his grandchildren. Perhaps the most poignant document we saw in this year was the original of his will, written in his own hand over eight pages of a ½d notebook.

Liberalism and Liberty

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candidate's speeches were regularly punctured with staccato cries of 'rabbits!, rabbits!', and occasionally with worse: *Amberly Papers*, II, 208, 209–10, 212, 219–20, 223, 235 and other refs.

30 Freeden, p. 35.
31 Freeden, p. 219, 209.
32 Freeden, pp. 218, 222.
33 Freeden, p 14. Hobhouse's exact words were: 'the interests of every man are no doubt in the end bound up with the welfare of the whole community, but the relation is infinitely subtle and indirect ... the direct and calculable benefit of the majority may by no means coincide with the ultimate good of society as a whole'. It is a line of thought whose debt to Mill's *Utilitarianism* is surely clear.
34 J. S. Mill, *On Liberty and Other Writings*, (ed. Stefan Collini, 1989), p. 95.
35 Grimond, p. 43.
36 Paddy Ashdown, speech at party conference, Cardiff, 9 March 1997.
37 Paddy Ashdown, *Beyond Westminster*, p. 6.
38 Paddy Ashdown, speech in London, 8 April 1997.
39 Paddy Ashdown, Friendship Group annual lecture, 16 June 1997.

Gladstone as Chancellor

The Exchequer brought fame to Gladstone but in return Gladstone raised the office to the forefront of politics. *John Maloney* explains.

Gladstone was Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1853–55 and again from 1859–66, first as a Peelite and then as a Liberal. (In 1873–74 and again in 1880–82, as Prime Minister, he would be his own Chancellor.) He first arrived at 11 Downing Street after destroying Disraeli's budget of 1852 on the floor of the House of Commons, bringing down the government, and thus earning the right and even the duty to bring in a budget of his own. It turned out to be the opening act not just of the most famous of all Chancellorships but of the Exchequer's ascent to one of the three great offices of state, ranking only behind the premiership and the Foreign Office. And Gladstone's accession also initiated a public finance where necessary taxes no longer had to be cajoled out of a grudging Parliament muttering ceaselessly about executive extravagance. For this, as we shall see, Gladstone must take much of the credit.

> It was the style as much as the content of a Gladstone budget which marked him out from the first. However austere the message, its delivery yielded an intense and invariable pleasure to Gladstone and almost everyone else. So, when things went right, did the results: John Morley, in his *Life of Gladstone,* attributed 'a carnal satisfaction' to his chief when 'the public revenue advanced by leaps and bounds. Deploring expenditure with all his soul, he still rubs his hands with professional pride at the elasticity of the revenue under his management.'[1]
>
> Popular appreciation reassured Gladstone that his delight was a legitimate one. Morley's biography is full of the 'enchaining' and 'delighting'[2] of audiences on the subject, dull in anyone else's hands, of public finance.
>
> Just as Macaulay made thousands read history who before had turned from it as dry and repulsive, so Mr Gladstone made thousands eager to follow the public balance sheet, and the whole nation became his audience, interested in him and his themes and in the House where his dazzling wonders were performed.[3]

Earmarking public expenditure

If you cut government spending, you cut the budget deficit. Since the converse does not necessarily apply, the level of public spending must, logically, take precedence over the balance of the budget. Such was Gladstone's attitude: except in wartime, when, typically, a degree of resignation over the level of public spending was compensated by an extra degree of determination to avoid borrowing, if at all possible.

Gladstone had the bad luck to begin and end his first Chancellorship in tandem with the Crimean War. In his 1854 budget he ruled out (for the time being) borrowing to cover the expenses of war, quoting Mill's *Principles* to the effect that: 'if capital taken in loans is abstracted from funds either engaged in production or destined to be employed in it, their diversion from that purpose is equivalent to taking the amount from the wages of the working classes'.[4]

Gladstone went further: unless they were sent the bill here and now, 'the community' would continue to extol the 'pomp and circumstance, glory and excitement' of war at the expense of its miseries. His actual response was to double income tax for a period of six months only, arguing that after six months the war would either be over or, in all probability, no longer supportable without borrowing. He proved himself wrong: with higher income tax, plus higher duties on spirits, sugar and malt, he was able to run a surplus throughout the Crimean War. But he continued to eschew the dogma that all war spending must always be financed by tax increases or spending cuts elsewhere: and when in 1862 Stafford Northcote attributed the doctrine to him, Gladstone was swift with a letter of rebuke.

More than one Chancellor has toyed with the idea of earmarked taxation, where specific

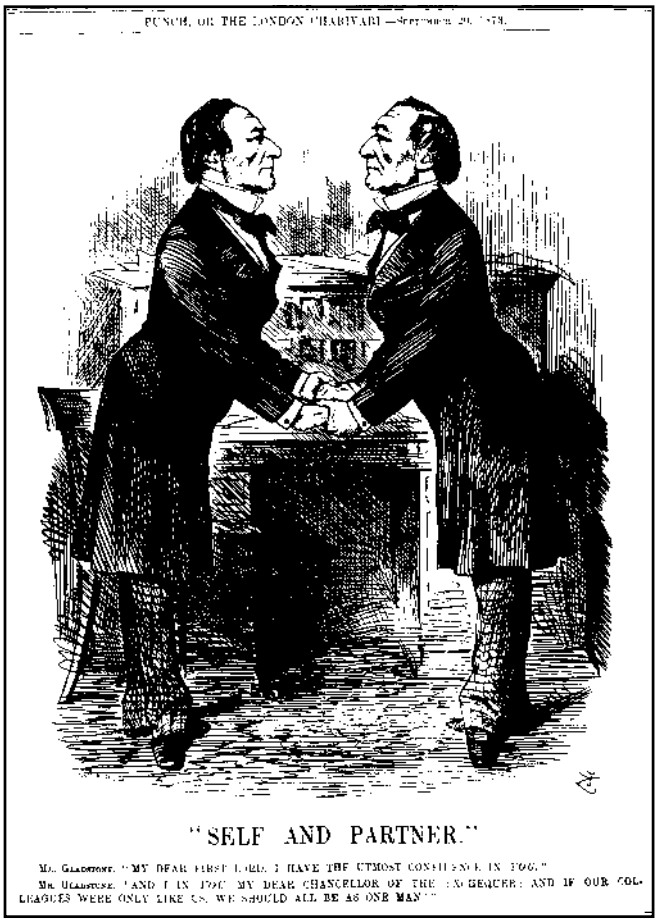
tax levies finance specific types of spending. Gladstone, by contrast, at times came close to earmarked public spending, under which the bill for particular projects was to be sent to those who had made the most noise on their behalf. The poor, he said, had demonstrated the largest appetite for the Crimean War. He therefore refused to let the whole burden fall on the better-off.[5] However, when in 1860 he came to look back on the increased spending of the last few years, he judged it to be mainly the fault of the more prosperous classes, and so had no compunction in raising income tax from 9d to 10d to make them pay.[6]

There was no equivalent of the Crimean War in Gladstone's second Chancellorship (1859–66), so his focus switched from containing the consequences of public spending to bringing it down. (Within two days of resuming office in 1859 he was proposing a reduction in British forces in the Pacific.) Gladstone's attitude to defence spending pleased Cobden and Bright, but Palmerston had few problems in carrying the bulk of the Liberal Party with him. Previous Parliaments' grudging attitude to almost any military spending had left Britain with outdated and inadequate defences – apparent enough even before the Crimean War revealed the full poverty of equipment and organisation alike. Now Palmerston demanded more ships, better fortifications against France and, in 1864, better living conditions for soldiers and armour-plated ships – provoking another resignation threat from Gladstone.

1862's budget statement dissected the trend. First, said Gladstone, there was the 'growth of real permanent wants of the country: wants which it is desirable to supply, and to which if you were to deny fitting supply, you would be doing current public mischief.'[7] Fears about national security had contributed their share, as had the desire to keep up with other countries' military expenditure. Palmerston could hardly have objected to any of this: the current placard seen around Manchester was another matter:

TAXPAYERS! Read Mr Cobden's new pamphlet, the 'THREE PANICS', and judge for yourselves. How long will you suffer yourselves to be Humbugged by PALMERSTONIANISM and Robbed by the 'Services', and others interested in a War Expenditure, even in times of Peace? ...THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER APPEALS TO YOU TO HELP HIM. You have the power in your own hands if you will only exert it. Reform the House of Commons, AND DO IT THOROUGHLY THIS TIME.[8]

Gladstone's position was not an altogether easy one. Unwilling to embrace the thoroughgoing anti-colonialism of the Manchester School, and on his own admission increasingly inexpert in the technical arguments on which the Admiralty based its demands, he could do no better than an intermittent guerrilla campaign against the majority Liberal view as led by Palmerston. But it was Gladstone and Palmerston's complementarity, not any episode of antagonism, which set the seal on mid-Victorian public finance. The Prime Minister's case for expenditure, combined with the Chancellor's eye for anything that could be construed as unnecessary spending, convinced Liberals and Conservatives alike, not just that any remaining taxes were necessary, but also that governments must be allowed to plan the fiscal future reasonably uninterrupted by the accidents of Parliamentary whim. Gladstone had persuaded even the radicals, in Professor Parry's words, that: 'the fight for economy no longer had to be conducted against the state.'[9]



Putting employment first

There were two kinds of Gladstone budget: those with and without an extended lecture on the principles of taxation. Some of the lecturing, as in the 1853 budget, was little more than an engaging historical canter through the precedents. Full-scale sermons tended to attach themselves to the budgets of other Chancellors: notably Disraeli in 1852 and Sir George Cornewall Lewis in 1857. Lewis had drawn on the authority of Arthur Young to argue that efficiency and fairness alike demanded a multiplicity of taxes. 'If I were to define a good system of taxation, it should be that of bearing lightly on an infinite number of points, heavily on none.' The reader, John Morley commented in his *Life of Gladstone*,

would have no difficulty in believing how speedily 'this terrible heresy' would have 'kindled volcanic flame in Mr Gladstone's breast'.[10]

Gladstone's first reaction was to note in his diary, *contra* Lewis, the necessity of simplifying the fiscal system 'by concentrating its pressure on a few well-chosen articles of extended consumption.'[11] To charges that his own measures had lacked the finesse of a Cornewall Lewis, instead now benefiting one class, now penalising another, with large changes in simple taxes, Gladstone replied that the benefits of lower taxes and tariffs extended, not just to the consumers of the goods concerned, but to almost everyone. In particular, the working class ought to realise that more employment should take precedence over cheaper necessities. One man's tax cut was another man's job opportunity. In his own budget speech of 1862 he went back to 1820 for the beginnings of fiscal enlightenment. In that year Sydney Smith had written of:

'taxes upon every article which enters into the mouth, or covers the back, or is placed under the foot ... taxes on everything on the earth and the waters under the earth – on everything that comes from abroad or is grown at home – taxes on the raw material – taxes on every fresh value that is added to it by the industry of man – taxes on the sauce which pampers man's appetite, and the drug that restores him to health – on the ermine which decorates the judge and the rope that hangs the criminal – on the poor man's salt and the rich man's spice – on the brass nails of the coffin, and the ribands of the bride.'[12]

Thanks to fiscal simplification, said Gladstone, the sauces, the drugs, the ermine, the ropes, the coffin nails and the ribbons were all free. Even better, they had been freed in roughly the right order. Gladstone, then as at other times, gave priority to cutting duties not on the working man's necessities, but on those goods which gave him the most employment. Take the Corn Laws: repeal had not provided cheaper or much cheaper bread, but rather had 'created a regular and steady trade which may be stated at £15,000,000 a year.' Demand for labour had thus risen 'and it is the price their labour thus brings, not the price of cheapened commodities, that forms the main benefit they receive.'[13]

Inevitably the *process* of scrapping tariffs and duties on this – or any other – basis brought protests about 'class legislation' from those consumers who thought they were too near the back of the queue and (in the case of tariffs) producers who thought they were too near the front. When the charge arose from Gladstone's refusal in 1865 to abolish the Malt Tax, he replied that he was well aware he had done nothing for the maltsters. That had been his aim: indeed it had been his aim, and his achievement, to do nothing for any class. Class legislation was not just 'a betrayal of our duty to the nation', it was not even an effective way of helping the intended beneficiaries, who would gain much more from 'wise legislation impartially applied and spread over the whole community.'[14]

But there was one tax whose strengths and weaknesses, beneficiaries and victims, pitfalls and hidden charms Gladstone enjoyed dissecting above all. This was income tax. His first and longest budget speech, the 4½ hour marathon of 1853, gave almost half its length to a history and economic analysis of income tax in Britain. Income tax was disliked for its links with the dictatorial powers of a state at war; its 'inquisitorial' method of assessment and collection; and for encouraging evasion and dishonesty. But now Gladstone was able to find as much praise as blame for the tax. It was, he said, essential to have it on hand in wartime:

'Times when the hand of violence is let loose, and when whole plains are besmeared with carnage, are the times when it is desirable that you should have the power of resort to this mighty engine, to make it again available for the defence and the salvation of the country'.[15]

Had income tax at its rate of 1806–15 been in place throughout the Napoleonic Wars, he continued, the conflict would have left no burden of debt. But this gave rise to parallel arguments for retaining income tax at other times, as Peel had recognised when, in 1843, he had 'called forth from repose this giant, who had once shielded us in war, to come and assist out industrious toils in peace.' The trouble began when a country dependent on indirect taxes for its main revenue then added income tax to pay for supposedly temporary emergencies. In 1861's budget speech he assured the House that:

'I should very much like to be the man who could abolish the income tax ... I think it would be a most enviable lot for any Chancellor of the Exchequer – I certainly do not entertain any hope that it will be mine – but I think that some better Chancellor of the Exchequer in some happier time may achieve that great consummation; and that some future poet may be able to sing of him, as Mr Tennyson has sung of Godiva, although I do not suppose the means employed will be the same –
"He took away the tax,
And built himself an everlasting name"'[16]

For the last few months of his first Premiership (1868–74) Gladstone was also Chancellor. He used this brief opportunity to propose, for the first and last time in his career, the abolition of income tax. The proposal became to all intents and purposes an official Liberal promise in the general election campaign of 1874 – something inconceivable under the loose, decentralised and ambiguous political arrangements of earlier ages. He was saved from having to implement it by losing the election.

Paying addresses to both

Given the didactic and analytical style of the typical Gladstone speech, it is rather surprising that he never

gave an extended lecture on the merits of direct and indirect taxation. Instead, in 1861, he congratulated himself on not having done so. In place of such inappropriate abstractions, Gladstone confided in the House that:

'I can never think of direct or indirect taxation except as I should think of two attractive sisters, who have been introduced into the gay world of London ... differing only as sisters may differ, as where one is of lighter and another of darker complexion, or where there is some agreeable variety of manner, the one being more free and open, and the other somewhat more shy, retiring and insinuating. I cannot conceive any reason why there should be unfriendly rivalry between the admirers of these two damsels; and ... I have always thought it not only allowable, but even an act of duty, to pay my addresses to them both'.[17]

Unfortunately for the indirect sister, Gladstone had preceded these courtly compliments by a long catalogue of her vices, making her indeed sound remarkably like the sort of person he rescued at night. He hoped that 'the memorable history' of the indirect tax cuts of the last twenty years would never be forgotten. Removing the worst tax and tariff burdens had produced such 'elasticity of the revenue' that the Treasury had ended up well in pocket. Thus, in presenting the Anglo-French commercial treaty to Parliament in 1860, Gladstone drew powerful comparisons between the golden age of tariff repeal (1842–53) and what had gone before and after it. Between 1832 and 1841 duties had been remitted only to the extent of £131,000 per year; since 1853 there had been no net reduction of duties. In each of these periods, customs and excise revenue had grown by around £170,000 per annum. Compare the great years from 1842 to 1853, when the *average* annual net remission of duty had exceeded £1 million. Despite this, or rather because of it, revenue (up by £221,000 a year) had grown faster than before or since.

A BAD EXAMPLE.

DR. PUSEY. "WHAT'S ALL THIS? YOU, THE TWO HEAD BOYS OF THE SCHOOL, THROWING MUD! YOU OUGHT TO BE ASHAMED OF YOURSELVES!"

Up to 1861 or thereabouts, Gladstone makes it sound as if indirect taxes are so far down the sunless side of the Laffer curve that he can reduce them and pocket the (eventual) extra revenue almost indefinitely. He was later to make it clear that he had never taken this view. In 1864's budget speech he warned that any future tax cuts would not expand the revenue base in the agreeable fashion to which the House had become used: the taxes cut so far, very naturally, were the worst, most burdensome ones – the taxes most deadly to prosperity. He drove the point home with the malt tax. Halve this tax, he warned, and you would wait in vain for a hundred years or more for the revenue to be made up again to its old level.

A unifying figure

Gladstone's public finance fits into the rest of his economics without a single rough edge. Free trade, peace, retrenchment and a balanced budget formed a sturdy and – as long as Gladstone himself remained their champion – well-nigh impregnable quadrilateral on which the rest of mid-Victorian Liberal politics was built. Free trade served the cause of peace, which permitted low military expenditure. So far as this assisted the balance of the budget, it provided a windbreak behind which Gladstone could dismantle another batch of protective duties. Since this, Gladstone claimed with good statistical reason, typically paid for itself in a few years by its widening of the revenue base, the process was self-sustaining.

Gladstone has had, and deserved, a consistently good press for his own consistency as a Chancellor. The charge against him has rather been that 'Gladstonian finance' was a mean and unimaginative doctrine which not only dominated Treasury thinking for ninety years too long but was also a regrettable contrast with everything else Gladstone stood for. Roy Jenkins identifies J. L. Hammond with the view that the Treasury corrupted Gladstone rather than the other way round, that:

'the Treasury spirit was Gladstone's poison. Set him free from it and he became an imaginative statesman, upholding the Concert of Europe and international arbitration, sensitive to the agrarian as well as the

political wrongs of Ireland, even capable of a measure of constructive reform at home. Imprison him in its toils, and he became a penny-pinching miser, elevating the reduction or abolition of particular taxes to the status of an ultimate achievement, and willing to trample on all sorts of other desiderata on the way'.[18]

If this is just a complaint that Gladstone was never visited by the bright idea of becoming a mid-nineteenth-century proto-Keynesian, then it is a supreme irrelevance. Even if we remember that Hammond was writing in the 1930s, and insert that decade's wildly optimistic estimates of the value of the multiplier (3, 4 and even 5), the public sector was far too small for fiscal policy to have a significant influence on aggregate demand.

The wisdom of the classical political economists was less prominent in Gladstone's speeches than in those of almost any other major politician of his time. There was a particularly stark contrast with the school of thought, preeminently represented by Robert Lowe and the Duke of Argyll, which did battle against the twin-headed monster of state activism and historical or geographical relativism. Lowe, as Gladstone's Chancellor, fought a rearguard action against the Irish Land Act of 1870, which compensated Irish tenants for improvements they carried out on their land, and for any eviction not caused by default on the rent. To Lowe, governing Britain and Ireland on opposing economic principles was little more than a confession of economic ignorance. Argyll in turn was to resign from the Cabinet in 1881 over another Irish land act, which among other things set up judicial machinery to fix 'fair rents'.

But Lowe and Argyll were increasingly isolated within a Liberal Party which had never much cared for doctrinaire political economy. And Gladstone himself, in sharp contrast to many of his initiatives on foreign policy, defence and above all Irish home rule, was in economic matters a unifying figure in the party he led. Indeed in the light of recent revisionist histories which raise 'the Gladstone effect' to new heights of impulsive disruptiveness, Gladstone's soothing influence on economic questions stands out all the more sharply. To present himself as the guardian of state against extravagant use of the people's money was a lifelong preoccupation, whatever else changed in his outlook: it was also the solvent that did most to hold the diverse Liberal coalition of interests together. By the time its magic ceased to work, the party had already split over Irish home rule, ushering in a period of 110 years in which the Tories would be out of office for only thirty-two.

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John Maloney is a lecturer in economics at Exeter University, and the author of The Professionalisation of Economics: Alfred Marshall and the Dominance of Orthodoxy *(Transaction Books, 1991) and* Debt and Deficits *(Edward Elgar, 1998).*

Notes

1 Quoted in F.W. Hirst, *Gladstone as Financier and Economist* (1931), p. 229.
2 John Morley, *Life of Gladstone* (1903), ii, p. 201 and i, p. 686.
3 *Ibid.*, i, p. 689.
4 *Hansard*, 131, col. 375 (6 March 1854).
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6 Roy Jenkins, *Gladstone* (1995). p. 225.
7 *Hansard* 166, col. 482 (3 April 1862).
8 Morley (1903), i, pp. 692–93.
9 Jonathan Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain* (1993), pp. 185–86.
10 Morley (1903), i, p. 559.
11 H. C. G. Matthew (ed.), *Gladstone Diaries* (1978), vol. 5,p. 197 (14 February 1857).
12 *Hansard* 166, cols. 488–89 (3 April 1862).
13 A. T. Bassett (ed.), *Gladstone's Speeches* (1916), p. 273.
14 *Hansard* 178, col. 1107 (27 April 1865).
15 *Hansard* 125, col. 1363 (16 April 1863).
16 *Hansard* 162, col. 586 (15 April 1861).
17 *Hansard*, 162, col. 586 (15 April 1861).
18 Jenkins (1995), p. 375.

In This Month...

3 September 1841
Gladstone accepted office in Peel's government. Reluctantly, as one 'having no general knowledge of trade whatever', he became Vice-President of the Board of Trade. In 1843, he was promoted to President of the Board of Trade, with a seat in the Cabinet.

18 September 1842
Gladstone lost the top joint of a finger of his left hand in a shooting accident. Thereafter he generally wore a finger stall or a glove to cover the damage.

6 September 1876
The publication of Gladstone's *The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East.* 200,000 copies were sold in the first month. Turkish atrocities against rebellious Christian subjects in Bosnia and Herzegovina were at first played down by Disraeli's Government, anxious to preserve the Turkish empire as a bulwark against Russian expansion.

Gladstone's moral indignation brought him out of retirement, helping to revitalise the Liberal grass roots, and led eventually to the Midlothian campaign of 1879. This laid the foundations for victory in the 1880 general election which swept away the cynical Tory government and made Gladstone prime minister for the second time.

8 September 1893
The second Home Rule Bill, designed to devolve Irish government to a parliament in Dublin, passed the Commons after 82 sittings on 1 September. The House of Lords rejected the Bill on 8 September after one short debate with a vote of 419 to 41. With it, Gladstone's last government lost its raison d'être.

24 September 1896
Gladstone made his last public speech, in his home town of Liverpool, protesting against the massacre of Armenians in Turkey.

Gladstone and Liverpool:

MP for South Lancashire, 1865–68

At a crucial stage in his career, Gladstone represented the area of his birth. *David Nolan* links Liverpool's reaction to electoral reform and Gladstone's popularity.

Walter Bagehot, the mid-nineteenth century journalist and constitutional expert, once wrote of Gladstone: 'Ah, Oxford on the surface, but Liverpool below.'[1] William Ewart Gladstone was born at 62 Rodney Street in Liverpool, on 29 December 1909. The family soon moved five miles north to an estate at Seaforth (long-since swallowed up by the expansion of Liverpool's urban hinterland) where the future Liberal Prime Minister spent his early years, before being sent to Eton in 1821. Thereafter, his links with the town of his birth were not strong, even if, as is sometimes suggested, he retained traces of a Liverpool accent. In 1830 his father moved to Fasque, between Dundee and Aberdeen, and subsequently William's brother Robertson was the only one who made his home in Liverpool.

However, the town did play a significant part in his political career between 1865 and 1868, when he was MP for the South Lancashire county division, of which Liverpool was one of the principal centres. By looking at how Liverpudlians responded to him, his election campaigns, and the issues which he promoted, we gain an impression of how this giant of the Victorian era was perceived by some of his contemporaries far-removed from the closed-world of the 'Westminster village'.

By the time of the 1865 general election Gladstone, one-time Tory minister and opponent of the 1832 Reform Bill, had served for six years as Chancellor of the Exchequer in what is generally regarded as the first Liberal Government, and was rapidly gaining a reputation for radicalism. This apparent shift in his political views was not well received in his staunchly Conservative Oxford University constituency, where he was consequently defeated.

Fortunately the Liberals of South Lancashire, and in particular the party's leaders in Liverpool, had ensured that he was also nominated for his native county. They had done so partly because he was a significant figure, but they also wanted Gladstone as their candidate because of his beliefs. The Liverpool-based periodical *The Porcupine* said that as he had changed from a Tory to 'an enlightened Liberal', Oxford University was no longer the right constituency for him. He should come to Lancashire, for as it had progressed so had he. This journal seems to have understood better than many the idiosyncratic nature of Gladstone's liberalism. It was not under any illusion that he had become an outright radical. Instead, it recognised that he was a moderate reformer who sought 'to reconcile progress with order'. Moreover, he was uniquely placed to deliver moderate reform because of the respect he had from even 'the most extreme of Radicals' who 'will listen to words of moderation and restraint from him which they would heed from no other official lips'.[2]

He was only confirmed as a candidate for the county after his defeat at Oxford had become clear, and did not begin campaigning until the evening of Tuesday 18 July, when he addressed a meeting at the Liverpool Amphitheatre. Even though this event had only been announced that morning, 35,000 applications for tickets had been received,[3] reinforced by the large crowds which surrounded the theatre in the hope of catching a glimpse of him. He told this meeting that he had 'never

swerved' from 'those truly Conservative objects and desires' with which he had begun life, but that experience had taught him 'that there is wisdom in a policy of trust, and folly in a policy of mistrust', and that he had 'not refused to acknowledge and accept the signs of the times'.[4]

Nevertheless, however much he tried to clarify his position, it was the radical elements of his speech which drew most attention. Indeed, people were so convinced of his radicalism that they would even find evidence in what he failed to say. As a correspondent of the pro-Conservative *Courier* pointed out, it was surprising that he made no mention of parliamentary reform, given that he had welcomed his move to South Lancashire as an opportunity to campaign 'unmuzzled'. The writer took this silence as 'ominous'. He believed Gladstone would soon show 'his true extreme Radical colours' but that for the time being he was trying to avoid terrifying the electorate for fear of losing another election.[5]

In the event, the first two seats were taken by Conservatives, with Gladstone being elected in third place. As the *Courier* emphasised, this suggested that South Lancashire was still 'essentially Conservative in its opinions', and that Gladstone had been returned because of who he was, rather than what he believed. Nevertheless, he topped the poll in the Liverpool district, confirming that, for whatever reason, he was popular in the town of his birth and its environs.[6]

There is only fragmentary evidence about how he was regarded by the working class of the town, few of whom would have been able to vote in the county election.[7] The large crowds which welcomed Gladstone on his arrival at the Amphitheatre on 18 July suggest he had a significant popular following, as does the cry, 'Gladstone's the working man's friend', which came from a member of the audience at an earlier Liberal rally in the same venue.[8] On the other hand, a meeting during the election campaign for working men to declare their support for parliamentary reform, had given the impression that they were not much interested in the issue.[9] Similarly, Gladstone's reforming budgets of the early 1860s do not appear to have aroused much excitement.[10] These reforms and his pronouncements on issues such as the extension of the franchise may have won Gladstone the admiration of the working class elsewhere, but one is led to the conclusion that in Liverpool he was popular with the masses more on account of a general impression that he was on their side, reinforced by his rousing platform oratory.

Photo: Mr. A. B. Harris, Liverpool.
THE HOUSE IN WHICH MR. GLADSTONE WAS BORN.

The 1866 Reform Bill

Reform may not have been the chief concern of the working class in Liverpool, but it soon became the major preoccupation of the new Parliament. Gladstone was widely regarded as an advocate of a large extension of the franchise, following his speech on Baines' Reform Bill in May 1864, when he had famously declared that 'every man who is not presumably incapacitated by some consideration of personal unfitness or of political danger, is morally entitled to come within the pale of the constitution'. He only envisaged a relatively small number being fit for enfranchisement, but was misunderstood, as so often, because of his tendency to indulge in emphatic statements. His attempts to clear up the misunderstanding were simply regarded as a recantation forced upon him by his Cabinet colleagues.[11] Despite the furore surrounding this speech elsewhere, it generated surprisingly little interest in the Liverpool press, and that which it did prompt, admittedly in the Conservative *Courier*, was negative. It regarded the speech as a shameless bid for mass support, which had 'hustings' written all over it, although, as we have seen, it does not appear to have been a major factor in his election success in South Lancashire.[12]

The Reform Bill which Gladstone announced on 12 March 1866 was largely his own work, reflecting his personal views. He stressed that it was a moderate reform, pointing out, for example, that a borough rental franchise of £7 had been preferred to £6, since the lower figure would have placed the working class in a clear majority in the borough electorate.[13] Furthermore, he maintained that the resulting increase in the number of working class voters would merely restore them to the proportion of the electorate they had constituted in 1832 but which had since fallen. Despite this moderation, he made it clear that some extension of the franchise was necessary to recognise the just claim to a say in the nation's affairs of those

members of the working class who had done most to improve their education and way of life over recent years.[14]

The Liverpool press responded to the Bill as one might have expected. The Conservative *Courier* wondered why reform was being pursued given that there was no public demand for it.[15] However, that paper would hardly have been more positive if the Bill had been the result of an upsurge of public opinion, probably quite the opposite. By contrast the town's Liberal papers were generally happy with the Bill. The *Post* regarded it as 'a good Bill' and was not put off by Gladstone's attempts to cast his proposals in a very moderate light, believing that they would result in the enfranchisement of 'thousands of honest, hard-working, and loyal men'.[16] The *Mercury* and *The Albion*, especially the latter, were more measured, happy with the Bill as far as it went, but disappointed that it did not go further. In particular, they would have liked a simultaneous redistribution of seats.[17]

Privately many local Liberals were also disappointed that the Bill did not represent 'a broad and complete measure', as Gladstone was informed by William Rathbone junior, the chairman of his campaign committee in 1865, who kept him informed of the mood in South Lancashire. This disappointment concerned more than the omission of a redistribution scheme.[18] Nevertheless, Liverpool's Liberals invited Gladstone to two events intended to demonstrate their support for the Bill, where he received the same highly enthusiastic welcome as he had during his campaign the previous year. The first was a banquet in his honour at the Philharmonic Hall on Thursday 5 April, organised by the Liverpool section of the South Lancashire Liberal Registration Society, at which he explained that the government was determined to achieve reform and had drawn up a moderate bill as the most likely to be passed.[19] The following day, a public meeting, was held at the Amphitheatre. Gladstone told this audience that: 'it is to a great extent, in these great assemblies of our countrymen, that the opinions and sentiments are formed, which become ultimately the guides of the public mind and the public policy'[20]. Thus he demonstrated that he was not averse to harnessing extra-parliamentary agitation in support of a cause he wished to promote. These two engagements in Liverpool are of significance, for although Gladstone gained a reputation for speaking to mass public meetings, he did not do it all that often. He received far more invitations to speak than he accepted.[21] He was probably a little unsure about placing too much burden on mass pressure, given that he believed the masses should generally be deferential, and as a result, he may well have accepted the invitations from Liverpool because as MP for South Lancashire there would be nothing extraordinary about him addressing large gatherings there.

The Amphitheatre meeting sent a strong signal to Parliament that the people of Liverpool wanted the Reform Bill to be passed. Not that Liverpool's Liberals necessarily saw the Bill in the same light as their party leader. Some of the speeches suggest that there were those who looked upon parliamentary reform as the necessary precursor to radical reforms quite different from anything envisaged by Gladstone. Rathbone believed that a reformed House of Commons would look to Gladstone to lead it in a war upon ignorance and upon the 'ghastly and revolting … contrast' between the 'misery' of many British people and 'the superabundance, wealth and blessings with which Providence has blessed the upper and middle classes of the community'. This suggests that Rathbone wished to see more of a social role for government than Gladstone. The reforms which Gladstone hoped to see were in the direction of reducing government spending, whereas those envisaged by Rathbone would almost certainly increase it. Differences of emphasis notwithstanding, and in spite of any initial reservations, a resolution proposing that a petition be sent to Parliament in support of the Bill was unanimously carried at the end of this meeting.[22]

The apathy towards reform displayed by the town's working men was still evident. A demonstration on Saturday 7 April for the working class of Liverpool to declare its support for the Reform Bill does not appear to have been well-attended. Furthermore, the platform was dominated by members of the local Liberal élite, like Robertson Gladstone and Jeffery, and according to the *Courier* many of those present were not working men at all, but 'curious clerks' on their way home from the office. However, many of the audience were genuine workers, as were some of the speakers. One of them, George Hardy, said he was happy with the Bill as an instalment, although he personally wanted to see household suffrage. But since only his views are recorded in any detail there is no way of knowing if they were typical.[23]

Unfortunately for Gladstone the party in Parliament was also unconvinced. A significant number of Liberal MPs, like the Conservative opposition, did not share his belief that reform would strengthen the constitution. The opponents of reform destroyed the Bill through a series of amendments, whereupon Russell's Government resigned. The defeat and resignation prompted mass protests in many major towns, including London, Birmingham and Manchester, but not Liverpool, a further indication that the Reform Bill had not captured the imagination of its people.

The 1867 Reform Bill

Demonstrations in other towns, not least the so-called Hyde Park riots in July, convinced Lord Derby's new Tory government that reform would have to be tackled. Responding to the government's proposals in February 1867, Gladstone promised that the Liberal opposition would support any scheme which offered the prospect of settling this important

issue.[24] This constructive approach was applauded by the Liberal press in Liverpool, which wished to see a Reform Bill passed with the minimum of delay.[25] Gladstone also had the backing of radicals in Liverpool, as demonstrated by a meeting, organised by the Liverpool Liberal Association and held at the Theatre Royal on 11 March. Moreover, this support came from all levels of society. The *Mercury* noted with satisfaction the presence at the meeting of 'a sufficiently large number of the working classes', and believed the event also showed that 'the great body of the middle classes' in Liverpool were 'actuated by no exclusive spirit' but were instead in favour of a measure which would 'materially extend the franchise in the boroughs and towns'.[26]

The Bill which Disraeli finally announced, following a series of abortive attempts and the resignation of three members of the Cabinet, provided for household suffrage with various limitations, including dual votes, and a requirement that voters had been resident in a borough for at least two years.[27] The dual votes did not survive long, instead, the main sticking point became the exclusion from the franchise of compound householders, those who paid the poor rate as part of their rent. Gladstone complained that exclusion would create an artificial distinction, with the chance factor of where a man lived counting for more than his suitability for admission to the franchise. Since compounding was the decision of the local vestry, a man had no choice and might consequently be refused the vote, whereas a man of similar standing who lived in a parish with no compounding, perhaps even in the same borough, would get on to the register of electors. Gladstone was concerned that as a result many of 'the most skilled and most instructed of our working men' would continue to be denied the vote, while at the same time many of 'the poorest' and 'least instructed' would be enfranchised.[28] He was not in favour of household suffrage, for which he did not believe there was any great demand, but argued that it was worse to purport to offer household suffrage while in fact proposing something not only limited, but limited in a random and unjust manner.[29]

Having thoroughly investigated rating law, Gladstone presented a detailed case against the exclusion of compound householders. Unfortunately, his speeches during the Second Reading debate on 25 March, bored the Commons, his own side included.[30] It is hardly surprising, therefore, that there were no more meetings in Liverpool to give support to his apparently lonely crusade. It was only when he faced rebellions by Liberal MPs over Coleridge's Instruction and Gladstone's own amendment of 11 April, designed to overcome the compounding problem and introduce some fixed line separating qualified voters from the disenfranchised, that Liverpool again rallied to his support. Rating law was too dry a subject to inspire mass meetings, whereas near-mutiny against a great Liberal statesman, who also happened to be a local man and a local MP, was another matter. The amendments were supported by all three major Liberal papers in Liverpool – the *Mercury*, the *Daily Post*, and *The Albion*.[31] The *Post* would have liked Gladstone to press for full household suffrage.[32] That it still backed his efforts shows that even those in Liverpool who were more radical continued to have faith in him. The *Mercury* accepted that the Bill would have been lost had the 11 April amendment been passed, and for that reason had mixed feelings over it. The paper was relieved that there was still the prospect of a settlement being reached that session, but at the same time agreed with Gladstone that the Bill was still seriously flawed.[33] Fortunately, amendments were eventually won which resulted in a Bill much more to the liking of Gladstone and his Liverpudlian supporters, even if short of their ideal. The period of residence required of voters was reduced to one year, provision was made for the enfranchisement of lodgers, and compounding was abolished under Hodgkinson's amendment.[34]

In the meantime, there had been a strong campaign in Liverpool to persuade Liberal MPs to rally behind their leader. Most notably, a meeting of South-West Lancashire county voters was held at Hengler's Circus in the town on 30 April. Much was said, in praise of Gladstone's stance and in criticism of the government's Bill. A number of speakers, including William Rathbone junior, disagreed with the prevailing view in the Commons that any Reform Bill was preferable to further delay. Rathbone also expressed his belief that Gladstone continued to have the support of the working classes as a result of the benefits his policies had given them. In consequence, he believed, 'they will accept at his hands, in faith in his wisdom and love for them, even limitations of their power as a settlement of this great question'.[35] Assuming Rathbone had good grounds for this belief, one might conclude that Gladstone remained popular among the working class of Liverpool during this difficult period. They do not appear to have held meetings of their own to give him their support, but even in 1866 they had not done that.

The 1868 general election

The redistribution of seats in the 1867 Reform Bill caused much less conflict in Parliament. Gladstone's South Lancashire division was split into new South-West and South-East divisions. The Liberal committees in both new divisions were anxious to retain Gladstone as their candidate, but following consultation Brand, the party's chief whip, settled upon the South-West, which included Liverpool.

On paper the Manchester-dominated South-East looked a safer prospect, but that was one reason why it was not chosen, for, as William Rathbone pointed out, it might look as though Gladstone was running

scared from his native part of the county. The bolder course was chosen in the hope of lifting the party's campaign effort nationally.[36] It was clear throughout that Gladstone was speaking, not just to the electors of South-West Lancashire, but to the whole nation as leader of a potential government. Consequently, his personal campaign was used to highlight the major issue on which the Liberals were basing their appeal to the country, the disestablishment of the Irish (Anglican) Church.[37]

Gladstone's campaign got under way in earnest with a demonstration at the Amphitheatre on 14 October. He devoted most of his speech to explaining his policy on the Irish Church. He argued that the establishment of a church to which the majority of the population did not belong had brought about 'the estrangement of the minds of the people from the law, from public authority, from this country ... and ... from the throne'. Disestablishment was necessary in order to 'remove the sense of injustice and oppression in Ireland'. The attempt, which he had earlier supported, to Anglicise Ireland, above all by converting it to Anglican Protestantism, had failed and should be abandoned. This policy was endorsed at this meeting by Thomas Dyson Hornby, the chairman of the South-West Lancashire Liberal Association, and by Henry Grenfell, the other Liberal candidate in the county election. J. H. Macrae questioned why 'the great majority' of Anglican clergy were hostile to the Irish disestablishment policy, and sought to reassure them that they were wrong to see it as a step towards disestablishment in England. He spoke of how Gladstone had been of valuable service to the Church in the past and would one day be recognised as one of its true friends.[38] Dissenting views were unlikely to be expressed at an election rally, but the fact that so many speakers publicly expressed their backing for disestablishment, when they could just as easily have concentrated on Gladstone's past achievements and personal qualities, suggests that the policy did have the backing of leading Liberals in Liverpool. This is hardly surprising given that there was a predominance of nonconformists among the leading figures in the party locally.[39]

The nonconformists of the area seemed to be solidly behind the Liberal candidates. They welcomed any opportunity to attack the principle of establishment and promote the cause of freedom of conscience, even though it was made plain, as in Macrae's speech, that the Liberal Party had no intention of depriving the Church of England of its established status. Local Liberals were also confident of the support of the Catholic community, for whom Irish disestablishment had an obvious appeal.[40] This was an uneasy alliance, for the nonconformists had no wish to assist the cause of the Papists; consequently, Gladstone's meetings with local Catholic landlords were kept secret from them.[41] Nevertheless, the Liberals were confident of being able to hold together this disparate support. This was a major boost, as in 1865 the nonconformists had been split between the two parties, and most Catholics had voted Conservative in protest at a Liberal foreign policy which they saw as anti-papal.[42]

The trouble was that, even united, the Dissenters and Catholics were no match for the local Anglican magnates and clergy, who were determined to defeat Gladstone over Irish disestablishment. They knew that the policy could not be stopped, as it was already clear that a Liberal majority had been returned to Parliament, but sensed that its principal architect was vulnerable because of the strength of popular Protestantism in the area.[43] As the *Courier* pointed out, just because a majority in the country had apparently backed Irish disestablishment, that was no reason why the voters of South-West Lancashire should abandon their principles and throw their weight behind it.[44] The clergy in particular seem to have played an important part in the effort to defeat Gladstone, even managing to override the influence of the landlord in Kirkby where sixty tenants of the Earl of Sefton were persuaded to vote Conservative by their vicar, even though the Earl was recommending a Liberal vote.[45]

Sefton was the exception to the rule – the only Protestant landowner with significant electoral influence in South-West Lancashire who used it in support of the Liberal side. He seems to have done so more out of respect for his family's long-standing Liberal tradition than out of conviction. He had serious reservations about Gladstone's apparent radicalism, and the policy of Irish disestablishment in particular. Indeed, even Grenfell, who was his kinsman and had been brought in as part of the effort to maintain Sefton's support, was regarded by him as being too advanced.[46]

A majority of the voters in South-West Lancashire seem to have heeded the advice of their Anglican landlords and vicars, for on 24 November they returned Cross and Turner, the two Tory candidates, defeating Gladstone and Grenfell. However, Gladstone did top the poll in the Liverpool polling district, with 401 votes more than Turner and 420 more than Cross, despite that being the part of the county division where the ultra-Protestant Orange Lodge was at its strongest.[47] This was final proof of his continued popularity in the town, which had been on display throughout the campaign, from the singing in his honour at that first big rally,[48] through to the thousands who put up with miserable November weather to hear him speak at the official nomination on the Saturday before polling.[49] One particularly revealing event, described in press reports as a working men's meeting, took place at Hengler's Circus on 27 October. It expressed support both for Gladstone and for the policy of Irish disestablishment, with only a few dissenting votes.[50] The defeat of both Liberal candidates in the Liverpool borough election casts doubt on the strength of support for this policy in the town. Nevertheless, one could speculate that it might

have been endorsed in the borough election had Gladstone been standing there rather than for the county. For unless the Hengler's Circus meeting was almost exclusively attended by Catholic or Dissenting workers – which admittedly is possible – what it reveals is that workers, regardless of creed, continued to regard Gladstone as a radical who had their best interests at heart. Mr Priest, a watchmaker, declared 'his general policy is such as to merit the enthusiastic and uncompromising support of the working classes of this country'. Similarly, a printer, Mr Hynes, spoke of him as one of 'those men who had supported great measures for the benefit of the masses' – the others, incidentally, being Bright and Mill.[51] Priest and Hynes were skilled workers, so their views may not be typical of the bulk of manual labourers, though they do sound as though they were stating what they believed to be the general opinion of 'the masses'.

Conclusion

Gladstone was a popular figure in his native Liverpool, and this remained the case in 1868 even though he failed to be returned for the county, and even though his party was defeated in the contest for the town's representation. Across the social spectrum, he was admired on account of his high-profile persona, his sense of conviction, and his reforming zeal – even by those whose views were very different.

In Liverpool, as elsewhere, he was thought far more radical than he actually was. Few grasped that he saw the purpose of reform as essentially conservative – although to be fair, his politics were such a complex and unique blend of conservatism and liberalism it is hardly surprising he was misunderstood.

It would appear that he was capable of leading opinion in Liverpool in a way which many other Liberals, who lived and worked in the town, generally failed to do. He rallied the town behind his 1866 Reform Bill, but once he had returned to London others do not seem to have been able to maintain the momentum; thus, while other towns protested at the Bill's demise Liverpool remained quiet. Furthermore, he managed to top the poll in the Liverpool district of the South and South-West Lancashire constituencies in both 1865 and 1868, in spite of his plan for Irish disestablishment – no inconsiderable achievement in a city ridden by sectarianism well into the twentieth century.

Arguably, his Lancashire campaigns of the 1860s showed Gladstone doing what he was best at – taking his message to the people and winning them over, if not by his arguments, then by his passionate and stirring oratory. He was never again to campaign as a candidate in his native county, but the skills he developed there were to be exploited once more, in Midlothian, eleven years later.

David Nolan is Secretary of Crosby Liberal Democrats. This article is based on his recently completed MA dissertation, Liverpudlian Responses to Gladstone and Gladstonian Liberalism c1859–1868.

Notes

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5 *Daily Courier*, 20 July 1865, p. 6.
6 *Daily Post,* Supplement, 21 July 1865, p. 2.
7 The poll book does not survive, making it impossible to say precisely who voted for him.
8 *Post*, 12 July 1865, p. 4.
9 *Post*, Supplement, 11 July 1865, p. 2.
10 For example, they did not send a petition in protest at the Lords' rejection of his repeal of Paper Duties.
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16 *Post*, Supplement, 14 March 1866, p. 1.
17 *Albion*, 19 March 1866, p. 4; *Mercury*, 14 March 1867, p. 6.
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21 *Ibid.,* pp. 130–31.
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24 *Hansard*, Vol. 185, 11 February 1867, p. 247.
25 e.g. *Mercury*, 18 February 1867, p. 6; *ibid.*, 20 February 1867, p. 6.
26 *Mercury*, 13 March 1867, p. 6.
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29 *Ibid.,* 25 March 1867, pp. 476–77.
30 Smith, *The Making of the Second Reform Bill*, pp. 172–73.
31 *Mercury*, 8 April 1867, p. 6; *ibid.,* 15 April 1867, p. 6; *Daily Post*, Supplement, 10 April 1867, p. 1; *Albion*, 8 April 1867, p. 4; *ibid.,* 15 April 1867, p. 4.
32 *Daily Post,* Supplement, 10 April 1867, p. 1.
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44 *Ibid.*
45 Searby, *Trans. Hist. Soc. Lancs. & Cheshire*, Vol. 111, p. 161.
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47 *Mercury*, 25 November 1868, p. 6; Searby, *Trans. Hist. Soc. Lancs. & Cheshire*, Vol. 111, p. 161.
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50 *Ibid.*, 28 October 1868, p. 3.
51 *Ibid.*

Gladstone and Ireland

Gladstone wrestled with the problems of Ireland for thirty years. *H.C.G.Matthew* argues that while Gladstone failed in his objective to integrate Ireland into a United Kingdom his policy still dominates today's consitutional debates.

'My mission is to pacify Ireland', Gladstone famously declared on receiving the Queen's commission to form a government in December 1868. The word 'pacify' was, as always with Gladstone's vocabulary, carefully chosen. Pacification, not liberation (as his remark is often taken to mean) was his consistent objective for the next thirty years.

In Gladstone's younger years, he was a Unionist Conservative; his book, *The State in its Relations with the Church* (1838) defended the established (Anglican) Church of Ireland, which represented about ten per cent of the population. In 1853, when first Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gladstone extended income tax to Ireland (hitherto exempt): a highly Unionist action, in line with the tendency since the Act of Union to try to provide a consistent taxation basis throughout the UK.

Gladstone's views began to change, partly as a result of Ireland changing and partly as a result of Gladstone changing. Gladstone's approach to Irish policy was firmly in line with Peel's Tamworth Manifesto (1834), which among other things told conservatives that where a grievance was reasonably, justly and fully established, Parliament must respond to it with a solution. Gladstone was also much struck by a remark of Lord John Russell in the Commons in the 1830s, that while Scotland was inhabited by Scots, and England by the English, so Ireland was inhabited by the Irish. In respects this was a platitude, but one with significant implications, if by it we mean people who might think differently from the English.

In his first government (1868–74) Gladstone initially behaved in a fairly Unionist way. His disestablishment of the Church of Ireland and his first Land Act were intended to show that a British cabinet could respond to Irish grievances and to show that Irish grievances could be met by the Westminster parliament: the executive could listen and make policy, the legislature could legislate for Ireland. Thus Ireland could be pacified by reform at Westminster. This approach was to an extent self-undermining, in the sense that if what was done by the Westminster parliament was not enough, then logically the cabinet and the parliament had to go a step further.

Another aspect of Irish policy for Liberal governments was that it was bedevilled by the more general problem of what to do about local government. Remarkably, there was in the UK no representative local government (outside some municipal corporations and ad hoc boards) until 1888. Part of the reason for the slow implementation of a change which had general support was that Liberal cabinets found local government reform conflicting with the recognition of nationality: should they go for the introduction of local government or should they make some recognition of nationality in which a higher level of devolution responded to the demands being made for Ireland by Isaac Butt's Home Rule Association in the 1870s?

In 1880, Gladstone returned to power and found, somewhat to his surprise, that Disraeli's government had allowed the development of the Land League, which had by 1880 become a formidable movement, with quasi-revolutionary overtones, successfully linking the earlier tenant-rights movement with a much wider and more profound agrarian unrest. Gladstone met the League with considerable resolve. He coerced its leaders, imprisoning Parnell. But, on the other hand, he introduced the second Land Act, more dramatic than the first, and an Arrears Act in 1882, which was passed despite the fact that the Phoenix Park murders had occurred only a few weeks earlier. The murders did not deflect Gladstone from his policy of coercion and conciliation.

Gladstone's second government, however, still failed to deal with the question of local

government, partly because of its Irish complications and implications. It also recognised, and Gladstone was foremost in recognising, that there were limits to what a Liberal government could do with coercion. It could not continue incarceration to solve a particular problem, if the upshot was that the demand by the Irish leadership would be one further step; the result of that would in the end be separatism.

Thus Gladstone moved to what turned out to be an attempt at a complete settlement of the Irish question in three stages (it remains unknowable whether Gladstone intended this from the start). The first stage was to include Ireland in the extension of household suffrage to the counties in 1884. The result of this was to enfranchise the Irish labourers and peasantry and to produce eighty-five home rule MPs (i.e. to confirm Home Rule as the aim of the representatives of most of Ireland). The second part of the settlement was the Government of Ireland Bill, establishing a parliament with two Houses in Dublin. The third part was the third Land Bill, committing a sum perhaps as large as £100 million (the size of the annual budget) to buy out the Anglo-Irish landowners.

Of course, only the first of these measures was enacted. The Liberal Party split and in 1886 home rule was voted down in the Commons. But although it failed, it captured the main part of the Liberal Party and captured the discourse about constitutional change in the UK to this day. From that time, changes to the constitution have always been discussed in terms of devolution rather that its more rational but less politically appealing alternative of federalism.

In 1893, Gladstone passed the second home rule bill through the Commons with a combination of Liberal and Home Rule support. It was then summarily rejected by the Lords. There was a curious self-contradiction about the Unionist position. On the one hand they argued that the Union was sacrosanct; on the other, that, on basic questions, only English votes counted, a very anti-Unionist view which left the non-English MPs little alternative in the long run but to become Homer Rulers.

The Gladstonian approach had various attractions. It offered a solution to the Irish sufficiently bold to attach the Irish Home Rulers to the Liberal Party and to gain the loyalty of the Irish electorate for home rule until the First World War. In the sense that Home Rule prevented an earlier success for Irish republican separatists, Gladstone's approach was, as he intended, effective in maintaining the Irish within the Union. Home Rule was, explicitly, a political response to a grievance clearly stated and supported by the political representative of the area concerned. Gladstone in introducing the bill in 1886 stated that he would not do anything for Ireland which could not be done for other parts of the UK. But one can readily see that if Home Rule was applied to all parts of the UK, the idea that the Westminster parliament could remain unchanged was unsustainable (especially if, as was the case with the 1886 bill) the area receiving Home Rule lost its MPs at Westminster.

Today, this is the position that we are reaching (though not in the extreme form of a limitation of Westminster MPs to the non-home rule areas). Scotland has a Home Rule parliament; Wales will have an Assembly which may soon grow into one; Northern Ireland will have its Parliament restored if all goes well there. Only England, of the constituent parts of the UK, will be lacking, and the Westminster Parliament will become a part-English parliament, and a quasi-UK overseeing body.

England has always been the chief problem with the Home Rule approach to constitutional development. The advantage of home rule is that it is an authochtonous response to a stated national demand, which offers a means both of meeting and limiting local nationalism in the UK. Its disadvantage is that each grant of it is, in terms of the constitution as a whole, ad hoc. It presupposes that devolution can be accommodated without overtoppling or undermining the Westminster core. Home Rule has the further advantage that to pass it requires no other change in the constitution: it is passed by an Act of Parliament (and can in extreme circumstances be revoked by one) within existing constitutional procedures. No Constitutional Convention is needed to

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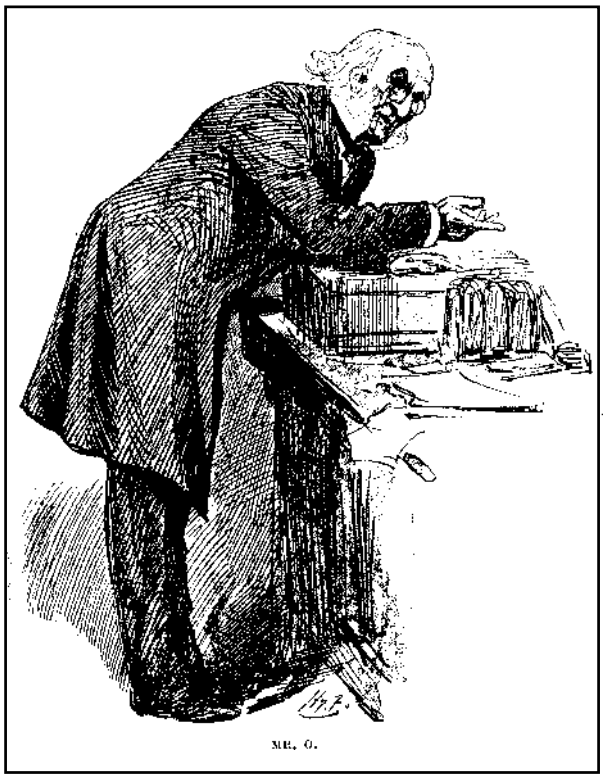
His Manner of Speech

From *A Diary of the Unionist Parliament 1895–1900* by Henry W Lucy

Mr Gladstone lived through a gradual, now finally established, change in the course of Parliamentary debate. Whilst he and Mr Disraeli sat facing each other, it was the custom for the Leaders on either side to speak late in set debate.



One would rise about eleven o'clock, making way for the other between half-past twelve and one in the morning. With the meeting of the House earlier in the afternoon, and the establishment of the twelve o'clock rule, it has come to pass that, with rare exceptions, all the important speaking is done before dinner.

Mr. Gladstone was equal to either contingency. For his great speeches he carefully prepared, bringing down his notes and turning them over as he proceeded. As he often showed, preparation and attendant notes were superfluities. Some of his most powerful and effective speeches were delivered on the spur of the moment, called forth by an incident or argument of current debate. Even at times when party passion ran riot, the House delighted in his lapses into conversation on some topic brought forward by a private member on a Tuesday or a Friday night. He did not in these circumstances make a speech. He just chatted, and those privileged to meet him in private life know how delightful was his conversation.

Brought up in the Parliamentary school of Canning and Peel, he preserved to the last something of the old- fashioned manner. His courtesy was unfailing, his manner dignified, his eloquence pitched on a lofty plane unattainable by men of modern birth. His place in the House of Commons remains empty, and to the furthest horizon there is no promise of its being filled.

Gladstone and Ireland

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achieve it. But this is a weakness as well as a strength, for it means that changes with major implications are made without those implications being fully or consistently thought through.

The Blair Government's approach has been thoroughly Gladstonian. Problems are identified and picked off one by one. Home rule for Scotland and Wales, a settlement for Ireland, reform of the House of Lords, reform of the executive, reform of local government through the introduction of powerful mayors, possible reform of the monarchy, reform of the relationship of the citizen to the state in terms of information and privacy, and a variety of other reforms: each of these is desirable in itself, but the aggregated result is to leave us with a shell of a constitution. To continue to work, the constitution will need to refer to an historic version of itself, but one which no longer in fact fully exists.

The upshot of this is, that while the Gladstonian constitutional approach has an honourable history in the Liberal Party and in the British political tradition, it may now be getting in the way of the fuller reconsideration which our constitution surely requires and deserves. We need a Constitutional Convention to consider all the various elements of constitutional inadequacy and reform which face the United Kingdom, both centrally and with respect to its constituent parts, and to produce proposals for a new constitution.

This paper was delivered originally at a Liberal Democrat History Group meeting in the National Liberal Club in July.

Professor H. C. G. Matthew is currently editor of the New Dictionary of National Biography. *He was editor of the* Gladstone Diaries Vols 3–14 *and author of* The Liberal Imperialists *(1973) and the recently published* Gladstone 1809–1898.

The Hawarden Kite

The techniques of spin-doctoring were well known to Victorian politicians. *M. R. D. Foot* considers a notable case of press management which went wrong. Or did it?

The Hawarden Kite was the prominent news item, published in the *Leeds Mercury* and the London *Standard* on 17 December 1885, announcing that Mr Gladstone (who lived at Hawarden near Chester – hence the name) had become convinced that Ireland needed a separate parliament: a fact he had long found it necessary to keep secret. A fuller version of the Kite lay in a statement put out on the previous night by the National Press Agency, which supplied over 160 local papers with political news from London; this is conveniently available in print[1]. To understand this catastrophe – if indeed it was a catastrophe – the event must be placed in its context, both national and local.

A general election had just been held, spread as was then usual over four weeks; the very last returns, from Orkney & Shetland and the Scottish universities, had indeed yet to come in. It was the first election fought on a much enlarged electorate: the third Reform Act, 1884, had just raised the total number of voters – all men over twenty-one – from some three million to about five million, between a seventh and an eighth of the total population of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, which was thirty-five million at the census of 1881 and nearly thirty-eight million at that of 1891. For the first time, there had been contests in more than three-quarters of the seats. Most of the new voters were farm labourers.

A hung Parliament was elected. The Conservatives did unexpectedly well in the towns, carrying (for example) three seats out of five in Leeds and every seat but one in Liverpool. Birmingham was the only large city in which they failed to capture a single seat, for it was tied up by the Chamberlain machine. In the counties the Conservatives did unexpectedly badly, for Chamberlain's 'Unauthorised Programme', that offered 'three acres and a cow', appealed to the newly enfranchised labourers. Neither of the two great parties could be sure of a working majority. In a house of 670 members, 333 Liberals faced 251 Tories – so far as either party could be counted exactly; the gap of eighty-two between them was almost precisely plugged by the eighty-six MPs returned for Parnell's Irish Nationalist Party. This party gained a preponderance of the Irish seats – eighty-five out of 103; they also secured the only seat not to vote Tory in Liverpool. Over a quarter of these Nationalist members, Parnell included, had recently been in prison. County Antrim was the only Irish county in which no Nationalist was returned at all; and outside the nine counties of Ulster every seat went to a Nationalist, except for the lonely pair of Queen's Counsel returned unopposed for the University of Dublin. Fourteen Liberals had sat for Irish seats in the previous Parliament; not a single Liberal secured a seat in Ireland in 1885.

One caveat needs to be put in about these figures. It is a mistake – universally made, but still a mistake – to be too precise, as between Liberals and Conservatives; to carry back into the nineteenth century the habits of the twentieth, and to ascribe to every MP a specific party allegiance. Some years later, in 1893, a clerk at the table remarked on thirty members at least who came down to the House to listen to debate, and voted as reason and conscience inclined. Mr Gladstone himself, as recently as 1870, had still been describing himself in *Dod's Parliamentary Companion* as 'A Liberal Conservative', an accurate label.

A Conservative government under Lord Salisbury was in office. It had existed, on sufferance, since the previous June. Salisbury doubled the posts of Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, and spent much of the autumn engaged in the intricacies of the eastern question, currently made more intricate than usual by a war between Serbia and Bulgaria. The British army was at war also, on two fronts with the Mahdists in the Sudan, and against King Thiba in Burma. The Cabinet decided, at a meeting on Monday

14 December, that it would hold on until Parliament met in late January, and see what happened then. Salisbury, for one, hated it; as he wrote to his Irish viceroy, Lord Carnarvon, who was about to retire, on 3 January 1886: 'I am feverishly anxious to be out. Internally as well as externally our position as a Government is intolerable.'[2]

A major problem in politics awaited – as indeed it awaits – solution: how should Ireland be governed peaceably? As Salisbury said the next summer to one of his sons: 'People make a distinction between principles and details, but the distinction is only valuable as an intellectual assistance. In practice, everything is done by the arrangement and execution of the details.'[3] Nobody at the end of 1885 could get clear the details of what ought to be done to reconcile, or if necessary to separate, the British and the Irish nations. Much of history consists of the record of neighbouring groups that have wrestled and fought with each other, and then decided after all to work together against some other group that seems even more dangerous – as for instance those age-long enemies, Wiltshire men and Somersetshire men, came to work together in the end, under Alfred, to drive away the Danes. Similarly in 1914 the British and some at least of the Irish could work together against the greater menace of Wilhelmine Germany, when they had been right on the verge of fighting each other;[4] but 1885 was not 1914.

It was not even clear at the end of 1885 who was to lead any of the three main parties in Parliament. Salisbury's leadership of the Tories was under challenge from the rising star of Lord Randolph Churchill, who had captured the party machine, and was not of course then known to be fatally ill. Mr Gladstone's leadership of the Liberals, equally, was in doubt. He had several times over, during the past three years, talked of – indeed looked like – retiring; he was rising seventy-six; privately he longed to get away from contention and prepare his soul to meet his Maker.[5] The succession seemed to lie either with the Whig Lord Hartington, or with the radicals, Joseph Chamberlain and Sir Charles Dilke. Dilke at that moment was embrangled in the divorce case that was – though no one then knew it – about to put an end to his official life. Chamberlain seemed to have the succession at his disposal, if he played his cards correctly.

There were various public signs that the Conservatives were prepared to do a deal with the Irish. Back on 1 August 1885, Parnell and Carnarvon had met – unaccompanied, and in deadly secrecy – in an empty house in Hill Street, Mayfair, for a long talk. What passed between them remained a deadly secret for ten months – Parnell blurted out his version of it in the Commons in the following June, in a mistaken last-minute attempt to influence waverers about to vote on the first Home Rule bill.[6] Forty years on, Carnarvon's biographer published the full account the Viceroy had taken down to Hatfield that August evening to show to Lord Salisbury, who approved: but did not tell even the Queen, let alone the Cabinet.[7] Carnarvon restricted himself to inquiring what sort of terms Parnell would regard as reasonable for a home rule settlement; particularly, what guarantees Parnell would be able to offer to safeguard landlords' rights in their property, always a cardinal point with Conservative statesmen.

Parnell kept his own counsel about his talk with the Viceroy: typically, 'Uncrowned King' of Ireland though he was, he kept himself very much to himself; a course to which we now know he was bound by the exigencies of his private life, but which looked to his close political aides much like hauteur. If we can believe the radical Labouchere's account of a talk with Tim Healy, one of Parnell's chief helpers, on 19 December 1885, 'Parnell is half mad.' 'To tell you the truth,' Healy went on, 'we settle everything almost always, and he accepts it.'[8] Parnell's aides' trouble was simple but basic – they never knew where he was. Even his secretary did not know his private address; he came and went as he chose. These were not gifts that were going to keep a man firm in the saddle till he died: as the eventual catastrophe of Committee Room Fifteen explained. Parnell had to his left Michael Davitt and an infuriated peasantry, still ready to skirmish on with the land war; and to his right the embattled Catholic clergy of Ireland, whose spiritual descendants looked after the early years of the young republic.

Momentarily, however, he was in control; and just before the general election began, he instructed Irishmen on the mainland to cast their votes for Conservative rather than for Liberal candidates. This is thought to have cost the Liberals a minimum of two dozen seats; later of course a cause for bitter regret by those who might have used those votes in the Commons in favour of home rule. It also caused severe ructions during the campaign.

Gladstone himself maintained a judicious silence about the Irish question all through the autumn of 1885. He devoted just over two pages of a twenty-three-page election address to Irish affairs, of which the keynote was an appeal for 'enlightened moderation', the last characteristic most politicians are capable of displaying at times of crisis.[9]

It is important to view his problem historically, as well as politically. He had already been an active politician for over fifty years, and an active student of politics for sixty; as an Eton boy he had followed the rise and fall of his mentor George Canning, as an Oxford undergraduate he had flung his soul into the campaign against parliamentary reform, as a young minister he had helped Sir Robert Peel reform the tariff. As leader of the House of Commons, he had locked horns in a struggle with Disraeli over the second Reform Act that had resulted – because the Conservatives took it up after the Liberal government had fallen – in a large rise in the electorate. He knew that all major constitutional changes had to be

put through by Conservative governments, because they alone could control the House of Lords, then far more weighty than today.

Indeed, on 15 December 1885 he drove over from Hawarden to the Duke of Westminster's palace at Eaton for a talk with Salisbury's nephew A. J. Balfour, an old personal friend whom he had once hoped to welcome as a son-in-law. He told Balfour that if the Conservatives cared to take up the by now highly visible desire of the Irish for some substantial say in how their own affairs were run, any Conservative efforts in this direction would receive all the backing Gladstone could give them. He used to pride himself on his sense of right timing; this time he got his timing disastrously wrong For by the time Balfour reached Salisbury with his message, the Hawarden Kite had been flown.

On that same Tuesday, Gladstone's youngest son Herbert left Hawarden for London to talk to some journalistic friends.

Through the publication of his private diaries we know a good deal about Gladstone's private life: so much indeed that even an editor three generations younger than John Morley could feel, as Morley did, qualms about the ancient crime of violating the sanctuary. With his wife Catherine, Gladstone made an arrangement, as soon as they were married: he offered her the choice of knowing all his secrets, and revealing none of them, or of remaining ignorant. She – wise woman – chose to know, and to be silent. A similar plan was arrived at with his children, all of whom, save his darling Jessy, whose death aged nearly five in 1850 had all but driven him mad with grief, were grown-up by the middle 1880s.

While a junior minister, he had been used mercilessly by his own father as a private secretary;[10] he was a shade more merciful to his own brood. One daughter, Agnes, was married and away from home; Helen, while a don at Cambridge, did her stint at Hawarden during vacations; so did Mary, who married the local curate. Stephen, the second son, was rector of Hawarden, a rich living of which the advowson belonged to the family; Henry was an India merchant. William, the eldest child, who never quite outgrew his father's shadow and was destined to die before him, had just retired from twenty years on the back benches of the Commons to manage the family estates. Herbert, having got a first in history at Oxford, had stayed up for a few terms to teach, but his heart was in politics. When, in 1880, the Liberal electors of Leeds insisted on electing his father as MP, as a form of safety-net in case the campaign in Midlothian went wrong, and W. E. Gladstone elected to sit for the Midlothian seat he had triumphantly captured,[11] Herbert John Gladstone secured the Leeds seat, in which he had sat for five years. He had just been returned, by a comfortable majority, for West Leeds.

One other family connection, of crucial importance for Ireland, needs mention. Lord Frederick Cavendish, the Irish Secretary who had been deliberately murdered in the Phoenix Park on 6 May 1882, had been almost a fifth son to Gladstone: he had married Lucy Lyttelton, Catherine Gladstone's sister's child, and the Uncle William who sparkles through her diaries had both liked him a great deal, and worked with him closely.[12] Lord Frederick had been Gladstone's chief assistant at the Treasury for two arduous years, May 1880 to April 1882, while Gladstone attempted the mistake that helped to kill Canning – combining the offices of Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer. His death was almost as much of a family shock to Mr Gladstone as it was to Lord Frederick's eldest brother Lord Hartington: whose refusal to look at any proposals for home rule stemmed from abhorrence at the murder.[13]

One of the reasons indeed why Gladstone felt himself chained to the oar of political work for Ireland was the feeling that he, with his detailed knowledge of many intricacies of Irish history and politics, might be able to do something to make up for Lord Frederick's death. To this view he seems to have been held by his womenfolk – his wife, his daughter Mary, and Lady Frederick who lived in Hawarden village and saw him often. (Hence Lord Milner's ill-chosen phrase about Gladstone's 'seraglio', long and often misinterpreted.) Not much sense can ever be made of Gladstone's political desires without putting the question, central for so religious a man, though not much regarded by historians today: What did God want? He be-

Hartington and Chamberlain resisting the call to office after the 1885 election.

came convinced that God wanted him to do something for Ireland, to atone for his nephew's murder. But we must go back to Herbert.

During his five years as a back-bench supporter of his father's second government he had nursed Leeds carefully, and had made his name as a more than competent speaker of the second rank, a tenacious arguer, and a left-of-centre Liberal. He was a bachelor of nearly thirty-two, knew his father's mind quite accurately, had been present at some of the less formal conversations his father had recently had with such visiting grandees as Lord Granville and Lord Spencer, and was well, though not intimately, informed about the state of the Liberal Party generally. He was himself a pronounced advocate of home rule for Ireland, and as recently as 8 December had pronounced in a letter to a travelling artist, who wrote to him from a Flintshire address, that 'if five-sixths of the Irish people wish to have a Parliament in Dublin, for the management of their own local affairs, I say, in the name of justice and wisdom, let them have it.'

His correspondent, Frank Miles, forwarded the letter to *The Times*, which printed it on Saturday 12th; there it triggered off a number of letters about whether Herbert's claim of 'five-sixths of the Irish people' would stand up to analysis of the votes cast, not to speak of priestly or terrorist intimidation of the new voters. On this last point, the last word lies with Conor Cruise O'Brien: 'As for the "inexperienced electorate", it went on voting for home rule at every election up to 1918, when it started voting for a republic.'[14] As usual, the Gladstones' enemies took for granted that the son was speaking on his father's orders; as usual, he was in fact speaking his own mind in his own way.

In those days, every serious newspaper carried – every day – a few lines on the Queen's movements of the day before, and a line or two about Mr Gladstone's as well. She stayed at Windsor, driving daily in the Great Park, until after the service at Frogmore on 14 December, the anniversary of Albert's death; she then retired to Osborne for Christmas. So minute was the notice taken by the press of Mr Gladstone that that Monday's newspapers remarked on the fact that, although he had of course been to matins in Hawarden church on Sunday, he had not read the lesson.

There was more in the serious press than these trivial reports about occupations of the notable. Herbert Gladstone was annoyed by a *Daily News* article on Friday 11th, which foreshadowed a speech by Dilke to his constituents in Chelsea on the 14th in suggesting that the Tories might usefully be left in office for some months to come, forced by a hostile Commons majority into enacting Liberal measures. On the 12th a leader in the same paper remarked: 'We presume that it is now admitted, not that Ireland ought to have a domestic legislature in this form or in that, but that Parliament will have to consider what modification it is necessary to make in the Parliamentary connection of the two countries.'

On the morning of the 14th, Herbert Gladstone got a letter from Wemyss Reid, the editor of the *Leeds Mercury*, which stirred him to action. A point in local politics is here worth noticing: Wemyss Reid, a strong supporter of W. E. Forster (who took no part in all these current controversies, because he was dying), was a prominent and energetic Yorkshire journalist, determined that Birmingham should in no circumstances steal any kind of march on Leeds or Bradford. In retrospect this looks quite petty; at the time it was central to Reid's and indeed to Herbert Gladstone's thinking. Reid could not abide Chamberlain; he had written to Herbert, back in January 1885, 'In my opinion the man who is capable of making such speeches, at once cowardly and crafty, mean and swaggering, is absolutely incapable of ever developing into even the similitude of a statesman.'[15] He now reported that, in his belief, Dilke, Chamberlain and their henchman John Morley were conspiring – secretly egged on by Churchill – against Mr Gladstone, intending to force him out of politics and to take the Liberal Party off on the radical course forecast by Chamberlain's 'Unauthorised Programme' in the election campaign of the earlier autumn.[16] 'The present crisis,' he wrote, 'is one of extreme gravity, & the forces which Chamberlain can command both in Parliament & the press are very formidable.' Could Herbert Gladstone help?[17]

It is perhaps just worth disposing, in parentheses, of John Morley: who had been jobbed into Parliament, as a replacement for Dilke's ailing brother, in 1883 and had hitherto worked as a dutiful subordinate to the other two. The Irish question now brought him under Mr Gladstone's attractive power, and he gave up an intimate friendship with Chamberlain for subservience to a still more tremendous personality.[18]

'Either the Irish question must be at once taken up or the Party must choose a new leader, or break up,' Herbert replied to Reid on the 14th; and they arranged to meet in London next day.[19] 'I resolved,' Herbert wrote to Lucy Cavendish, 'without consulting my Father to go up to London & find out how matters really stood.'[20]

Now though Herbert was well informed about the way his father's mind had been moving on the Irish question, 'the one question', as he put it himself, 'on which I feel very deeply and with reference to which I can sacrifice my opinions to nobody',[21] he did not know everything. Quite probably he had never seen the letter his father had written to Lord Rosebery on 13 November, while both writer and reader were staying at Dalmeny, Rosebery's place by Edinburgh; for by that date he too was only too busy electioneering. Its firm statement that 'the production at this time of a plan by me would not only be injurious, but would destroy all reasonable hope of its adoption'[22] might have made even his son pause. As it was, Herbert plunged ahead.

On Tuesday 15th – the day of his father's talk with Balfour – he saw Wemyss Reid at some length in the Reform Club; and next day he had a long talk with Dawson Rogers of the National Press Agency at the National Liberal Club. Both these talks were meant to bring Herbert Gladstone's hearers confidential news of what his father was thinking; in his own summary a fortnight later, his main message to Reid was contained in three points:

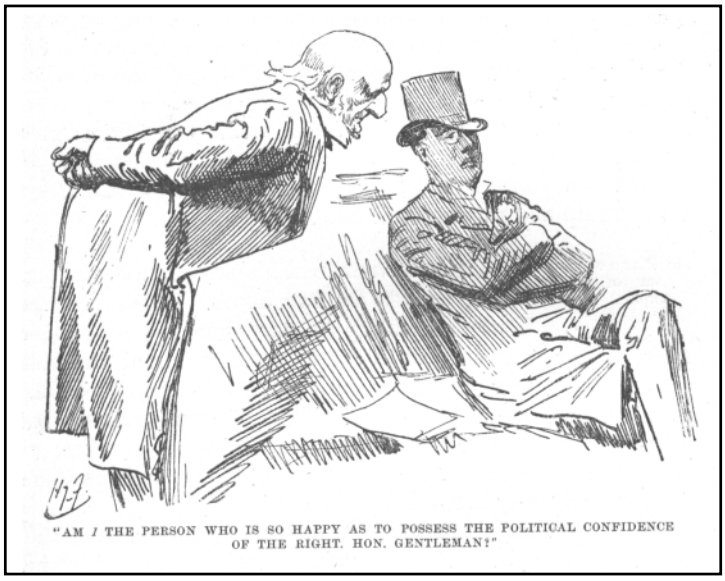
1. That the Govt. shd. deal with the I(rish) Q(uestion) & that a fair & thorough proposal from them wd. receive Liberal support.
2. That until he was formally called upon to assume responsibility nothing would extort a scheme or plan from my Father.
3. No negotiations (were being conducted) with the Irish party.[23]

With Reid he spoke tête-a-tête; Dawson Rogers had two assistants with him. No-one, at either meeting, took any notes; nor was any piece of paper produced on either side. In the second talk, with the National Press Agency, Herbert seems to have speculated fairly freely about what he believed to be the opinions of Lord Spencer, Lord Hartington and others.

Commentators, historians included, like to insist on perfection, and forget too easily the Latin tag, *humanum est errare*: men and women make mistakes. Herbert made a mistake.

He did say, both to Wemyss Reid and to Dawson Rogers, that what he had to say should be regarded as confidential; 'over-rating', in his own phrase, 'the discretion of men whose direct interest it may have been to be indiscreet.'[24] What he forgot to extract from either of his audiences was an assurance that the journalists would let him see any articles they wrote, arising out of the talks, before they were published. Both went off to the telegraph machines: 'the magazine then exploded'.[25]

Brought up at J. L. Hammond's knee to believe that the *Manchester Guardian* represented the fount of purest Liberal thought, I turned first to what it had to say on 17 December. Shortly after its leading articles, it carried the following report: 'Mr Gladstone cut down a tree at Hawarden yesterday afternoon. He continues in excellent health.'[26] The *Guardian*, in fact, was scooped; so was *The Times*; so was the *Daily News*. The balloon went up in the *Leeds Mercury*. By-lined 'Our London correspondent writes', the article began: 'Mr Gladstone's scheme for dealing with the Irish Question has not yet reached a definite form, but I have the best reason to believe that he has laid down very clearly the principles on which he intends to proceed in his settlement of the Irish difficulty ... The plan, therefore, which he has in view provides for the establishment of a Parliament in Dublin for dealing with purely Irish affairs.' There were lots of safeguards; 'very large limitations', 'effective guardianship of Imperial interests', and the rest; but the main cat was out of the bag: Mr Gladstone, like his son, favoured a revival of the Dublin Parliament abolished by the Act of Union of 1800.



Gladstone and Chamberlain; even after the Liberal Unionists split from Gladstone's Liberals, they continued to occupy the same benches in the Commons.

The *Mercury*'s accompanying leading article also bore traces of its editor's talk with Herbert Gladstone, but less sensitive ones: it dealt mainly with Dilke's proposal, which it deplored, that the Tories should be left in office just after they had done so much less well than the Liberals in the general election.

More oddly, there was also a leak in the *Standard*, then a principal London Tory morning paper. How this happened was never found out. The most plausible conjecture is that someone overheard the conversation at the National Liberal Club – four are always too many to keep a proper secret – and seized the occasion to make mischief, or even money. The *Standard* laid it down, at the end of its leading articles, that 'We are in a position to state that the following are the lines on which Mr Gladstone, on taking office, would be prepared to deal with the question of Home Rule for Ireland: The maintenance of the Unity of the Empire, the authority of the Crown, and the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament to be assured. The creation of an Irish Parliament, to be entrusted with the entire management of all legislative and administrative affairs, securities being taken for the representation of minorities, and for an equitable partition of all Imperial charges.'

The first leader was much stronger, and set the tone for all the more raucous comments from the right in the weeks to come. It drew its readers' attention to its first news item, and went on: 'That it is an attempt to detach the Irish vote from the Conservatives before Parliament meets is too obvious to need any demonstration.' Again, 'Mr.

GLADSTONE'S anxiety to reseat himself in office is almost passionately intense.'

Quite why an aged man who did not really enjoy politics should be so passionate in his desire to be flung back into the thick of them remains, to one of his later admirers at least, unclear.

He replied to the kite in a telegram to Central News – a snub to the National Press Agency – on the 17th; most newspapers carried it next day. He said, fairly simply: 'The statement is not an accurate representation of my views, but is, I presume, a speculation upon them. It is not published with my knowledge or authority, nor is any other beyond my own public declarations.' This is borne out – if Herbert's letter to Lucy might yet once more be quoted – by his son's remark, 'With all these matters my Father had no more connection than the man in the moon, & until each event occurred he knew ... no more of it than the man in the street.'[27]

Other politicians were more forthright. 'My view is,' Chamberlain wrote to Dilke, 'that Mr G's Irish scheme is death and damnation; that we must try and stop it.' In his next letter he remarked, 'What a mess Mr. G. has made of it! What will be the end of it all? Why the devil could he not wait till Parnell had quarrelled with the Tories?'[28] Chamberlain's immediate preoccupation was that he was scheduled to make a big speech in Birmingham on the night of the 17th. He had Labouchere staying with him the night before, but was disinclined to take his advice to hedge. When it came to the point he had to hedge – he had no data on which to do anything else. He had been warned by the same friend, two months earlier, that Parnell 'never makes a bargain without intending to get out of it, and that he has either a natural love of treachery, or considers that promises are not binding when made to a Saxon.'[29] So unstable was the bog through which politicians had to march.

Moreover, politicians were not supermen; they were as liable to fault as everybody else. Labouchere, in a note of condolence to Herbert Gladstone – dated no better than 'Sat', but conjecturally of Saturday 19 December – pointed out that 'the most rare thing in the world is to be able to keep a secret. People tell them in the strictest confidence to others, in order to increase their own importance. They are like tubs with a hole at the bottom. It is not their faults. Nature made them so.'[30] This provides an alternative explanation of the leak to the *Standard*.

Now was it the case, as Herbert Gladstone always maintained, that flying the Kite was entirely his own idea; or was the almost universal assumption at the time, that his father had put him up to it, correct? A little light can be thrown on this from the Gladstone diaries.

Might a moment's excursus be allowed? When it was made public that the diaries were at last to see the light of day, and that I was to edit them, I was interviewed by (among others) the literary editor of the *Daily Express*. Remembering Herbert Gladstone's troubles with the kite, I took great care to settle with him beforehand that we were to go through every word, every comma of his article before it appeared. It was perfectly innocuous. What, I asked, about headlines? 'Oh, that has to be left to the sub-editors on the night.' So the article came out, in the wake of the Profumo affair, under the headline: THE PRIME MINISTER WHO SPENT £80,000 ON GIRLS.

One of the first points I looked up in the diaries was what evidence they contained about the Hawarden Kite. To explain what I found, it is necessary to remark that they are written, almost all the time, in a sort of private telegraphese; heavily condensed, and not at first glance at all a piece of flowing prose, easy to read. After the Gladstones' marriage in 1839, the commonest entry is probably 'Ch 8½ AM', meaning that he had walked up the hill from the great house to the church at Hawarden, heard matins, and walked down again – forty minutes' walk and about as long at prayer. Next to that, the most frequent entry is probably 'Saw C': that is, had a talk of some importance with Catherine his wife.

All that the diaries have to say about the Hawarden Kite is compressed into six letters: 'Saw HJG'. Herbert's own diary goes as far as six words, for the same date – 17 December: 'Saw Father. He was quite compos.'[31]

Morley, when he came to write the official life of Gladstone after the old man's death in 1898, felt he had to administer a formal rebuke to Herbert: 'Never was there a moment when every consideration of political prudence more imperatively counselled silence.'[32] Indeed the Liberal Party did split, as a result of the Gladstones' espousal of the cause of Irish home rule; both ends fell off it. Chamberlain, whose strength of feeling has been noted already, has long had the credit for having 'wanted to kill the bill' when home rule came before the Commons in the summer of 1886.[33] It failed to get a second reading by thirty votes. Yet analysis of the division lists shows that even if Chamberlain and all his personal tail had voted for it, the bill would still have been lost; the defection of Hartington's Whiggish wing was more weighty, if less noisy, than the defection of the Birmingham radicals.

Moreover, Mr Gladstone survived in politics to lead 190 other home rulers into the next Parliament; the cause of home rule, of reconciliation with the Irish, stayed alive, and after the general election of 1892 even brought the old man back into office as Prime Minister for the fourth time: to fight his home rule bill through every detail in the House of Commons, and then see it destroyed in the Lords by the largest majority ever recorded there until their lordships approved British entry into the Common Market.

Anti-Gladstonian diatribes abounded then, abound now. Let me end by quoting two contemporary opinions that tell the other way, nei-

ther by a mean man: one Irish, one English (or Anglo-continental). The Irishman is Michael Davitt, who wrote to Labouchere on 29 January 1886 about Gladstone: 'No English Statesman has ever had so splendid an opportunity of settling the Anglo-Irish difficulty.'[34] The other view is Lord Acton's. He summed up to Herbert Gladstone on 18 March 1886 where the elder Gladstone's Irish struggle stood in historical perspective: 'From the point of view of the ages, it is the sublime crown of his work, and there is a moral greatness about it which will, I hope, strengthen and console him under any amount of difficulty and even disaster.'[35] Difficulty and disaster indeed lay ahead; for Mr G, the sense of moral grandeur was enough. Had Herbert Gladstone's talks with Wemyss Reid and Dawson Rogers never taken place, the infant project of home rule might have been quietly strangled in the cradle.

There is no need for historians to go in for counterfactual speculation, beloved by journalists and novelists. There is no need, either, to treat honourable men as if they were rogues. When Herbert Gladstone came eventually to sum up in print his recollections of the Hawarden kite, he prefixed to the chapter the old tag, 'A poor thing but mine own.'[36] May we not believe him?

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M. R. D. Foot is the editor of the early volumes of the Gladstone Diaries *and the author, with J. L. Hammond, of* Gladstone and Liberalism *(1952). He has also written on military affairs, particularly the SOE.*

Notes

1 J. L. Hammond, *Gladstone and the Irish Nation* (1938), pp. 449–50.
2 Lady Gwendolen Cecil, *Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury* (1931), vol iii. pp. 283–84.
3 *Ibid.,* iii. p. 313.
4 Lionel Curtis, *Civitas Dei* (1937), vol. ii. p. 356.
5 Cf Crewe, *Lord Rosebery* (1931), vol. i. p. 194.
6 *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*. 3s cccvi. 1199–2000, 7 June 1886.
7 Hardinge, *Carnarvon* (1925), vol. iii. pp. 178–81.
8 BL Add MS 46015. fo 87: Labouchere to H. J. Gladstone, 19 December 1885. Cf R. J. Hind, *Henry Labouchere and the Empire* (1972), pp. 111–22.
9 W. E. Gladstone, *Address to the Electors of Midlothian* (1885), p. 21.
10 Cf M. R. D. Foot, and H. C. G. Matthew, *The Gladstone Diaries* (9 vols, 1968–86), vol. i. p. xlii.
11 Cf W. E. Gladstone, *Political Speeches in Scotland* (intr. Leicester, 1973).
12 John Bailey (ed.), *The Diary of Lady Frederick Cavendish* (2 vols, 1927).
13 On the murders, see Tom Corfe, *The Phoenix Park Murders* (1968).
14 In *Parnell and His Party* (1957), p. 161n.
15 BL Add MS 46041, fo 60.
16 See A. D. Hamer (ed.), *Joseph Chamberlain et al. The Radical Programme* (1971).
17 BL Add MS 46041. fo 72; confidential.
18 Cf *Fortnightly Review*, vol. mlii, p. 117. August 1954.
19 BL Add MS 46041, fo 72; confidential.
20 BL Add MS 46046, fo 58, 31 December 1885.
21 *Ibid.,* fo 56.
22 John Morley, *Life of William Ewart Gladstone* (1903), vol. iii. p. 239.
23 BL Add MS 46046. fo 58v.
24 Again from his letter to Lady Frederick Cavendish, 31 December 1885, in BL Add MS 46046. fo 61.
25 *Ibid.,* fo 60v.
26 On the felling of trees, a post-Freudian audience is referred to W. T. Stead, *Gladstone*, pp. 52–53. 1898. Stead took no part in the affair of the Hawarden kite because at that moment he was doing time for his 'maiden tribute' troubles.
27 BL Add MS 46046. fo 60v; version in Morley, *Gladstone*, vol. iii. p. 265.
28 Stephen, Gwynn, and Gertrude M. Tuekwell, *Life of Dilke* (1917), vol. ii. pp. 197–98.
29 A. L. Thorold, *Life of Labouchere* (1913), pp. 238–39.
30 BL Add MS 46015, fo 112v.
31 Private information.
32 Morley, *Gladstone*, vol. iii. p. 266.
33 J. L. Garvin, *Life of Joseph Chamberlain* (1933), vol. ii, pp. 220, 250.
34 BL Add MS 46015. fo 174v.
35 BL Add MS 46052. fo 39.
36 The Viscount Gladstone, *After Thirty Years* (1928), p 306.

On Gladstone ...

Lord Randolph Churchill
'An old man in a hurry.' (Address to the electors of South Paddington, 19 June 1886)

Winston Churchill
'Gladstone read Homer for fun, which I thought served him right.' (*My Early Life*)

Benjamin Disraeli
'He has not a single redeeming defect.' (Quoted in *Facts about the British Prime Ministers,* ed D. Englefield *et al*)

'A sophisticated rhetorician inebriated with the exuberance of his own verbosity, and gifted with an egotistical imagination that can at all times command an interminable and inconsistent series of arguments to malign an opponent and to glorify himself.' (*The Times* 28 July 1878)

'Posterity will do justice to that unprincipled maniac Gladstone – extraordinary mixture of envy, vindictiveness, hypocrisy and superstition; and with one commanding characteristic – whether Prime Minister or Leader of the Opposition, whether preaching, praying, speechifying or scribbling – never a gentleman.' (W. Monypenny and G. Buckle, *Life of Benjamin Disraeli* vol.6, 1920)

Henry Labouchere
'I do not object to the old man always having a card up his sleeve, but I do object to his insinuating that the almighty placed it there'. (Quoted in G Curzon *Modern Parliamentary Eloquence,* 1913)

Queen Victoria
'He speaks to me as if I were a public meeting.' (Quoted in G W E Russell, *Collections and Recollections,* 1898)

Gladstone and Britain's Imperial Role

Imperialism has now become a term of abuse, but *Dr Eugenio Biagini* shows that Gladstonian Liberal policy aimed to develop a partnership of self-governing colonies.

What Gladstone preached in the last quarter of the nineteenth century became the orthodox colonial policy of the Liberal Party and remained so until about 1939. During his lifetime his perorations of right and justice in international relations and of self-government within the empire enthused both the National Liberal Federation at home, and, in the colonies, constitutional nationalists in Canada, New Zealand, Australia, India and South Africa. Great historians such as John Morley and Paul Knaplund described him as the precursor, if not the 'father', of the idea of the modern Commonwealth.

Eschewing old hagiographic accounts as much as recent revisionist critiques, in the present article I shall suggest that Gladstone's imperial and colonial policies – when placed in their historical context – appear as genuine expressions of Victorian Liberalism.[1] The latter was not concerned with such modern ideas as colonial 'self-determination', and the liberties it proclaimed were of a different sort. With its emphasis on social and political peace, financial retrenchment, individual responsibility, moral improvement and civic virtue, Victorian Liberalism offered values which colonial elites were ready to accept. The Liberal status of Gladstone's policies must be assessed against this context: only then will he emerge for what he was, namely an 'evangelical' preacher and practitioner of the universal, normative values of western Liberalism.

A further qualification is perhaps necessary at this stage. By late twentieth century standards there is little radical, and perhaps not much Liberal, in Gladstone's views, which may well be perceived as Eurocentric and culturally imperialistic. However, we should be wary of drawing hasty but anachronistic conclusions. It should not be forgotten that in some crucial way the world was 'Eurocentric' in the 1880s. More particularly, between 1815 and 1914 the world was, to some extent, 'British-centric': Britain was the largest economy of the time, the greatest exporter of manufactured goods, the greatest world market for raw materials, the greatest sea power, and the only nation with a genuine global policy reflecting the range of its economic interests. Furthermore, as the classical model of a parliamentary government enshrining effective political and civil liberty, Britain was much admired both in Continental Europe and in America and Asia.

There was no necessary conflict between this liberal/free-trade image and reputation, and Britain's imperial role. At the time all the other powers, both European and extra-European (including China and the USA) were – to some extent – imperialistic; in itself the notion of 'empire' bore neither stigma nor negative connotation. As far as the British empire was concerned, admirers and critics alike were astonished that a quarter of the total population of the globe – Victoria's subjects – could be kept in check by an army and constabulary which were smaller than the forces at the disposal of minor European countries such as Italy. Though little localised wars were commonplace, no major challenge was mounted against British rule with the exception of the 1857 'Mutiny' in India. The British Empire was, in many ways, a 'Liberal' empire which was distinctive for being based, apparently, more on the cooperation of the native populations, than on repression and military control.

'Govern them upon a principle of freedom'

Gladstone's fame as an imperial reformer is based on his life-long preference for self-government rather than direct rule, and for conciliation rather than repression. He insisted that the Empire was essentially a community of countries held together by loyalty to British culture and by shared economic interests in a free-trade world. He had developed this 'proto-Commonwealth' vision from Edmund Burke – particularly from the latter's analysis of the 1776 crisis in the Thirteen Colonies, and from his stipulation that imperial rule could only be founded on an equitable reconciliation between British interests and those interests of the natives. As Gladstone declared in a speech in 1853:

'Experience has proved that if you want to strengthen the connection between the colonies and this country – if you want to see British law held in respect and British institutions adopted and beloved in the colonies, never associate with them the hated name of force and coercion exercised by us, at a distance, over their rising fortunes. Govern them upon a principle of freedom. Defend them against aggression from without. Regulate their foreign relations. These things belong to the colonial connection. But of the duration of that connection let them be the judges, and I predict that if you leave them the freedom of judgement it is hard to say when the day will come when they will wish to separate from the great name of England. Depend upon it, they covet a share in that great name. You will find in that feeling of theirs the greatest security for the connection. ...Their natural disposition is to love and revere the name of England, and this reverence is by far the best security you can have for their continuing, not only to be subjects of the crown, not only to render it allegiance, but to render it that allegiance which is the most precious of all – the allegiance which proceeds from the depths of the heart of man.'[2]

For various reasons, including contemporary racial prejudice and the constraints inherent in a policy of imperial security (to which all British governments, irrespective of their political inclination, were obviously committed) such a policy was easier to implement in the colonies of 'white' settlement than, let us say, in India. Yet, even in India and in Africa Gladstone emerged as a consistent advocate of what he termed 'local freedom'. Moreover, in the heyday of Victoria's rule, Gladstone stood up against the rising tide of militant jingoism, and advocated national restraint, proposing policies which some contemporaries hailed as God-inspired, though others deplored as a wholesale surrender of imperial pride and interests to the foreigner and the 'savage'.

These principles were tested during his second administration (1880–85). When Gladstone returned to power in the spring of 1880 at the head of a large Liberal majority, his priorities were to purge the country from 'the fit of delirious Jingoism' – allegedly provoked by the previous Conservative government – and to restore commercial prosperity and high levels of employment. These two aims were inextricably linked, as trade problems and the rise in unemployment were widely ascribed to the 'wars and rumours of wars' which had characterised the latter part of Disraeli's Government, and particularly the years 1878–80. With typical energy, and combining the positions of Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gladstone set out to pacify the empire and restore the economy. At first it seemed that he would succeed: however, at the beginning of 1881 the Liberal government ran into major difficulties, as imperial commitments entangled the country in a number of new colonial and international crises, particularly in South Africa and Egypt.

In the case of South Africa, when the Boers took up arms against British rule, Gladstone was faced with the alternative of enforcing large-scale repression or conceding something like independence; he opted for the latter course, even at the cost of giving the impression that he was 'capitulating to the rebels.' This move from coercion to conciliation was the prelude to a similar change in Irish policy from 1886. In India too there followed an important move towards a more liberal regime with the appointment of Lord Ripon as Viceroy. The establishment of forms of representative government at the provincial level, the repeal of the restrictive vernacular Press Act, and the passing of the Ilbert Act, which gave Indian magistrates jurisdiction over Europeans, were highly controversial among the British community in India. Gladstone, however, firmly

supported Ripon all the way along. This was the context in which the first Indian National Congress (1883–85) was established as an organisation basically inspired by the ideals of Gladstonian Liberalism.[3]

The Egyptian imbroglio

Rather different was the outcome of Liberal policy in Egypt. British involvement in the Suez Canal Company, together with Anglo-French financial control of the country and the imposition of a British-friendly Khedive, generated growing discontent and hastened the formation of a nationalist movement spearheaded by Egyptian army officers. Gladstone initially regarded this movement with sympathy, but in the course of 1882 local British officials, fiercely hostile to the nationalists, managed to convince him that the situation was degenerating into anarchy and military despotism. When most Liberal ministers demanded the forcible restoration of the status quo, Gladstone was apparently reluctant to act. However, once embarked upon a policy of intervention, he pursued it without vacillation or misgivings. Militarily successful, it soon emerged that the operation had opened a Pandora's Box of troubles for the Liberal government. Like the Americans in many of their late-twentieth century semi-colonial involvements in Asia and Latin America, the British in Egypt found that their 'police' operation had to be prolonged indefinitely in order to fill the power and legitimacy vacuum created by their intervention.

Contemporary critics and many modern historians have claimed that the Egyptian imbroglio revealed the full degree of duplicity and hypocrisy inherent in Gladstone's Liberalism, since his commitment to peace and international justice seemed to apply only when a Conservative government was in office. There may be something in this criticism, though, on the whole, it is based on a series of misunderstandings.

First we must remember that, as H. C. G. Matthew has pointed out,[4] Gladstone's notion of international right was explicitly limited to the Christian world,[5] with the qualified addition of the Ottoman Empire. As for the rest, he applied general humanitarian considerations, such as respect for human life and avoidance of any unnecessary bloodshed, but recognised no inalienable right to either independence or self-government for countries which, like Egypt, had long lost both their independence and national identity.

Second, we must also bear in mind that Gladstone was in no way hostile to empires whose legitimacy he did not question. He simply insisted that within empires – whether British, Austrian or Ottoman – respect for 'local freedom' should be the general guideline. Coupled with the principles of the 'Third Midlothian Speech' quoted above, such a vision could be mistaken for a blanket endorsement of national aspirations, though, as D. Schreuder has pointed out, it was actually 'concerned ... with both liberal reform (devolution, autonomy, freedom, voluntaryism) and imperial conservation (reserved powers, delineated responsibility, circumscribed status, and qualified home rule in colonial societies).[6]

Finally, it must be observed that, in contrast to radical pacifists like John Bright, Gladstone accepted that coercion might sometimes be necessary as a short-term restraint for 'evil' tendencies and 'irrational' behaviour, which, as a Christian, he saw as deeply rooted in fallen human nature. Liberal imperial policy consisted in moving from occasional and limited coercion back to conciliation as the general rule. Given that conciliation was the rule and self-government the method, coercion might be applied whenever the circumstances required.

It has been suggested by some historians that there was a fundamental difference in the Liberal approach to imperial reform: Gladstone's model 'for colonies of non-white settlement ... whether Jamaica or India, was the empire of Rome' rather than the 'Greek model' of self-governing colonies, to be reserved for the 'white settlements'.[7] It is true that such a position was held explicitly by some members of Gladstone's first and second governments, including Joseph Chamberlain, who had strong misgivings about any further extension of Indian self-government. However, as far as Gladstone is concerned, it is difficult to see how such a sharp distinction can be maintained. When we consider his preference for 'indirect rule' and colonial assemblies based on limited electoral franchises in both India and Egypt, as well as his concern that representation and financial responsibility should go hand in hand, it is problematic to argue that the aims and strategies of his policy in India, and indeed in Egypt or Jamaica[8] were fundamentally dissimilar from those he deployed in the British Isles.

Gladstone was aware of the tension between what he described as the 'Christian races' and the 'Muslim races', but to him the differences which mattered were cultural, not biological. Overseas he was not interested in the establishment or preservation of British control over peoples of darker pigmentation in tropical contexts: he was much more concerned about the identification of social groups which, whether native or European, could become Britain's economic partners and political allies. Empire was, from this point of view, a means to an end: and the end was the creation and expansion of a political and economic system based on those 'bourgeois' values which were foundational both for modernisation and social development in a capitalist, free-trade world economy.

Dr Biagini is Director of Studies, History, at Robinson College, Cambridge. He is the editor of Citizenship and Community: Liberals, Radicals and Collective Identities in the British

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Writing About Gladstone

As author and statesman, *Roy Jenkins* gives his impressions of the challenges in tackling a prolific fellow author.

When, just over six years ago, I was persuaded to undertake a life of William Ewart Gladstone, it was my sixteenth book and ninth work of biography. I nevertheless approached him with trepidation. That is the reason I use the phrase 'I was persuaded'. My literary agent and my then publishing editor were at first keener that I should do the book than I was. I thought Gladstone was too big a subject for me, and in particular I doubted my ability to get to adequate grips with his important but subsidiary pursuits, such as the theological and liturgical disputes of early Victorian England or his attempt to see Homer as part of the headwaters of Christianity.

The trepidation was, however, mingled with fascination. He was the highest peak in the mountain chain, and as such the most enticing as well as the most intimidating. Once I had hesitantly started the climb I never regretted it. The 600-page book took most of my spare time for 2½ years of writing, preceded by six months of reading myself in and followed by another six months of revision and checking. I never got remotely bored with Gladstone during this period. This did not mean that I was starry-eyed about him. He was intolerable as a young man, priggish and without much sense of the ridiculous, particularly where he himself was concerned, although he greatly improved in tolerance as he grew older.

As I went along I found him increasingly easy to laugh at. This was not at all because he diminished under probing. On the contrary, indeed, it was the sheer exuberance of his energy which increasingly attracted my irony – a quality in which he himself was not strong. This was in no way incompatible with the fact that at the end of my 3½ years' immersion with him both my affection and my admiration for him increased. My pleasure in making mild jokes about him fitted in with my growing conviction that most really great men have elements of being figures of fun about them. This was certainly true of both Churchill and General de Gaulle, to take two later examples. And Gladstone's greatness never weakened under the microscope. There is room for argument about whether he should be first amongst the fifty men and one woman who, beginning with Sir Robert Walpole, have filled the office of Prime Minister. But I have no doubt at all that he was the most remarkable specimen of humanity who ever occupied 10, Downing Street. He was the biggest beast in any forest which he inhabited throughout his 88½ years of life, a much more unusual span in the nineteenth century than it has become in the late twentieth.

The fact that I never regretted the Gladstone enterprise once I had embarked upon it was far from meaning that I was not filled with apprehension as the date of its publication approached. There was a vast Gladstonian literature. There was John Morley's three authorised volumes of 1903, which were at once the best example of and the beginning of the decline of the multi-volume 'tombstone' biography. There was Philip Magnus' highly successful and much shorter 1954 re-interpretation, which still reads very freshly and in the modern idiom, while nonetheless getting Gladstone demonstrably wrong on a number of important points. And, above all, there was Professor H. C. G. Matthew's massive work on the Gladstone diaries, fourteen volumes meticulously edited and accompanied by introductions which between them have amounted to a full biographical study.

So there was a lot of room for critical comparative judgments, and when I had completed the manuscript I awaited publication with a new wave of trepidation. It was a great relief

and considerable surprise to me when it was received with remarkably little jugular criticism, and moreover sold well. This does not mean that it was free from errors. I have been much struck by how elusive is the search for absolute accuracy. I devoted great initial attention to trying to get things right, and there were no swingeing accusations of 'slap-dashery'. Nevertheless, through five or six successive impressions I have been engaged in a constant rolling process of correction, mainly as a result of letters from those who knew some little fact which had previously eluded me. And I have no doubt that there are still some so far concealed errors. Truth is always relative rather than absolute, but this is no reason for not constantly trying to get nearer to it.

When *Gladstone* came out in America, approximately eighteen months after its London publication, it was almost as widely reviewed as it had been in the British literary press, and also sold surprisingly well for an English political biography in that now somewhat internally oriented and apolitical market. But the reviews, although gratifyingly extensive, were more critical than the English ones had been. Trying to find a reassuring reason for this difference I decided that it was at least partly because American reviewers did not like the jokes. If a man was a great man, and therefore worth writing about at length, he should be immune from even the occasional flippancy. But I am aware that in evolving this explanation I was seeking a comforting corn-plaster.

I also discovered that the value of reviews is to be measured much more by their column inches than by what they actually say. Nearly everyone in America who has since spoken about them to me has referred to the wonderful *Gladstone* reviews. And when I point out that the *New York Times* may have put it on the front of their book section but that the actual words were far from ecstatic and that the *Washington Post* had quite a few criticisms, even though the *New Yorker* rose above such petty points and the *New York Review of Books* at least engaged a reviewer who was more interested in Disraeli so that he did not bother much to engage with my view of Gladstone.

What are the specific qualities which made me say with such confidence that Gladstone was a pre-eminent specimen of humanity, and which also made him so rewarding to write about? I would select two: first the number of different points at which he touched life, and second his energy. On the first point I have already mentioned his involvement in all the great religious disputes of his age. But he did not merely take sides. He also wrote a good deal of theology, and indeed soon after the end of his premiership retired from the leadership of the Liberal Party in order to devote what he saw as his few declining years to theological writing. The plan was, however, based on two false premises. First, his 'few declining years' amounted to about a quarter of a century, during which time he was again three times Prime Minister. Second, he was by no means a first-class theologian, whereas he indisputably was a first-class politician and indeed statesman. As a result, almost as in the operation of a physical law, he was quietly drawn back into that at which he was best.

He was a better classical scholar than he was a theologian, although even here, while he had sound knowledge and muscular intelligence, he lacked the intuitive verbal sensitivity which marked out the greatest classicists. But he devoted a lot of time to classical texts, and he read the bible in Greek every day. Towards the end of his life work on his new translation of Horace's odes became a ruling passion. When he got back from Windsor after his final resignation and an ungracious audience (more on her side than on his) he immediately got down to a Horace translation.

As a literary critic Gladstone's preference was somewhere between his theology and his classicism. He wrote a good long essay on Tennyson, although he and the Laureate mostly circled round each other like two cats with arched backs, perhaps sub-consciously aware that, with only a handful of others, they were amongst the greatest stars of the nineteenth century, and as such needed their own unimpeded orbits. Gladstone also undoubtedly read more fiction (contemporary in his case) than any subsequent Prime Minister until Macmillan, although Asquith would have been a clear third.

This leads on to the intellectual aspects of Gladstone's energy. He claimed that he read 20,000 books over his adult lifetime (approximately 280 a year) and sustained the claim by listing all of them and annotating most. He kept his daily journal for 69½ years. He habitually sent out 15 to 20 long handwritten letters a day. At the age of 84, and during one of the most difficult weekends of his life, he took time off to compose a 4000-word treatise on church music and how it had changed (and on the whole improved) during his lifetime.

Moreover, this intellectual vigour was matched to an equally astonishing physical energy. At the age of 74, staying at Balmoral as Prime Minister he escaped for 7½ hours and climbed Ben Macdhui, at 4100 feet the highest point in the Cairngorms. His favourite recreation from middle-age onwards was the felling of great trees; he brought down his last one at the age of 81. When, at about the same time, he was knocked down by a cab in London, he got up, pursued the errant driver, and held him until the police came. There was always plenty to write about and unexpected quirks to Gladstone. Despite his earnestness he was rarely dull.

Lord Jenkins of Hillhead was until recently the leader of the Liberal Democrats in the House of Lords and is currently chairing a commission on electoral reform for the government. He is the author of several books, including Gladstone *(Macmillan, 1995) and* The Chancellors *(Macmillan, 1998).*

Gladstone's Death and Funeral

H. C. G. Matthew marks the centenary of Gladstone's death.

Few political deaths can have been so anticipated as that of William Ewart Gladstone on 19 May 1898. Though 88 years old when he died, Gladstone had been in harness until March 1894, when he resigned for the fourth and last time as prime minister. He had first been in office in 1834, so his was a 60-year long career which began before the reign of Queen Victoria and lasted almost to the end of it. Moreover; though in his last administration he had clearly been near to retirement, his government had been no nostalgic parade. He had carried through the House of Commons a Home Rule for Ireland Bill, and had thus demonstrated that such a thing was possible, even though it was immediately thrown out by the House of Lords almost without debate. Nor had Gladstone been silent once he had retired. His last campaign was an appeal for justice for the Armenians against persecution, made during a great speech at Hengler's Circus in Liverpool, the town of his birth, on 24 September 1896, which had occasioned the resignation of Lord Rosebery from the leadership of the Liberal Party. Gladstone's final illness and death was that of an old man, but one still very much in the public eye.

A slow and semi-public death

After retirement from politics – he did not stand for his Midlothian constituency at the general election of 1895 – Gladstone rather systematically prepared himself and his affairs for death. In the same month as his retirement from the premiership he discussed with his wife Catherine arrangements for their funerals (unfortunately, no details of this conversation remain). At the end of 1896 he wrote his third and final will; he made what in his family became known as the 'Declaration' (on his sexual life and the extent of its improprieties); and he wrote the final entry in the daily diary he had begun while a schoolboy in 1825. All was thus in order. But death was not to be so neat. Gladstone's remarkably tough body put up a strong fight. His habit of tree-felling – so derided by his contemporaries and subsequently – had kept him in excellent shape. His main problem was his eyesight, for which he had an operation for cataract in his right eye in May 1894; this helped in that eye, but cataract quickly developed in the left eye, and a further operation was thought inadvisable. Apart from this difficulty, Gladstone remained apparently healthy. When he and his wife left to winter in Cannes in November 1897, with Gladstone feeling pain from neuralgia on one side of his face, his former secretary noted: 'He has always made the most of his ailments ... one must make allowance for some exaggeration ... Apart from glumness and depression I could see no sign of increased failure either mentally or physically.' In fact Gladstone was suffering from the cancer which killed him. While in France, he had to take opiates but he refused close medical examination until he came home. He listened a great deal to music and his family noticed that his usual daily round of reading and correspondence was in effect abandoned. Even so, he was able to give an interview to the *Daily Telegraph* on Arthur Hallam, his Eton friend in the 1820s and the subject of Tennyson's *In Memoriam*; the *Telegraph* published it on 5 January 1898 in the form of an article, the last of his many literary publications.

The Gladstones in March 1898 returned to Britain a disconsolate party, and went to Bournemouth, as an intermediate temperature between the balmy Mediterranean and the bracing cold of wintery Hawarden Castle, the family home in North Wales where Gladstone had told his family he wished to die. He was examined in Bournemouth by his doctor; Samuel Habershon, who found a swelling on

the palate; the leading cancer surgeon, Sir Thomas Smith, diagnosed cancer; but it was decided not to operate. An announcement was made to the press which made it clear that death was imminent.

Gladstone returned to Hawarden on 22 March, but he did not die quickly. His final months occasioned intense public interest, with a squad of press reporters based in Hawarden keeping the world in touch with developments by telegraph. A stream of Liberal potentates visited to pay their respects. Gladstone received them on his sofa, still getting up each day to dress and to dine. He calculated how many days of his working life had been lost by illness (he could remember the dates of all significant illnesses, for they were few) and he refused to take many opiates despite the pain, on the grounds that he would be 'falling into bad habits'. He regaled his visitors with hymns, especially J. H. Newman's 'Praise to the Holiest in the Height'. On 9 April Gladstone went out of doors for the last time; on 18 April he ceased to come downstairs; and about this time he made his last communion, celebrated by G. H. Wilkinson, Bishop of St Andrews. Nursed by Kate Pitts, Gladstone continued to get out of bed for a time each day, but bv mid-May it was clear that he would soon die. Just after 5 a.m. on the morning of Ascension Day, Thursday 19 May, with his wife, eight other members of the family and three doctors round the bed, Gladstone was pronounced dead.

However much anticipated, this was an event reported throughout the world. The pressmen were waiting in the smoking room immediately underneath Gladstone's bedroom and they knew that he was dead when the stentorian voice of Stephen Gladstone intoning the prayers for the dying and the dead echoed around the corridors of Hawarden Castle. Gladstone's timing was in a way inconvenient, for although the news was immediately telegraphed to the Press Association and around the world, the first edition of the London papers had gone to press; but this meant the profitable sell-out of extra special editions mid-morning. The press had had ample time to prepare: special supplements were issued with the main papers and memorial books and pamphlets of photographs were at once on sale. Newspapers could not then print photographs, and had to fall back on drawings; most of them therefore either produced their own photographic books or had a partnership with a publisher heavily advertised in the new papers, for which even the most staid carried unusually large advertisements.

Gladstone's death was thus the second British death which was a media event of the modern sort (the first had been the death of Gordon in 1885, for which Gladstone was much blamed – but that was in the Sudan and without direct reporting, and Gordon's body was never found). Intimate descriptions of Gladstone's body on the deathbed – of a sort probably unacceptable today – immediately appeared in the *Daily News*, the main Liberal paper in London: 'the figure on which I looked down, tremulous, might be some beautiful statue of grayish white marble lying recumbent upon a tombstone ... only a very few of the intimate friends of the family have passed through this dim chamber of death, just pausing for a moment by the bedside to cast a fleeting, a reverent look'. But of those few, most then published their observations. Sir William Blake Richmond, who made a drawing of Gladstone just after death (dedicated to Nurse Pitts), also issued a detailed (if romanticised) verbal portrait of the dead prime minister. These reports were not regarded as intrusive nor were they resented bv the family, for they fitted with the Victorian view of death as something both reverential and ordinary.

Plans for the public funeral

The Gladstone family bore the immediate responsibility for the arrangements which followed and indeed proceedings were already in place before Gladstone died. In his will Gladstone gave three directives: an absolute requirement that he should not be buried where his wife might not subsequently be laid also; the instruction that 'no laudatory inscription' be placed over him; and the statement that his burial was 'to be very simple unless they (his Executors) shall consider that there are conclusive reasons to the contrary'. This might be seen as a simple preference for a simple burial, or it might be seen a characteristic piece of Gladstonian ambivalence – wanting to appear simple while leaving the door open for a public funeral. Even before his death, the family had opted for the latter.

A public funeral was one paid for by Parliament through a resolution to the monarch. It was, and remains, a very rare event. In the nineteenth century only Nelson, Pitt the Younger, Charles James Fox, R. B. Sheridan, George Canning, the Duke of Wellington, Palmerston, and Napier of Magdala had been so buried (several had been offered and declined, for example Beaconsfield and Russell). Palmerston was the best precedent (and he had made the same requirement about his wife), but he had died in the Parliamentary recess and the procedures had had to be short-circuited. The Wellington funeral had been a lavish but rather chaotic affair; the catafalque being too heavy for the road which gave way under it in St James' and too large to get through the gates of St Paul's (where both Nelson and Wellington were buried) and the congregation was thus kept waiting for over an hour. Gladstone's funeral was to be the first public funeral with a recognisedly modern aspect – worldwide press coverage via telegraph and the procession filmed. The arrangements for a public funeral are, like those of a coronation, in the hands of the Earl Marshal, the Duke of Norfolk. To liaise with him, the family asked Edward Hamilton, formerly Gladstone's secretary, to take time off from the Treasury;

Hamilton had in fact started work on the plans before Gladstone had died.

We often think of public funerals as martial events, with streets lined with soldiers, bands playing, the coffin covered with medals and borne on a gun carriage flanked by men in uniform. Gladstone's funeral showed that this need not be so, even at the high noon of Empire.

Lying-in-state at Hawarden and Westminster

While Hamilton and the Duke planned in London, the first steps were taken at Hawarden. There, Gladstone's body was laid out in the Temple of Peace – his study in the Castle – dressed in his doctoral robes from Oxford University. The family chose these scarlet robes deliberately to emphasise that Gladstone was not merely a politician but a person of letters. Wearing his robes, his body was placed on a silk cloth embroidered 'Resquiescat in Pace', the head and chest slightly propped up, with his mortar board laid on his chest and a red silk handkerchief given to him recently by the Armenians covering his feet. A bust of Disraeli was prominent among the busts on the top of the bookcases in the room. The room was then open for mini-lying-in-state for the people of North Wales, and large numbers came to file past it. On 25 May, the body, still in its doctoral robes, but now sealed in a simple oak coffin, was pulled on a hand bier by colliers, estate workmen, tenants and labourers of Hawarden to the church where communion service was held. Pulling a body on a bier was the traditional Victorian way of showing respect – just as live politicians who were popular used to have their carriages pulled by hand when they visited a town to make a speech. The closed coffin was the result of a decision which caused the only serious disagreement in the making of the plans: the family was keen that the coffin be kept open for the lying-in-state. Hamilton and the Duke thought that this 'would no doubt be thought "unEnglish" and without precedent', as did the Prince of Wales who was becoming increasingly involved in the plans for the proceedings in London. Hamilton had to exercise 'peremptoriness' to persuade the family to close the coffin.

Hamilton and the Duke, whom the former found 'a charming man to work with – such a gentleman', had made arrangements for the body to lie in state in Westminster Hall. It was brought to London during the night of 25–26 May on a special train pulled by the engine 'Gladstone' (now in the Railway Museum at York), the train also containing the large crowd of journalists and illustrators who had gathered at Hawarden. On reaching Willesden in north London, the coffin was transferred to the District line of the underground, in which company Gladstone had been a shareholder since its flotation. The underground train took the coffin to Westrninster station, from which it was carried into the Hall across the road. Part of the aim of this operation had been to avoid a procession: there seems to have been general agreement among the organisers that a procession, which would inevitably involve soldiers or police, would be inappropriate in Gladstone's case.

The coffin lay in state in Westminster Hall from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Thursday and Friday, 26 and 27 May. It lay on an undecorated catafalque while over a quarter of a million people filed past it. During the night, Anglican priests and laymen kept a vigil, but during the day the coffin was unguarded. The crowds were partly from London, but many came by special train from the provinces, for Liberalism was weak in London and strong in the rural areas and in the Northern towns. One of those who filed through the Hall was the novelist Thomas Hardy, always a sharp observer of the telling detail. Hardy wrote to his sister:

'I went to see Gladstone 'lying in state' this morning – though it can hardly be called in state – so plain, even to bareness was the whole scene – a plain oak coffin on a kind of altar covered with a black cloth ... Two carpenters in front of me said "a rough job – ¾ panels, & 1¼ framing" referring to the coffin, which was made by the village carpenter at Hawarden. The scene however, was impressive, as being in Westminster Hall, & close to where his voice had echoed for 50 years.'

At the end of the lying-in-state on the Friday, the doors of the Hall were reopened to allow Liberals to pay their respects: led by officials of the National Liberal Federation and the Liberal Chief Whip, Tom Ellis, and concluded by members of the National Liberal Club, a long procession of deputations from Liberal Associations throughout the county filed by. Given the state of their party in 1898, they must have wondered if they were bidding farewell to the last Liberal prime minister.

The grave, the pallbearers, and Queen Victoria's 'oversight'

Gladstone was buried in Westminster Abbey on the morning of Saturday, 28 May, nine days after his death. There was a good deal of negotiation about the place of the grave; Dean Stanley, the reforming Dean of Westminster twenty years earlier, had allocated a plot; but the grave had to be big enough in due course to contain Mrs Gladstone also; eventually a suitable spot was found in the crowded floor of the political corner of the Abbey – ironically it was near the statue of Disraeli (though he was buried at Hughenden) and was placed so that Disraeli's statue gazes permanently down on the grave of his dead rival.

A short procession bore the coffin from Westminster Hall to the Abbey in silence, on a simple funeral car (not a gun carriage), pulled by

two horses with civilian bearers and grooms – some of them from the Hawarden Estate – accompanied by the pallbearers and a political procession. The Guard of Honour was made up of schoolboys from Eton, Gladstone's school – a neat touch which emphasised the educational priorities of the dead man. The procession left as Big Ben struck 11 a.m., the bell of St Margaret's, Westminster having previously been tolling every minute together with the bells of the Abbey muffled. No account was taken of public wishes to see the coffin – those were thought to have been accommodated by the lying-in-state – and it was not processed round central London. The area around the Abbey was consequently crammed with a crowd estimated at up 100,000, many of whom were observed to be weeping openly.

The membership of the pallbearing party was naturally a matter of close attention and controversy, for the choice of pallbearers of a dead prime minister necessarily included enemies as well as friends. A. J. Balfour and Lord Salisbury, who had moved the relevant motions in the Commons and Lords, represented the government, despite their violent political antipathy to the dead man; Sir William Harcourt, Lord Rosebery, and Lord Kimberley represented the Liberal Party (we can be sure that Gladstone would have preferred Lord Spencer to Harcourt, whom he found especially difficult to deal with, but the Liberals could hardly have all been members of the House of Lords!); the Duke of Rutland, who as Lord John Manners had sat with Gladstone for Newark, his first constituency; and two cronies, George Armitstead and Stuart Rendel, who together had looked after and paid for the Gladstones in the last years of his life.

There were two further pallbearers: the Prince of Wales (soon to be Edward VII) and the Duke of York (later George V). Their inclusion was controversial, especially to Queen Victoria. The monarch traditionally did not attend public funerals, and nobody at this time suggested that she should. Nor, however, did other members of the Royal family, at least not in a prominent role, and Wales' gesture was typical of his capacity to spot the need for change. The Queen was furious. Her antipathy towards Gladstone had reached a level of irrationality in the last years of his final government. In marked contrast to its effusive regrets – personally written by Victoria – for Disraeli's death in 1881, the Court Circular did not record Gladstone's death. When Lord Salisbury, as prime minister and aware of mounting public anger, pointed this out, the Queen replied that the omission was 'entirely an oversight'! The Prince of Wales, who had always enjoyed Gladstone's company and sympathised with some of his policies, and whom Gladstone had seen as the means of restoring the credit of the monarchy, was determined at the funeral to correct what most saw as his mother's bad manners. He bluntly told the Queen, when she asked what precedents there were for royalty attending such a funeral, that 'the circumstances were unprecedented, and he would and should never forget what a friend to Royalty Mr G had been'.

MAY 19, 1898

PUNCH, May 28, 1898

The funeral

The congregation in the Abbey had begun assembling at 8.30 a.m., the door being shut at 10 a.m. Mrs Gladstone with her granddaughter Dorothy entered at 10.15, followed, just before the coffin, by the Princess of Wales (later Queen Alexandra) and the Duchess of York (later Queen Mary). The Earl of Pembroke, a person of no consequence, represented the Queen. Gladstone's funeral was thus attended by two future kings and two future queens. Then entered the funeral procession and the coffin. The music before the service was conventional – Schubert and Beethoven – and the setting was that of Croft. The first two hymns were Gladstone's known favourites. Toplady's 'Rock of Ages', almost an anthem of the Victorian evangelicals, reflected Gladstone's youthful religion: he approved of the hymn so much that he had translated it into Latin (Tractarianising it, almost); but it was the original version that was sung. The second hymn was Newman's 'Praise to the Holiest in the Height', verses of which Gladstone had quoted to his friends and family as he lay dying. The third hymn was Isaac Watts' 'O God our Help in Ages Past', a national hymn. The choice of hymns – a matter of great remark and sensitivity to contemporaries – was thus highly ecumenical, embracing evangelicals, Roman Catholics, and the non-English parts of the United Kingdom, for the Watts hymn was especially popular in Scotland. None of Gladstone's own

hymns was used, though immediately after his death several were republished in religious magazines.

By the end of the service, the coffin was in the grave, and the family and others went to look at it there. Mrs Gladstone led the congregation out of the Abbey. As she passed down the nave, the Prince of Wales leaned over his pew and spoke to her; they then shook hands on Mrs Gladstone's request. This brief gesture was very widely commented on, and was taken by most to be in effect an apology for his mother's behaviour. The Queen herself tried to make amends by publishing the telegraph of condolence which she sent to Mrs Gladstone on the morning of the funeral.

The service could, of course, only be seen by those in the Abbey, and there was no procession after the funeral, for the coffin was already in the grave. Contemporaries participated in the proceedings in a rather different way from our 20th-century TV-watching: church services were held in churches of all denominations in cities, towns. villages and parishes throughout the United Kingdom and throughout the Empire to synchronise thanksgiving for Gladstone's life with his burial in the capital. Similar services were also held in some cities of the United States, and especially in the mid-West, where there were many Home Rule Associations and several towns named 'Gladstone'. This idea of the nation literally at prayer for a specific purpose at a specific time was a remnant of the fast-disappearing custom of days of national penance or thanks. Despite a national and international fascination with the funeral, the rest of the Saturday was as usual. Theatres were open and cricket and horse racing were uninterrupted. The Grand National Horse Show opened that day at the Crystal Palace, but was poorly attended. The only cancellation seems to have been, somewhat ironically, the Royal Military Tournament, whose Saturday performance was postponed as a mark of respect.

Memorials: a death in perspective

A Parliamentary motion paid for the statue of Gladstone in Westminster Abbey. The national memorial to him took two chief forms. A Gladstone Memorial Trust was established which still looks after the residential library of St Deiniol's, Hawarden, based on his books but with a larger library and facilities for accommodation; another Trust was established which still dispenses bursaries, prizes and other grants; and provision was made for statues to be erected in the national capitals of London, Edinburgh and Dublin (that for Dublin was refused by the city until a suitable one of Parnell had been erected there first; it was meanwhile placed in Hawarden, where it remains).

Gladstone's funeral was, in retrospect, especially remarkable for its absence of bombast. Held at the very peak of Empire, it emphasised civic, non-military, and religious values. It was striking that the British could at that moment hold a state funeral which had no soldiers and no uniforms (save those of the Heralds and of the Speaker and Lord Chancellor). The funeral of Queen Victoria three years later was a very different affair, with much comment on the contrast between the Queen's personal faith and 'womanly' lack of presumption and the parade of military might which her citizens provided to accompany her to her grave.

Funerals are at their most effective when the service reflects the character and wishes of the dead person and at the same time caters for the often rather different concerns of the mourners. In Gladstone's case, there was a happy, almost organic, coincidence of the personal and the national, of the religious and the political. Indeed. it might be argued that the harmony between church and state which he had argued for in his book, *The State in its Relations with the Church* (1838), but which he soon recognised as impractical was, even so, reflected in his funeral. This was, of course, in the larger scale of things a false impression. There was a forced contrast between the determined non-militarism of Gladstone's funeral and the temper of the times; and the British government was about to embark in South Africa on what was, in ratio to its objectives, the most expensive and inept of all its wars. Gladstonian Liberalism was to have a last, dramatic burst in the governments of Campbell-Bannerman and Asquith (1905–15), but the elegiac tone of the Gladstone funeral neatly brought to its end the century of Liberalism.

H. C. G. Matthew was Editor of The Gladstone Diaries *from 1972. His two-volume biographical study of Gladstone has recently been published by Oxford University Press as a one-volume paperback,* Gladstone 1809–1898. *He is presently Editor of the* New Dictionary of National Biography.

Further reading

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The Passing of Gladstone: his life, death and burial (1898), no author known.

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Report

Only Connect

Tony Little reports on the international conference held at University College Chester, at the beginning of July, to commemorate the centenary of Gladstone's death.

A conference attended by nearly one hundred people, mostly professional historians, spread over four days, in which some twenty-eight different papers were delivered inevitably presented a diverse view of its subject. Yet the key theme was set by David Bebbington in his introduction to the first session – 'Only Connect'. From the first biography of Gladstone in 1868 to the current day we have a daunting mass of material about the Grand Old Man which has inevitably led to a specialisation particularly between the political studies and the religious – a divide which dates back to Morley's great but largely political biography of 1903. The challenge for future historians is to rebuild an integrated Gladstonian personality, understanding how each part of his life influenced the others.

Colin Matthew, the editor of the Gladstone Diaries, developed the theme by arguing that the diaries represented 'a long piece of string' – 25,300 daily entries over nearly seventy years – 'through the maze'. The diaries were primarily a record of the *process* of Gladstone's life, not an *analysis* of his thought. They were driven by his evangelical background as a preparation for an account to his Maker, and therefore religion and temptations were a key component. They recorded his journeys, his correspondence – an important consideration, as Gladstone practiced 'war by literary attrition' on his colleagues – his reading, his own publications and his recreations. They rarely give his political views, as these were already available in the speeches and correspondence, but the diaries were used by him and can be used by others as a source of reference for these political views. The diaries are the skeleton on which the body of Gladstone studies will hang, establishing the links between the components, allowing them to form a whole.

The need for this guidance became clear as the conference progressed. The longevity of Gladstone's political life is well known, as is his shift from Tory to Liberal. What became clearer was the consistency of his thought processes and the application of the same principles throughout his life. His economic policy was formed by Peel and Cobden in the 1840s and 1850s. Anthony Howe, of LSE, showed that the commercial diplomacy which informed the treaty with the French in 1860 still influenced commercial policy-making in the 1880s, with Gladstone fighting against colonial protectionism and retaliatory tariffs against the US or Germany, whose rise to economic power were seen by others to pose a threat to Britain. Retrenchment was a key to his policy as Chancellor in the 1850s, when he fought Palmerston over naval fortifications, and it was the subject of his final battle in cabinet in 1894, when he protested in vain about the expansion of military expenditure. The quarrels with Pam, perceived as holding a lackadaisical attitude to finance and lacking moral principles in foreign affairs, were, Michael Partridge explained, transferred to Disraeli, where they enjoyed an extended life. Sessions on such apparently diverse subjects as Ireland, electoral reform and the Empire showed the influence of Burke on his thinking while making clear the conservative nature of his reforming zeal. In each case, Gladstone was looking to integrate disaffected sections of the community into the whole and in each case seeking to demonstrate that placing trust in the people would achieve responsibility rather than revolution.

Politics by other means

David Bebbington's own contribution was on the superficially unpromising subject of Gladstone and Homer, but was one of the most sparkling, demonstrating the value of thinking across the subject. Classics were part of the education of any Victorian gentleman and many kept up their studies – the library at St. Deiniol's contains a translation of Homer by Lord Derby, the Tory premier. Gladstone's Homeric studies appear initially to have been a distraction from politics but, for a man of Gladstone's energies, idle reading was not an option and serious study was followed by publication of a three-volume 1500-page tome, *Studies in Homer and the Homeric Age,* and a later 'popular' version, *Juventus Mundi*, plus of course numerous articles. Gladstone imported into his

classical studies his political and polemical skills. Homer was used to demonstrate to an increasingly less religious age the true revelation of God, and the continuity of that revelation from pre-biblical times. Similarly, it was used against those Tractarians, such as Newman, who deserted the Church of England for Roman Catholicism. If the use of Homer and ancient Greek religion as weapons in Christian controversies might be seen as a natural extension of Gladstone's urge to integrate both into a single vision of God's plan for humanity, Bebbington also illustrated the more overt political content of ancient Greek history. One of Gladstone's objectives was to attack the theories of Radical MP and Greek historian George Grote, who thought of Homer as mostly myth, while Gladstone saw him as historical and Agamemnon as an early constitutional monarch. Similarly, rivalry for the Exchequer between Gladstone and Sir George Cornewall Lewis is reflected in differences in their Homeric views.

As Ulysses bound to the mast

Naturally, Ireland played a large part in the conference. The settlement Gladstone proposed in 1886 is still seen as the opportunity that Britain missed to resolve what has been the most long-lasting and intractable problem to confront British politicians. Elements of his solution still show in the repeated efforts to devolve power to a local parliament, such as is included in the Good Friday Agreement, and after each demonstration of the ineffectiveness of coercion, which lives on in the debate on internment. The broad outline of Gladstone's insistence on tieing his fate with Ireland right from the outset of his first government to his final great feat in the Commons in 1893 are well known, but questions still remain.

Alan O'Day and George Boyce discussed 'Gladstone, Nationalism and Unionism'. Why did Gladstone choose to champion Irish Catholics despite his hostility to their religion? The article by Colin Matthew elsewhere in this issue gives part of the reason. O'Day suggests that Mr G. was in part trying to take religion out of the state in his Irish proposals, but Boyce quoted a Whig Belfast paper accusing him of exactly the opposite fault. Victorian Irish Protestants did not reject their Irishness – indeed Parnell was a Protestant – but they could not understand Gladstone's Home Rule policy as achieving his objectives of rebuilding the primacy of the gentry and removing bigotry. Gladstone hinted at safeguards for Protestants in a second chamber of the Home Rule Parliament, but gave no explicit guarantees and was unwilling to use fancy franchises. He did not come to terms with the distinctive characteristics of Ulster, with its heavier industrialisation and developed middle class, focusing more on the dysfunctional systems of agricultural tenancies which were less of a problem in the north.

In recent years revisionism has been the source of controversy among Irish historians, but O'Day suggested that Gladstone's reputation had suffered less than that of Ireland's own nationalist leaders. He is still given the credit for making Ireland a critical issue in British politics.

The challenge

The older generation of historians present at the conference began their careers, as Walter Arnstein reminded delegates, when the everyday features of London would have still been recognisable to Gladstone – fogs and street sellers, but no supermarkets and few cars. It was still possible to talk to people who had known Gladstone, but the wealth of written material now available had not been opened up for inspection. However, there was a danger, at least in the US, of history departments being seduced by literary theories and cultural anthropology while neglecting national, constitutional and diplomatic studies. Imperial history survived under post-colonialism and oriental studies.

How will Gladstone fit into this? Michael Wheeler, Richard Shannon and Philip Bull tried to answer. For Wheeler, revisiting the Gladstonian intellect was the challenge. Bull endorsed this view: we still need to conciliate the contradictory elements in his personality to explore further his efforts to preserve in a period of transition. For example, Gladstone's foresight in tackling the problems of Ireland eased India's colonial transition. Do we need to do more to restore Gladstone's reputation as a patriot? For Shannon, he needs to be rescued from the Morley/secular view of Gladstone as the Godfather of modern Liberalism, and restored to his own time as the inheritor of a tradition that stretches backwards to Cromwell. We need to bring back religion to the centrality it assumed in his own life and see how the role of providential purpose worked consistently through his series of great undertakings.

Liberal Democrats still have much to learn from their Gladstonian tradition. I came away impressed not just by the greatness of the man, but the continued relevance of his approach.

The papers from The Gladstone Centenary International Conference are being edited by David Bebbington and Roger Swift. They will be published in two volumes, the first by the Liverpool University Press and the second, consisting of the shorter papers, by St Deiniol's Library.

Tony Little is Secretary of the Liberal Democrat History Group.

MR. GLADSTONE WALKS IN.

Reviews

The Two Mr Gladstones

Travis L. Crosby:
The Two Mr Gladstones: A Study in Psychology & History
(Yale University Press, 1997)
Reviewed by Tony Little

As we pass the centenary of his death, we are finally beginning to get to grips with Gladstone. Not the great statesman, the outstanding orator and reformer, but the fallible human. Gladstone, the great Victorian idol, 'The People's William', was celebrated in the newspapers of the day – he was an early exploiter of the mass media and was one of the first major politicians to campaign among the people 'out of doors'.[1] Gladstone the statesman was entombed in Morley's monumental biography.[2] But it was not until Magnus in the 1950s[3] that we began to get an insight into the man behind the mask, and it was not until the publication of the diaries that the evidence was clearly and publicly available for analysis. Jenkins' recent book[4] added the insight of a practising modern politician, highlighting, for example, the stress-related illnesses. Are there more insights to be found?

Travis argues that there are. His is not a gimmicky Freudian expose of the Grand Old Man, as has been practiced by Leo Abse on Mrs. Thatcher, and it does not focus exclusively on the unknowable aspects of the rescue missions among fallen women. Rather, it is a serious analysis, drawing on Freudian work where necessary, but concentrating on stress and coping strategy. The mass of material generated by Gladstone, his rivals, colleagues and observers means that if any historical figure can be subject to a psychological analysis, Gladstone must be the prime candidate for treatment.

The duality of Mr G's personality is expressed in many ways. The collecter of porcelain may be contrasted with the ill-tempered debater. The fearless statesman is also the man who longs for escape. The century's greatest mass orator is also the neat administrator, the amateur theologian was also a man of excess physical energy whose main hobby was the felling of trees and who thought nothing of a twenty-mile walk. Are these just random aspects of the same character, or are they linked into a coherent whole by this psychological inspection? If psycho-history is to add value it must add to our understanding of the personality, and, more importantly, it must help explain some of the more perplexing episodes of a career not satisfactorily resolved by more traditional techniques.

Travis argues that at heart Gladstone was a carefully organised man who reacted negaively when that order was disturbed – only a carefully organised man could have produced so much written material in his life. His ambition was to bring order to the country. This is readily seen in the great reforming budgets and the reforms of his first premiership. In smaller things it is seen in his frequent re-ordering of his books and papers and in the methodical process of the diary. When people or events conspired to prevent Gladstone achieving his targets, how did he cope with the resulting stress? One answer, already given, was to run away until a solution presented itself or until Gladstone devised a new strategy. Into this category may be put the Ionian Commissionership in the frustrating officeless mid-1850s. Similarly, his reaction to the 1874 defeat by throwing up the party leadership; and the retreat to France in the crisis of 1894. During the period in which he decided to bring forward Home Rule, Gladstone may be accused of skulking in Hawarden and keeping colleagues in the dark. Throughout his career, when in subordinate positions, he threatened resignation, as Peel and Palmerston found to their exasperation, and when in the highest office, he used retirement for the same purpose of enforcing his will or providing an escape route.

The G.O.M. always found attractions and temptation in the company of pretty women – a nickname among the demi-monde was Gladeyes – and if there was a religious angle, the temptation was especially strong, as Laura Thistlethwayte proved. While there was always more in the rescue missions than Christian sympathy for Magdelenes, it was less than Gladtsone's enemies hoped, as he adopted strategies to sublimate the temptation. Nevertheless it is clear that the streetwalking was itself a means of coping and was at its high-

est when he was under severe stress with problems in his family or political life.

Fifty years ago, this book would have come as a great revelation. Now no biographer can escape an exploration of his hero's motivesn and Gladstone has not escaped the attentions of Jenkins, Matthew, Shannon *et al*. Travis has added valuable new insights, but they are too often points of detail rather than breakthroughs. Importantly, the book is not laden with jargon and acts as a good short introduction to the life for those who already have some understanding of the politics – and adds that little extra understanding for the specialist.

Notes

1. H. J. Hanham: *Elections and Party Management* (Longmans, 1959), p. 202.
2. J. Morley: *Life of Gladstone* (1903).
3. P. Magnus, *Gladstone* (Murray, 1954).
4. R. Jenkins, *Gladstone* (Macmillan, 1995).

Some Gladstonian Attitudes

Peter J. Jagger (ed.): *Gladstone* (The Hambledon Press, 1998)

Reviewed by Tony Little

The opening illustration of Peter Jagger's book shows a cartoon of Gladstone at work in the Commons, but it is the other meaning of attitudes which comes over in this book. Any book with essays on Gladstone and Acting, Ireland, Rhetoric, America, Disraeli, the working man, Ruskin, Railways, to name some of the topics, and with authors as good as Asa Briggs, Lord Blake and David Bebbington, to select just some of those whose names start with B, is bound to offer some little treat. This book offers a whole feast.

When he died Gladstone left his library at St. Deiniol's, Hawarden, for the use of scholars. Each year a Founder's Day lecture is held to commemorate some aspect of Gladstone's life. All but two of these essays were first given as lectures at St. Deiniol's over the period 1968–96 and all but a (different) pair appear for the first time in this volume. The Blake piece on the rivalry with Disraeli was first published in the now out of print first volume of Founder's Day lectures and is well worth the reproduction, though not without the unworthy thought that it would be hard to imagine a similar book on the Tory leader that encompassed such a wide range of interests.

In his introduction, Peter Jagger describes Gladstone as a 'Victorian colossus: a man of boundless energy and varied and great gifts'; here we are given a glimpse as to just how wide these gifts were, and an introduction to the magnitude of the problems he was prepared to tackle. Some, such as Ireland, the Balkans and management of the railways are still unresolved. The problem with a colossus is its sheer scale. The Gladstone diaries, as published, take up fourteen volumes, and the Gladstone papers have now been published on 262 reels of microfiche, of which the thirty reels of general correspondence and associated letter books alone cover more than 15,000 letters. As Peter Jagger makes clear in his own contribution on 'Gladstone's Library', Gladstone's 30,000 books were a working library and there is evidence from the diaries and the books themselves (heavily annotated) that he read around 20,000 of them. It is not surprising that biographers as practiced as Lord Jenkins have approached their subject with some trepidation.

It is also no surprise that many prefer to specialise, tackling just some part of Gladstone's contribution to the nineteenth century. It is in this specialisation that this book finds some of its strength. For example, Glynne Wickham is not just a great grandson of the Grand Old Man but also a professor of drama, well-placed to demonstrate the influence of classical oratorical skills on both Victorian politicians and actors, to illustrate Gladstone's love of the theatre (once he had overcome his evangelical fears of its sinfulness) and his willingness to promote the profession in society. He persuaded Victoria to offer a knighthood to Irving (refused at the time but accepted later) and invited him to breakfast at Downing Sreet – luvvies and politics go back a long way.

David Bebbington offers one of the most sparkling pieces on what might at first be thought an especially obscure subject – 'Gladstone and Grote'. 'Who he?' would probably be the reaction of most readers, but this merely illustrates the strength of Bebbington's essay. Grote was a somewhat idealistic radical MP, utilitarian, strongly in favour of democracy and fanatical about the secret ballot, at a time when Gladstone (who later ironically introduced the secret ballot), a rising Tory, opposed each of these views. Grote is now more famous for his pioneering history of Greece, but into this history he imported his philosophical ideas, placing temptation in the path of that amateur classicist Gladstone, who was temperamentally incapable of resisting the call to respond, toss-

ing off a three-volume 1500-page work on Homer. This defended not just Homer's unique pre-vision of biblical tradition, but also an idealised view of Homeric kingship and aristocracy which matched Mr. G's own view of how the British constitution ought to work. Homeric studies became political warfare by other means.

The reader will pick and choose among these essays in accordance with personal predilection but I hope that all Liberal Democrats will read the two lectures on Ireland and Wales. Each is still of relevance to today and helps shape our politics. How do we rise to the challenge that Gladstone set himself, quoted at the end of Boyce's shaping of the deeper context of Liberal Irish policy? 'We live ... in a labyrinth of problems, and of moral problems from which there is no escape permitted us.'

The challenge issued at the Gladstone Centenary International Conference was to rebuild Gladstone as an integrated personality. This book illustrates the breadth of that task, and the words quoted above represent one of the keys to the way in which Gladstone approached not just politics but his whole life.

'The only being who elects without voting, governs without law'[1]

K D Reynolds:
Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain
(Oxford University Press, 1998)
Reviewed by Tony Little

For many years history appeared to carry the gender implicit in the first part of the word. Nowhere was this more obvious than in the Victorian era where, apart from the Queen and the Lady with the Lamp, few schoolchildren could name another significant female Victorian.

The greater assertiveness of women in our own time has been reflected in a greater focus on women in history. A number of different theories have been developed but unfortunately all too often driven to see women purely in terms of their sex rather than in their varying roles. There has also been a focus, quite rightly, on the middle and working classes. But here, for the Liberal, there can be severe disadvantages, particularly the tendency to work on the masses rather than on the individual, to look for the typical, common, behaviour rather than to celebrate differences, to use statistics to make up for a paucity of other forms of records. There has also developed a stereotype of the female victim of the patriarch, confined to child-rearing, prostitution or servitude, which is all too common in popular 'historical' drama, especially on the television.

Victorian aristocratic ladies do not readily conform to stereotypes. There were too few real aristocrats to be statistically significant, and the things they shared with their poorer sisters were too limited to be constrained by the same theories. And it is hard to call them victims. Consequently this book is a welcome diversion which makes a strong case, not only for looking at these women in a new light, but perhaps also for pointing the way to a re-examination of the variety in the role of women in the other layers of society.

Reynolds makes the argument that for women in the higher reaches:

- the theory of separate spheres of influence between the genders is not adequate;
- we should see their lives as part of a continuity of aristocratic modes of behaviour from the eighteenth century (or even earlier); and
- a satisfactory role in politics was open to women and accepted by men even though women did not have the vote and could not take part in parliament.

One of the great attractions of the nineteenth century is the abundance of material from both private and public sources. This is much less obviously true of the areas studied in this monograph. So much of what Reynolds is trying to illustrate was just normally accepted behavior among those studied that there was never a need to write it down. Some positives are proved by criticism of negative behaviour (for example criticism of Lady (John) Russell's failings are used to deduce what the role of a political hostess should be), and quotations from fiction are sometimes made to fill a gap. I do not feel that damage is done to the argument by either device.

Reynolds worries a little about the political bias of the book. Whig/Liberal ladies appear to have kept rather more extensively available records than the Tories. Again this is a bias for the *Journal* to forgive readily and it is good to be reminded of the part played by the Duchess of Sutherland in the career of Gladstone, or of the importance of Lady

Palmerston to the growing coherence of the Whig/Radical/Peelite alliance that in the 1850s became the Liberal Party.

Under the notion of separate spheres women occupied the positions dictated by their gender – for example child-bearing – and roles developed from this position that did not interfere with the roles of the more dominant male. In this analysis, female charity work was an extension of care within the family and women could have a role in education on the same basis but should not be seen as entering the economic or political spheres.[2]

Those of the British aristocracy who continued to play a part in political life in the nineteenth century were driven by a sense of duty and historic continuity. Without a French-style revolution there was no clear break between rule by the aristocracy and a full democracy – some will argue that there still has not been, with hereditary peers active in the Lords. Aristocratic families continued to use techniques which had proved effective in the eighteenth century well after Victoria came to the throne. A territorial base was required to provide wealth, though as the century progressed and agriculture declined in importance, those who did not have industrial sources of income tended to be left behind. A London base was required for the Season – near the centre of power, and often providing a retreat within easy reach of the capital.

The territorial base in particular was used for the bestowal of patronage and charity, focused clearly on known individuals or in the case, for example of schools, known groups or communities. The influence gained could be translated into seats in the Commons. This system was less widely used in Ireland, which may help account for the greater difficulties in tenant-landlord relations and the reduced social cohesion of the community. The London Season was used for entertainment, not for enjoyment but to provide a place for politicians to gather to exchange information and build rapport. It was an age without the pager to keep the back-benchers 'on message'. Through this process, support was built for the career of individuals and favours sought for the entourage of the great houses. This process of obligation, patronage and duty would seem to reflect a sense of social feudalism, though this is not a term Reynolds uses.

Where a Lady was without a husband or father, it was clearly necessary for her to manage not only the household but also the estate or other sources of wealth. It was acceptable for such women to interfere with the management of elections and clerical appointments. But what if the husband or other male relative was present and not incapacitated? The evidence suggests that gender was no obstacle to involvement and that aristocratic women would run the estate or even take charge of industry in partnership with a husband or in the place of a husband who was tied up in politics and managing the country. The objective of such 'incorporated'[3] wives, apart from any intrinsic satisfaction, was to enhance the position of the family as a unit – securing patronage for male members of the family, or allowing them to devote time to politics without the distraction of the estate, benefited the whole unit.

There was one role, in politics where the woman came into her own, that of political hostess, and Reynolds devotes a separate chapter to this. For each generation there was one supreme hostess on the Whig/Liberal side. Lady Holland was succeeded by Lady Palmerston and then Lady Waldegrave. In each case the hostess was doing more than securing advantage for her husband; rather she was acting in the interest of the whole party. However, on a smaller scale it would form a major activity for any ambitious family. It is worth noting that the wives of party leaders did not always take on the role, nor did they always perform it well – Lady Russell and Lady Derby were both thought of as failures, while Catherine Gladstone did not seek to provide entertainment on behalf of the whole party. Lady Russell found the issues of much more interest than managing the people. Disraeli made frequent complaints that the Tories were unable to undertake this vital function as well as the Liberals.

Reynolds mentions other roles played by political wives – wielders of patronage, confidantes and go-betweens. Of these the role of confidante is probably the most frequent but least recorded. Every politician requires someone with whom to converse in confidence and without any risk that the information will be abused, and a spouse is often the first choice. Surviving correspondence of the period indicates that wives took an intelligent interest in the controversies of the time and clearly understood the political implications. Mention is made of the Duchess of Manchester's conservative influence on Hartington but the Duchess of Sutherland's influence on Gladstone's temperament was missed.[4] I felt that not enough was made of the impact that wives and other female confidantes could make.

This is a serious work, for all its modest scale, making full use of a sociological as well as a historiographical apparatus. It brings to the fore a much-neglected aspect of Victorian politics and I hope it will act as an inspiration for others. Reynold hints at the scope for further work, such as the impact of changes in generation on the prominence of women in politics. It ends with a potted biography of some of the main characters quoted. The variety of their lives and the sparkiness of some of the quotes makes me suspect that there is a bigger and more popular book waiting to be written from this material. The success of Stella Tillyard's *Aristocrats* with eighteenth-century material shows it can be done.

Notes

1. Lady Dorothy Nevill *My Own Times* (Methuen, 1912), quoted in Reynolds.
2. Reynolds, p. 3, and the references listed therein.
3. Reynolds, p. 43, and references listed therein.
4. R. Shannon, *Gladstone* Vol. 1, 1809–65, p. 556.

Research Notes

Chronology

Key dates in the life of William Ewart Gladstone 1809–1898

Compiled by Tony Little

Early Life

1809 29 December
William Ewart Gladstone born at 62 Rodney Street, Liverpool, the fourth son (and fifth child) of Sir John Gladstone, a merchant with West Indian plantations, and Anne Mackenzie Robertson, a frail woman with strong evangelical leanings.

1821–1830
Educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford: double first in classics and mathematics.

1832 13 December
Elected MP for Newark (Tory).

1833 3 June
Maiden speech defending his father's treatment of slaves on the West Indian plantations.

1834 26 December
Appointed Junior Lord of the Treasury.

1835 27 January
Appointed Under-Secretary for War and the Colonies (until 8 April) in Peel's short-lived ministry.

1838
Publishes *The Church in Its Relations with the State,* arguing the case for the role of the Church of England as a state church.

1839 25 July
Marries Catherine Glynne (aged 27), daughter of an historic Whig family, at Hawarden.

1840 3 June
Eldest son, William Henry, born.

1841–46: Peel's Government

1841 3 September
Appointed Vice-President of the Board of Trade. Gladstone joins Cabinet as President of Board of Trade on 15 May 1843, and carries the first general railway act in 1844, ensuring that poorer passengers are provided for.

1845
Resigns from the government over a grant to the Maynooth RC college, but rejoins in the Corn Law crisis, though losing his parliamentary seat.

1846
The government repealed the protective tariff on corn in response to the Irish famine, but is defeated shortly thereafter on a coercion bill. The Tory party splits between protectionists and Peelites.

1847
Elected MP for Oxford University.

1850/51
Death of his daughter Catherine (Jessy), of Robert Peel, of his father.

1852–55: Aberdeen's Peelite/Whig/Liberal Coalition

1852 16 December
Gladstone vigorously attacks Disraeli's budget, bringing down the Derby Government. Aberdeen appoints Gladstone Chancellor of the Exchequer – reorganises the indirect tax system by maintaining the supposedly temporary income tax, reforms Civil Service.

1854 28 March
Outbreak of Crimean War against Russia in support of Turkey.

1855
30 January, Aberdeen resigns over the conduct of the war. Palmerston becomes premier. Gladstone resigns on 22 February.

1859–65: Palmerston's Government

1859 6 June
'Formation' of the Liberal Party in Willis' Rooms. Agreement reached to bring down Derby. Palmerston becomes premier on 12 June and appoints Gladstone Chancellor of the Exchequer – raises income tax from 3d to 9d in his first budget.

1860
Cobden agrees a commercial treaty with France, and in the ensuing budget Gladstone greatly strengthens free trade and enhances his reputation.

1861
Gladstone introduces the Post Office Savings Bank Bill and consolidates all the annual financial legislation into the udget to ensure the abolition of the excise duty on paper in the face of opposition from the Lords.

1865
Gladstone defeated at Oxford University, but 'unmuzzled' he is elected for South Lancashsire.

1865-66: Russell's Government

Russell succeeds on the death of Palmerston. Government defeated over Reform Bill through splits in Liberal Party, and resigns on 26 June 1866. Derby becomes the new premier of a minority Tory government

and Disraeli introduces a new Reform bill which, thanks to skilful manoeuvering, becomes the second Reform Act in 1867. On Derby's death Disraeli becomes Prime Minister. By 1868 Gladstone is able to regain the initiative through a campaign to disestablish the Church of Ireland.

1868-74: Gladstone's First Government

Now MP for Greenwich, Gladstone becomes premier for the first time on 3 December 1868.

1869
Disestablishment of the Church of Ireland.

1870
Irish Land Reform.Elementary Education Act.

1871
Abolition of purchase of army commissions.

1872
Secret ballot introduced.

1874
The government is defeated over Irish University reforms in 1873 but limps on to the 1874 general election where it is defeated by Disraeli, who achieves a Conservative majority for the first time since the 1841 general election.

1875 13 January
Retires from Leadership of the Liberal Party, succeeded by Hartington in the Commons and Granville in the Lords.

1876 6 September
Re-entry into politics with publication of *The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*.

1879 25 November
The First Midlothian Campaign – a new style of popular electioneering.

1880-85: Gladstone's Second Government

Elected for Midlothian, Gladstone becomes prime minister for the second time on 23 April 1880 and combines the office with the Exchequer. An unhappy government, most of whose members threaten resignation at one time or another, its time is largely taken up with:

- Irish land reforms and attempts to suppress rural violence against a background of obstruction of the House of Commons by Irish Home Rule MPs. Obstruction is reluctantly overcome by the now familiar guillotine.
- The Bradlaugh affair, where the MP for Northampton is refused his seat as an atheist and efforts to introduce an affirmation bill fail.
- Third Reform Act of 1884, which brings household suffrage to the counties as well as the boroughs. In debates Gladstone opposes votes for women,
- The Egyptian and Sudanese crises (General Gordon is killed at Khartoum in the Sudan on 26 January 1885, just before a relief force arrives).

1881 19 April
Disraeli dies.

1885 9 June
The government resigns after Tories and Irish defeat the budget. Salisbury forms the new government.

1886: Gladstone's Third Government

1885 November
A general election produces a hung Parliament: Liberals 333, Tories 251, Irish Home Rulers 86.

1886
27 January Irish and Liberals combine to defeat the Salisbury government on an amendment to the Queen's Speech calling for allotments for agricultural labourers ('Three Acres and a Cow'). Hartington refuses to join the government and Chamberlain resigns on 26 March over plans for Home Rule. Home Rule Bill introduced 8 April. Defeated on Second Reading (6 June) by thirty votes. Liberals, split into Gladstonian and Unionist groups, are beaten by the Conservatives in the resulting general election. 20 July Gladstone resigns.

1889 25 July
Celebrates Golden Wedding Anniversary in London.

1891 2 October
Newcastle Programme – a party, not prime ministerial, manifesto.

1892–94: Gladstone's Fourth Government

1892 July
Liberals win general election but with a smaller majority than hoped following splits among Irish MPs after Parnell's divorce. 15 August Gladstone forms fourth government.

1893
13 February Home Rule Bill introduced in Commons and passes Commons stages but defeated in Lords on 8 September.

1894
Gladstone refuses to accept increase in naval expenditure and resigns on 2 March; replaced as Prime Minister by Rosebery. Gladstone remains an MP until the general election of July 1895, which sees heavy Liberal defeat.

1898 19 May
Death of Mr Gladstone at Hawarden from cancer . Buried in Westminster Abbey.

Bibliography

Gladstone: Further Reading

Compiled by Tony Little

The following very brief list is merely a starting point. Most of the works listed have their own much more extensive bibliographies for the serious student.

Published sources

The Gladstone Diaries: 14 vols: Edited by M. R. D. Foot & H. C. G. Matthew.
Detailed abbreviated daily doings. The skeleton on which Gladstone studies now hang, but not an easy read as they were intended as a personal introspection and ready reference of time spent.

The Political Correspondence of Mr. Gladstone & Ld. Granville: 4 vols.: Ed. A. Ramm.
Granville was Gladstone's closest political confidant and friend.

The Prime Minister's Papers: W. E. Gladstone: 4 vols.: Ed. J. Brooke & M. Sorenson.
Memos, mostly autobiographical, kept by Gladstone, for the record.

Gladstone's Speeches: Ed. A. Tilney Bassett.
14 key speeches covering 535 pages plus an 84-page list of all the major speeches!

Midlothian Speeches: W. E. Gladstone Ed. M. R. D. Foot.
A reprint of the key speeches of 1879.

The Red Earl, The Papers of the 5th Earl Spencer 1835–1910: 2 vols.: Ed. P. Gordon.
Princess Diana's ancestor was a Gladstonian Cabinet Minister; an insider's view.

The Diary of Edward Walter Hamilton (3 Vols): Ed D. Bahlman.
One of Gladstone's secretaries and later senior Treasury official. The view of another insider, blurring the line between politics, the civil service and friendship.

Background

Nineteenth Century Britain: A. Wood.
A standard 'A' level textbook.

Politics Without Democracy: M. Bentley.
Inexpensive paperback which gives a brisk survey of the period with added perspective.

The Palliser Novels: 6 vols.: A. Trollope
Capture the mood, mores and something of the principal personalities.

The Crisis of Imperialism 1865–1915: R. Shannon.
Thought-provoking, poses the problems faced by successive governments and their answers to them.

The Optimists, Themes and Personalities in Victorian Politics: I. Bradley.
How the sometimes contradictory ideas which make up Liberal politics came together.

The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain: Jonathan Parry.
How the system worked in its prime.

Biography

Gladstone: R. Jenkins
Very readable but somewhat headmasterly approach by our former leader in the Lords. Draws heavily on the diaries and Matthew but with the insight of a practising senior minister.

Gladstone 1809–1898: H. C. G. Matthew.
Matthew has collected together the introductions to the diaries to form what is probably the best modern biography. Although the opening section dwells heavily on the inescapable religious aspects, do not be deterred.

Life of Gladstone: 2/3 vols (depending on edition): J. Morley.
Still the unreplaced classic, but a monument which lacks the personal insights and 'warts' expected of a modern life.

Gladstone 1809–1865: R. Shannon.
A competitor to Matthew on the early career. Long and detailed but not without humour. Volume 2 may be with us by the end of the year.

Disraeli: R. Blake.
Gladstone's chief competitor and antithesis. Infinitely preferable to the gossipy newer biography by S. Weintraub.

Robert Peel: 2 vols.: N. Gash.
Peel was Gladstone's first ministerial employer and the mentor who inspired the rest of his career.

Politics

McCalmont's Parliamentary Poll Book 1832–1918: Ed. J. Vincent & M. Stenton.
The election results for every parliamentary constituency over the period, the psephologist's delight.

British Parliamentary Election Results: F. W. S. Craig (several vols).
The modern work of reference, more accessible than McCalmont but not subtle enough on party labels in the Gladstonian period.

Elections and Party Management: H. J. Hanham.
Political organisation and campaigning in the good old days before central organisation and *Focus*.

A Diary of Two Parliaments: 2 vols.: H. W. Lucy.
The *Punch* sketchwriter views the party combat; naturally stronger on

concluded on page 52

A Liberal Democrat History Group Fringe Meeting

No More Heroes Any More?

What have Liberal Democrats today to learn from Liberal heroes of the past? Who contributed most to the development of the party and of Liberalism? What common themes bind us together?
Three speakers offer their choices:

Bill Rodgers (Lord Rodgers of Quarry Bank), one of the SDP's 'Gang of Four' and leader of the Liberal Democrat peers;

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Professor Ben Pimlott, Warden of Goldsmiths College and author of biographies of Harold Wilson and the Queen;

Chair: **Graham Tope** (Lord Tope of Cheam).

The meeting marks the launch of the Liberal Democrat History Group's major new publication, the **Dictionary of Liberal Biography**.

8.15pm, Sunday 20 September
Osborne Suite, Metropole Hotel, Brighton.

Bibliography

continued from page 51

personalities than issues. Other works by Lucy well worth sampling.

The Literary Companion to Parliament: Ed. C. Silvester.

A selection of articles, extracts and sketches covering the whole history of parliament – well worth enjoying in its own right. It has a chapter on Gladstone and is more easily obtained than Lucy.

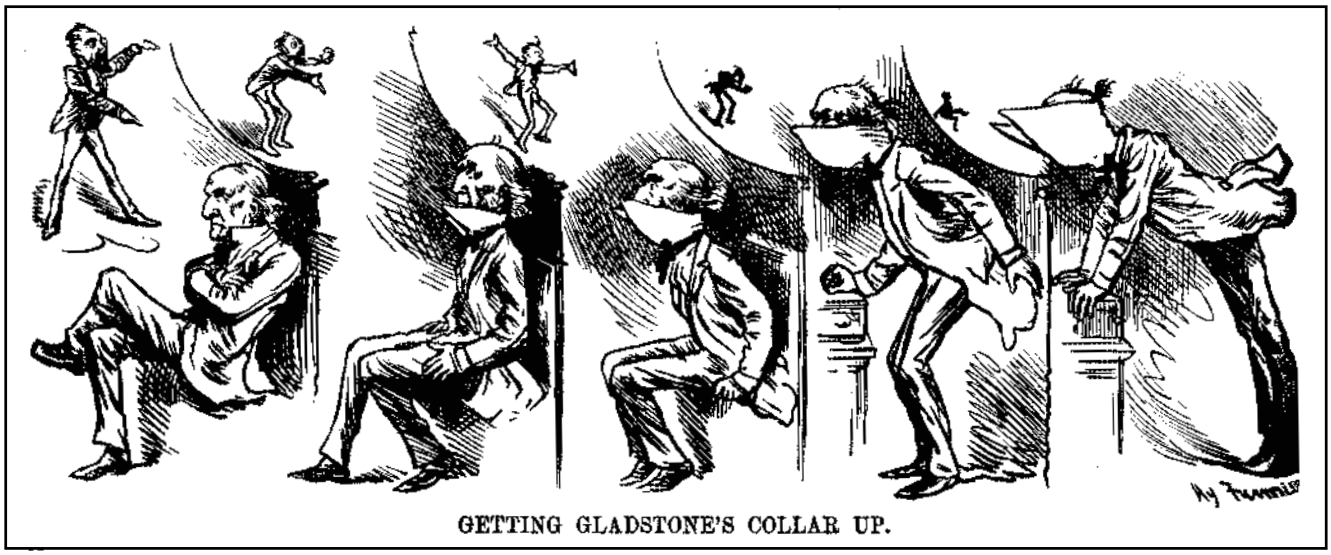
Gladstone and Britain's Imperial Role

continued from page 35

Isles, 1865–1931 *(CUP, 1996), and author of* Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860–80, *(CUP, 1992).*

Notes

1. I have further developed this analysis in my article 'Exporting "Western & Beneficial Institutions": Gladstone and Empire, 1880–85', in D. Bebbington and R. Swift (eds.), *Gladstone Centenary Essays* (Liverpool University Press, 1999).
2. Cit. in J. Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone* (1903), vol. 1, pp. 363–64.
3. See O. Ralph, *Naoroji: The First Asian MP* (1997), p. 92 ff.
4. H. C. G. Matthew, 'Introduction' to *Gladstone Diaries* (1990), vol. 10, p. xc.
5. W. E. Gladstone, *Midlothian Speeches 1879*, with an introduction by M. R. D. Foot (1971), pp. 123, 129.
6. D. Schreuder, 'The making of Mr Gladstone's posthumous career: the role of Morley and Knaplund as "Monumental Masons"', 1903–27', in B. L. Kinzer (ed.), *The Gladstonian Turn of Mind* (1985), p. 230.
7. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj: The New Cambridge History of India* (1995), III.4, p. 54.
8. For interesting parallels between Jamaica and Ireland in terms of ethnic conflict and the problems involved in granting self-government, see Gordon to Gladstone, 21 January 1882, *ibid.*, p. 84. For the general methodological and historical context see C. A. Bayly's masterly *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780–1830* (1989).



GETTING GLADSTONE'S COLLAR UP.