

Collecting Political Cigarette Cards

Graem Peters describes an unusual form of political activism.

Almost all political cigarette cards were produced between 1900 and 1930; after 1930, very little exists of any interest. Virtually every single cigarette card printed is known and its existence recorded in catalogues. They usually formed part of a particular named set; there are only a few sets of politicians, but the better known politicians frequently appeared in 'general interest' sets.

Of the political sets, the first and perhaps the best to appear was issued by Ogden's under their 'Guinea Gold' brand in 1900. These are relatively small for cigarette cards. They have a black and white glossy photograph of the politician on the front, with nothing on the back; the name is typed at the foot of the photo, noting his constituency, if an MP. There are sixty politicians in this set, known in the catalogue as 'Politicians Base D'. About twenty Liberals feature, including Campbell-Bannerman, Asquith, Rosebery, Herbert Gladstone, Burns, Grey, Fowler, Broadhurst, Sir William Harcourt, Tweedmouth, Kimberley and Labouchere. Many of the cards are quite common, but a number are hard to come across. At £60, the set is remarkably good value; individual cards may be picked up for around £1. Ogden's also produced a number of similar cards as part of general interest sets.

Murray's Cigarettes issued a set of fifty 'Prominent Politicians' in 1906. About half are Liberals, including Campbell-Bannerman, Lloyd George, Asquith, Herbert Gladstone, Lewis Harcourt, Middlebrook, Macnamara, Birrell, Burns, Grey, Haldane, Churchill, Russell, Fowler and Buxton. These are black and white matt photographs of slightly larger than average card size. It is virtually impossible to come across a complete set nowadays, and each card will probably cost about £18. The set was reprinted in 1909 with a slight amendment to the backs of the cards; since six of the original MPs had left the House, six new subjects were

added to replace them. The second set is collectable, though harder to come across than the Ogden's set and thus more expensive, at £120 for the set, with individual cards available at around £2.50.

Carreras issued an attractive set of fifty 'Notable MPs' in 1929. These were full-length coloured caricatures of leading politicians prior to the 1929 general election. Lloyd George, Simon, Runciman, Beauchamp and Macpherson were included, together with several prominent former Liberals such as Wedgwood Benn, Hilton Young, Wedgwood and Churchill. The backs of the cards contain a potted biography. Two different sizes of card exist, standard and extra wide. Both sets are fairly common and reasonably priced, at about £40 for the set and around £1 for each card.

R. & J. Hill produced a set of thirty cards entitled 'Our Empire' in 1930. This set featured a handful of royals, members of the Labour Cabinet, and the premiers from the leading Empire countries. The backs of the cards contain a potted biography on each. As with the Carreras 'Notable MPs', the cards came in two sizes. Pictorially, the set is not particularly attractive; the sepia matt photographs have been over-edited, and do not look very natural. The set, at £10, is very cheap and relatively common.

A better set of Labour politicians was produced by Godfrey Phillips, entitled 'The

Lloyd George in 1906





Balfour in 1900

members of the first Labour Government. The backs of the cards contain a potted biography. These are quite rare and, at £50 for the set, a bit pricey.

1924 Cabinet'. This is a set of twenty-five black and white photographs of the

Finally, Carreras produced a set of twenty-seven British Prime Ministers in 1928. This is a set of glossy black and white portraits of the more significant PMs since Walpole, up to Ramsay Macdonald. The backs of the cards contain a potted biography — a visually attractive set which is reasonably priced at £40, though hard to come across.

There are other sets which contain politicians in reasonable numbers: Ardath, 'Empire Personalities'; Ardath, 'Famous Scots'; Adkin 'Notabilities'; Hignett, 'Modern Statesmen'; Wills, 'Vanity Fair Series'; Imperial Tobacco Company of Canada, 'Notabilities 1917'; Ogden's, 'Gen-

eral Interest 1900'; and John Player, 'Straight Line Caricatures'.

Often antiques fairs will include a dealer in cigarette cards. Better still are collectors' fairs at which a number of cigarette card dealers will be present alongside dealers in stamps, postcards etc. Cigarette card collectors' clubs will occasionally organise cigarette card fairs. Collections can be held in special loose-leaf albums; some collectors will chose to have their sets specially framed, and hang them on the wall. Their value will increase over time.

Graem Peters is a member of the Liberal Democrat History Group.

Research in Progress

This column aims to assist research projects in progress. If you can help any of the individuals listed below with sources, contacts, or any other helpful information – or if you know anyone who can – please pass on details to them. If you know of any other research project in progress for inclusion in this column, please send details to the Editor at the address on page 2.

The party agent and English electoral culture, c.1880 – c.1906. The development of political agency as a profession, the role of the election agent in managing election campaigns during this period, and the changing nature of elections, as increased use was made of the press and the platform. *Kathryn Rix, Christ's College, Cambridge, CB2 2BU; awr@bcs.org.uk.*

Liberal policy towards Austria-Hungary, 1905–16. *Andrew Gardner, 22 Birdbrook House, Popham Road, Islington, London N1 8TA; agardner@ssees.ac.uk.*

The Hon H. G. Beaumont (MP for Eastbourne 1906–10). Any information welcome, particularly on his political views (he stood as a Radical). *Tim Beaumont, 40 Elms Road, London SW4 9EX.*

Defections of north-east Liberals to the Conservatives, c.1906–1935. Aims to suggest reasons for defections of individuals and develop an understanding of changes in electoral alignment. Sources include personal papers and newspapers; suggestions about how to get hold of the papers of more obscure Liberal defectors welcome. *Nick Cott, 1a Henry Street, Gosforth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE3 1DQ; N.M.Cott@newcastle.ac.uk.*

Liberals and the local government of London 1919–39. *Chris Fox, 173 Worplesdon Road, Guildford GU2 6XD; christopher.fox7@virgin.net.*

Crouch End or Hornsey Liberal Association or Young Liberals in the 1920s and 1930s; especially any details of James Gleeson or Patrick Moir, who are believed to be Chairman. *Tony Marriott, Flat A, 13 Coleridge Road, Crouch End, London N8 8EH.*

The Liberal Party and foreign and defence policy, 1922–88; of particular interest is the 1920s and '30s, and the possibility of interviewing anyone involved in formulating party foreign and defence policies. *Dr R. S. Grayson, 8 Cheltenham Avenue, Twickenham TW1 3HD.*

Archibald Sinclair and the Liberal Party 1935–45. Sources, particularly for Sinclair's Air Ministry period (1940–45), the reorganisation of the party in 1936 and the 1945 election, needed. *Ian Hunter, 9 Defoe Avenue, Kew, London TW9 4DL; Ian_Hunter@ATKEARNEY.com.*

The Liberal Party 1945–56. Contact with members (or opponents) of the Radical Reform Group during the 1950s, and anyone with recollections of the leadership of Clement Davies, sought. *Graham Lippiatt, 24 Balmoral Road, South Harrow, HA2 8TD.*

The grassroots organisation of the Liberal Party 1945–64; the role of local activists in the late 1950s revival of the Liberal Party. *Mark Egan, 42 Richmond Road, Gillingham, Kent ME7 1LN.*

The Unservile State Group, 1953–1970s. *Dr Peter Barberis, 24 Lime Avenue, Flixton, Manchester M41 5DE.*

The Young Liberal Movement 1959–1985; including in particular relations with the leadership, and between NLYL and ULS. *Carrie Park, 89 Coombe Lane, Bristol BS9 2AR; clp25@hermes.cam.ac.uk.*

The political and electoral strategy of the Liberal Party 1970–79. Individual constituency papers, and contact with members of the Party's policy committees and/or the Party Council, particularly welcome. *Ruth Fox, 7 Mulberry Court, Bishop's Stortford, Herts CM23 3JW.*