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HISTORY



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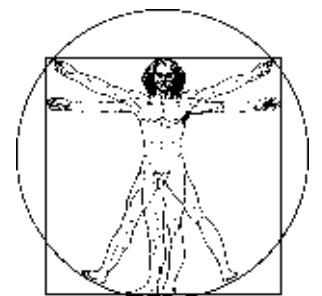
Harcourt 'Crinks' Johnstone Biography

Neil Stockley

1974 Remembered Meeting report

J. Graham Jones

Liberal Party Archives at the National Library of Wales



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The front cover cartoon shows Gladstone 'strangling the monster' of anarchy, terrorism and sedition in Ireland (*Punch*, 5 February 1881). See Matthew Roberts' article, pages 3–10.

Enclosed with this mailing are two free publications of interest to *Journal* readers: an article on the **Scottish coalition agreement** of 1999, provided by its author, Philip Goldenberg; and an **introductory reading list on Liberal history**, prepared by the History Group. We hope you enjoy them both.

Gladstone and Ireland

Gladstone tried repeatedly to resolve the problem of Ireland. **Matthew Roberts** argues that his efforts were doomed to failure because of his own prejudices and preconceptions.

Gladstone and the Irish Question

Writing to Lord Tennyson during the electrically charged atmosphere of April 1886, Gladstone indignantly commented that ‘for forty-two at least out of the fifty-four years of my public life, Ireland has had a rather dominant influence over it. Which is those of my opponents that has had occasion to study it as resolutely & for the same time?’¹ With comments such as this it is easy to see why some historians have seen Gladstone as ‘a crusader for the cause of the redress of Irish grievances.’² After receiving the Queen’s letter inviting him to form a government in December 1868, Gladstone declared that his mission was to pacify Ireland. But what are we to make of this famous declaration? Was this tantamount to a rejection of his previous stance, in which he had so arrestingly defended the Act of Union between Britain and Ireland? Did this mark a new beginning in Gladstone’s thinking towards Ireland? In short, does Gladstone’s relationship with Ireland after 1868 justify the notion of a special liberating mission? This article seeks to question that assumption, suggesting that there were powerful strands of continuity in Gladstone’s thinking towards Ireland.

Insofar as having a consistent objective throughout his political career, Gladstone worked for the closer integration of Ireland into the United Kingdom. Above all, this article is concerned with the extent to which Gladstone’s initiatives towards Ireland were self-undermining in the years when his second and third governments were forced to respond to the rising power of Parnell, and the Catholic and agrarian nationalist forces that he headed. It will be argued that Gladstone’s interpretation of Irish problems was grounded in his social conservatism and that his constant efforts to export this into Ireland, epitomised by his constant and ill-suited desire for

the Irish landed class to play a leading role in Irish society, undermined his higher objective of strengthening the link between Ireland and Britain.

Gladstone the unionist

Standing before an audience at Southport in 1867, Gladstone said that his ultimate objective towards Ireland was ‘that end of which I never despair – viz. of redeeming the reproach of total incapacity to assimilate to ourselves an island within three hours of our shores.’³ In this respect, Gladstone’s thinking towards Ireland had not changed and was consistent with the Unionist stance of his earlier political years. In his younger years, he certainly appeared as a Unionist *par excellence* in his book – *The State in its Relations with the Church* (1838) – that so ardently defended the established (Anglican) Church of Ireland, which represented only some ten percent of the population. Similarly, in 1853, Gladstone, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, extended income tax to Ireland. By providing a unified scheme of taxation for the three kingdoms Gladstone can be seen as attempting to consolidate the Act of Union. The actions of his first government further confirm his Unionist stance. He was no longer convinced that the Established Church fortified the Union; in fact, he had come to believe that it worked against it. Thus, somewhat paradoxically, his disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in 1869 ultimately sprang from conservative intentions. Equally, his Land Act of 1870 was designed to reduce the enmity between the landlord and the tenant. The events of the year 1868, therefore, did not constitute a *volte face* in Gladstone’s thinking towards Ireland. His desire to strengthen the link between the two countries had not changed, and the only difference after 1868 was



'Waiting for the landlord', by Charles Keene, *Punch*, 1878. 'Sure, Tirince, I hope the ould gintleman hasn't mit wid an accidnt!!!'

that he aimed to show that Ireland could be pacified by reform from Westminster, whether that be disestablishment in 1869 or the Home Rule Bill in 1886. The rationale behind such thinking was the assumption that once Irish grievances had been redressed, the animosity that Ireland had once felt would dissipate and the country would be reconciled to the Union.

However, one should not elevate this thread of consistency to a level which views the work of Gladstone's second and third governments as representing the logical conclusion to that of his first. Indeed, Gladstone not merely regarded *his* work towards Ireland as complete during the mid to late 1870s, but he was convinced that Ireland's main grievances had been resolved. As he told the Birmingham Liberal Association in June 1877, '... what has been done for Ireland will have its fruits, and the little inconveniences and secondary evils of which we may now, perhaps, complain ... will pass away.'⁴ The work of Professor Matthew has succeeded in throwing more cold water on the notion that Gladstone had a special mission with regard to Ireland. He has argued that Gladstone sincerely sought retirement and had taken steps in 1875 to that end by resigning the leadership of the Liberal Party, declining public occasions and minimising his presence in London. Since he had retired, in the years after 1875 Gladstone's return to political life had to be temporary and justi-

fied by 'exceptional circumstances', and as such, 'made the self-admission of ambition in any usual sense impossible.'⁵ Thus, it cannot be argued that Gladstone somehow perceived his work towards Ireland as incomplete. Whilst it was not long before Gladstone re-entered the political arena, it was the exceptional circumstances created by the evils of Lord Beaconsfield's foreign policy that drew him back into politics. Ireland could not have been further from his mind, even when he resumed office in April 1880.

However, the fact that Gladstone had washed his hands of Ireland during the 1870s by no means constitutes the greatest argument against the notion that he possessed a special liberating mission. For when Gladstone was forced to turn his attention back towards Ireland in the 1880s it could be argued that his attitudes and actions were counter-productive. This was primarily the consequence of his strict adherence to a socially conservative outlook. It is to a discussion of his social conservatism that we must now turn.

Gladstone the social conservative

Gladstone had a highly articulated view of society – especially rural society – and how it was to be ordered. For him, society was and should be deferential, with the upper class taking the lead

through their acceptance of public duty and social responsibility on behalf of the whole community. In turn, this justified their privileges and ensured the deference of the lower orders to their social superiors, thus producing social harmony. With regard to rural society, Gladstone, along with the majority of Liberals, and especially the Whig landlords, was loath to interfere in the landlord-tenant relationship, believing that the symbiosis of the two classes was fundamental to the perpetuation of social harmony. It was therefore most important to preserve the sanctity of contract that governed landed relations between the two parties if that symbiosis was to be maintained. In short, for Gladstone, the aristocracy provided society's natural leaders locally and nationally: if social harmony was to be preserved, he believed that this interdependent relationship between the ruling class and the lower orders had to be maintained at all costs. As far as he was concerned, this was no less true of Ireland than of mainland Britain.⁶

Unfortunately, in reality Ireland was different. What Gladstone refused to accept as final was that the upper classes in Ireland were no longer in a position to play the role that he would have them play. As Allen Warren has argued: 'While historians may take a more tolerant view of the ascendancy⁷ after the Famine than they did formerly, it is nevertheless clear that by the 1880s their authority was being undermined by an increasingly articulate, assertive and Catholic subculture ...'⁸

The work of the late William Feingold on the boards of guardians has confirmed this. These boards were established in Ireland under the Poor Relief Act of 1838 and along with the municipal and town authorities, they were the only part of the Irish administration that contained elected elements. Therefore, a large part of the tenant farming class had the right to vote as ratepayers in elections to the boards, while the more substantial of the class had the right actually to sit as guardians. The important point is that despite the fact that the boards were still weighted in favour of the landlords, as Emmet Larkin concedes, 'the tenants had the means, if they had the will, to oust the

landlords from power.⁹ By the 1870s the tenants were no longer interested in cooperating with the landlords on the boards. With the exception of Ulster, control very quickly passed to the tenants. Ultimately, what the boards represented was a microcosm of the changes that were happening throughout Irish society. In this sense the land war of 1879–81, the result of an acute agrarian crisis, merely acted as a catalyst in the transfer of power to the tenants at the expense of the landlords.

Feingold argued that this process had begun in the early 1870s and was completed by 1886. Thus, the power of the landlords, which had rested on the deference of the tenants, had by 1886, again excepting Ulster, evaporated.¹⁰ In spite of Samuel Clark's attempts to portray Irish agrarian society with a more complex and nuanced structure, with different classes having different interests, even he is forced to conclude that 'in the post-famine period the stage was occupied almost entirely by collective conflict between independent landholders and the land-owning class.'¹¹ Similarly, whilst Mark Bence-Jones is surely correct to remind us that there were 'plenty of good landlords', even amongst the absentee ones like Viscount Middleton, he is also forced to admit that 'Irish landlords by the 1870s had come to be regarded as hard-hearted evictors and rack-renters', and that 'relations between landlords and tenants were never quite the same' after 1880.¹²

The extent to which this was actually true is irrelevant. The important point is that this was how many landlords were being *perceived*, thanks to nationalist propaganda. The Irish Nationalists worked to exploit and deepen the rift in Irish society between the landlord and tenant by portraying Irish landlords as exploitative foreigners who had come across from England and expropriated the land and enserfed the Irish people. Religious divisions were also capitalised upon by the nationalists as they portrayed the landlords not merely as foreign, but also as Protestant, thus serving to exacerbate the divisions in Irish society since the majority of tenants, outside Ulster, were largely Catholic.

But how are we to account for the persistence of Gladstone's social conservatism, especially when it seemed to be so inappropriate? Did he simply not understand the Irish question? Or did he lack information about real conditions in Ireland? Alternatively, are we to believe that he did have the necessary information, and that he understood conditions in Ireland only too well, but vainly hoped to change them by his various schemes? It will be argued that it is this last interpretation which presents itself most convincingly. When circumstances forced Gladstone to respond to the situation in Ireland in the years 1880 to 1886, he sought to counteract the trends in Irish society by attempting to buttress the waning power of the upper class in Ireland. This will be illustrated with reference to the problem of law and order, his reluctance to interfere with landlord-tenant relations, epitomised by his aversion to extensive schemes of peasant purchase and his attempts to deflect that very issue with the need for Irish local government.

When Gladstone's second government was eventually forced to respond to the lawlessness of the Irish countryside, as a consequence of the acute agrarian crisis, it was Gladstone who offered the most sustained resistance to the demands of his Irish Secretary, W. E. Forster, for the suspension of habeas corpus. At first glance, it certainly

seemed that a progressive Gladstone was restraining a repressive Forster, since his Chief Secretary was willing to sacrifice the liberty of all Irish subjects to achieve his ends. Gladstone indeed spoke out against this. By such actions he placed himself at the head of the radical resistance, who could be expected to be hostile to such an infringement of civil liberties. However, Gladstone's apparent 'radicalism' was a mirage. Ultimately, his objections stemmed from his social conservatism. In his view, it was not the job of the government in London or Dublin to be overly involved in maintaining law and order. He thought Ireland had too many policemen already, and they were proving far too costly.¹³ It was ultimately the responsibility of the communities themselves, with the landed classes leading the way. Thus, Gladstone could write to Forster, on 9 December 1880, that 'it is difficult to feel much admiration for those landlords whose Resolutions you sent me ... surely they ought to have gone beyond the scope of mere complaint.'¹⁴

Unfortunately, this was a forlorn hope given the position of the landed elite in Ireland. Whilst Gladstone eventually acquiesced to Forster's demand at the end of December 1880 – even the radicals had accepted, by 25 November, that coercion was inevitable – as Warren comments, this had more to do with him being isolated 'in his own cabinet,

Armed constabulary at Lisselane, the home of William Bence-Jones in West Cork, during the Land War (*Illustrated London News*). Bence-Jones was supposedly an 'improving landlord'.



but also through him not being prepared to articulate fully an alternative coercion policy ...¹⁵ This is merely further confirmation of Gladstone's refusal to face up to the prevailing conditions in Ireland: he did not need, as far as he was concerned, to articulate an alternative plan since it was not really the government's job to do so. That he still clung to this view is evident by the fact that even a year later he was still hoping for a landlord counter-attack. It is remarkable that he did not realise that even if this was realisable it would merely have added fuel to the flames of discontent – indeed it would have been the worst type of coercion possible. Any argument that Gladstone lacked sufficient information about the position of the landlords cannot be entertained. As we have seen, he had been presented with resolutions from some of the landlords themselves, yet he was still hoping, somewhat foolishly, that the landlords would reassert themselves.

The problem of land

Gladstone's social conservatism was revealed with even more zeal over the question of land. Whether one looks at the debates in the last months of 1880 or the eventual land purchase bill that accompanied his Home Rule Bill in 1886, he was most reluctant to interfere with the landlord-tenant relationship, refusing to countenance any

scheme that threatened the power of the landlord. He proved to be even more difficult over land in 1880–81 than over coercion. Gladstone was adamant that any land reform had to be 'on the lines & basis of the [1870] Land Act' and 'give to the Irish occupier an *increased* security of tenure' as opposed to *fixity* of tenure – one of the dreaded 'three Fs', the other two being fair rent and the right of free sale.¹⁶ This would have removed the landlord's ultimate right to dispose of his property as he saw fit, converting the landlords into mere 'incumbrances', thereby challenging Gladstone's sacred principles of social harmony; consequently he looked upon this with 'considerable apprehension'.¹⁷

Initially therefore, he had supported the Longfield proposal – a complicated compensation mechanism where the landlord or the tenant would pay a financial penalty to the other if either made an unreasonable demand over rent. It is not surprising that Gladstone preferred this and similar plans since they involved no direct interference with landlord-tenant relations and above all, were designed to bring about cooperation between the two parties. Once again, this failed to take account of the realities of the Irish countryside, which was hardly conducive to the success of half-hearted, highly complex intellectual schemes that only provided compen-

sation for tenants *if* evicted rather than protection *from* eviction.

Despite this, Gladstone was reluctant to move away from such schemes, even though the interim reports from the government's own Bessborough Commission (established at the end of 1880 to investigate the Irish land problem) suggested that complicated measures like the Longfield proposal would be ineffective.¹⁸ This is clear evidence of Gladstone's failure to deviate from an inappropriate course of action in spite of contrary evidence. Even when he had accepted that some form of tenurial reform was necessary he would not compromise his principles. In the preparation period of the Land Bill in 1881, he virtually hijacked the process and could therefore present to the cabinet on 5 March his 'limiting conditions ... not to transfer the kernel of the property to the tenant from the landlord', while the bill was 'to leave open the way for an eventual return to free contract.' Above all, the bill should not compel 'people to things on the passing of the Act, but only empowering them.'¹⁹ Thus, he refused to enshrine the three Fs in the bill – despite being presented with overwhelming evidence arguing for their incorporation. He remained implacably opposed to the concept of fixity of tenure and so it was not mentioned in the final bill.

Gladstone also refused to extend the bill to include those in arrears and leaseholders – arguably the most needy – on the grounds that it would have represented an unwarranted interference by the state with specific arrangements and obligations enacted between the landlord and tenant or leaseholder.²⁰ While Gladstone could hide behind the argument that the House of Lords would have been implacably opposed to the Land Bill if it had been more radical, at the same time it cannot be denied that he had allowed his outdated principles to dictate the final form that the bill would take, in spite of overwhelming contrary evidence: Forster's analysis of the Irish situation, based on the numerous reports and correspondence that he had received (many of which were from landlords), convinced him that nothing short of the 'three Fs' would suffice. Gladstone

'The burning of the Duke of Leinster's leases in Kildare' (*Illustrated London News*, 8 January 1881)



himself was forced to concede that 'evidence comes in, rather more than expected, of a desire for a measure such as the brewers call treble X.'²¹

To that end, it could be said that the Land Act of 1881 was conservative in the sense that it was designed to prop up the waning power of the landed classes in Ireland. It was this consideration that made Gladstone hostile to large-scale land purchase schemes enabling tenants to buy their land. In his eyes this would not merely have interfered with landlord rights; rather it would have ousted the traditional landlord class once and for all, thereby preventing the upper classes from playing their crucial role in his deferential model of society. When the Bessborough Commission seemed to be going in the direction of purchase, Gladstone thought it 'alarming' and believed the Commissioners to be 'going rather far in the use of their powers.'²² Here again, we see Gladstone's obstinacy in the face of evidence and opinions that were contrary to his own. He believed it was important to keep the conversion of tenants into owners to a minimum: hence his insistence on the tenant advancing a considerable sum himself under the purchase clauses of both the 1870 and 1881 Land Acts. The 1881 Act created only 733 owners in the years 1881–85. This consideration was to underpin all Gladstone's attitudes and actions towards Ireland henceforth. Indeed, the years 1882–86 revealed him to be not merely conservative, but even reactionary; he increasingly deployed Machiavellian tactics to stave off the land purchase schemes which were increasingly coming to the fore not only in his own party, but also amongst the Tories and the Parnellites.

It could be plausibly argued that Gladstone's aversion to purchase seriously retarded a potentially effective solution of Irish problems. While Gladstone was certainly not alone in his attitude towards purchase – some Whigs and radicals were equally unenthusiastic – it could be argued that land purchase was much less problematic than the 'three Fs'. Notwithstanding the general distrust of the Parnellites, and doubts concerning the ability of

the Irish to repay loans that would be advanced for schemes of peasant land purchase, many of the Whigs were in favour of 'an emergency relief bill to enable Irish tenants to fulfil their contractual obligations' in the short term. As for the long term, they advocated a land purchase scheme.²³ In this sense, the supposedly reactionary Whigs were in advance of Gladstone, as their endorsement of a scheme of land purchase was tantamount to an acceptance that the landed class were no longer in a position to play a leading role in Irish society, and also that this state of affairs was largely irreversible – a fact that Gladstone would not accept. This is not to suggest that an extensive purchase scheme would have resolved all of Ireland's grievances. Nevertheless, a generous scheme of peasant purchase, against the background of a relief measure, would almost certainly have been more effective than Gladstone's limited Land Act, since it would have recognised, and indeed assisted, irreversible changes that were under way in Irish society. It would certainly have taken the wind out of the Land League's sails. (The Land League had been established in 1879 to maintain the momentum of the agrarian unrest and direct it towards nationalist ends.) Of course, Gladstone could offer that timeless excuse against such initiatives: it would simply have cost too much. As Lord Derby commented, 'he is more moderate in his proposals than even the moderate section of the cabinet.'²⁴



'The Grand Old Magician's Irish Policy' (*Illustrated London News* 24 April 1886)

That such schemes were attractive to Parnell and his group in the House of Commons is evident by Gladstone's manoeuvres in 1882. When the Land Act's deficiencies became all too evident, the Conservatives aimed to capitalise on the Act's weaknesses by evolving schemes of land purchase, which, as Gladstone realised, had the very real potential of drawing the Parnellites into the Tory camp. Gladstone therefore tried to drive a wedge between the Conservatives and the Parnellites. It was in this context that the so-called 'Kilmainham negotiations' resulted. Masterminded by Joseph Chamberlain and Captain O'Shea (Parnell's go-between), Parnell's desire to leave prison and work for a settlement of the arrears question provided a 'golden moment' for Gladstone: their proposal to amend the Land Act showed that they were willing to work *with* rather than *against* the government. By secretly endorsing the negotiations, this enabled Gladstone to avert the possibility of land purchase,



Fighting the Land League monster

and end the convergence of the Conservatives and the Parnellites.²⁵ More importantly, the episode revealed the extent to which Gladstone was willing to go in order to avoid the introduction of measures for Ireland that contravened his principles: he was quite prepared to settle the arrears question by a gift, rather than a loan, thereby perpetuating sanctity of contract, but he was not prepared to loan large sums of money for peasant purchase.

Another diversionary tactic used by Gladstone to avoid the issue of land purchase was his insistence on the primacy of establishing local government in Ireland. Even though there was a considerable body of opinion advocating large schemes of peasant purchase – in and out of the Liberal Party – Gladstone could not see his way to such large schemes until local government had been established. He certainly had no desire to make the British government the largest landowner in Ireland; this could have soured relations beyond recognition, especially in times of economic hardship when tenants would have found it impossible to repay government loans. Moreover, Gladstone argued that such schemes would not work unless local bodies had been es-

tablished, which in turn could coordinate and manage purchase schemes. Hence Gladstone could say: '[Lord] Cavendish has framed a plan of finance for the purchase clauses ... But he has no body to place between the purchasing tenant & the Treasury.'²⁶ Therefore, Gladstone argued that local bodies would, in effect act as a guarantor for the English money lent for purchase.²⁷ In the absence of such bodies, he did not see how the Irish tenant could 'be safely accepted as a debtor on a large scale to the Imperial Treasury.'²⁸

Once again, Gladstone could hide behind the offer of local government tomorrow to keep the Parnellites loyal, while staving off purchase *before* local government was introduced on the grounds that it was too much of a liability. Thus, the prerequisite for any extensive scheme of peasant purchase was the establishment of responsible bodies in Ireland. Gladstone never deviated from this.

More importantly, Gladstone believed that the introduction of local government would train people in matters of public responsibilities at a local level, which he always believed brought out an intrinsic conservatism in people. Local government taught people to:

understand political rights and understand political duty, and, understanding the relations which prevail between right on the one side and duty on the other, they carry with them a talisman which is a safeguard...against those dangers which have threatened ... other great and distinguished nations.²⁹

Thus, Gladstone thought that the 'many questions connected with Irish Land & Public works' which were 'most dangerous', could 'only be rendered innocuous by our having really responsible & rather weighty bodies to deal with.'³⁰ Publicly therefore,

Gladstone could deflect such schemes on the grounds that they were too expensive, whilst in private he was confident that once taught public responsibility, natural conservatism would prevail and 'local communities would be equally cautious about any schemes to abolish landlordism at public expense.'³¹ As will be seen in Gladstone's Home Rule Bill of 1886, devolution, in his mind, offered a perfect opportunity to restore the landlords to their rightful place as society's natural leaders.

Gladstone's continued opposition to land purchase in the years after 1882 adds further credibility to the notion that he was not prepared to sacrifice his principles of social conservatism under any circumstances. By 1883 it was clear that there was still a widespread desire for land purchase. That the National League advocated such schemes is not surprising given that its objective was the annihilation of landlordism; but there was also pressure for purchase within the Liberal Party, especially amongst the radicals. Furthermore, it was still the central plank of Conservative policy, as demonstrated by Lord Hamilton's parliamentary motion to extend purchase. Gladstone revealed that he had not altered his attitude to the purchase question and that he continued to believe that the maintenance of the landlord-tenant relationship was crucial to the future stability of the Irish countryside.³² Moreover, he characteristically put his faith in the previous inadequate legislation; he believed that the Land Act had addressed the Irish land problem in its entirety.³³

Unfortunately for Gladstone, by 1885 the cries for an extensive scheme of land purchase had become substantially louder and Lord Spencer, Irish Viceroy since the Phoenix Park murders in 1882, had also become convinced. Opinion in Ireland was now virtually unanimous in its desire for a large scheme of land purchase. Whilst this is not the place to discuss the complexities of the year 1885 and the events leading up to the downfall of his second ministry and Gladstone's subsequent move towards Home Rule, suffice it to say that in perfect continuity with his objectives in his second government, his social conservatism was at the route of his thinking

with regard to what he was aiming for in Ireland in 1886.

The flaws in the Home Rule attempt

The final part of this article will argue that the Gladstonian assumptions that shaped the final Home Rule legislation, including the land purchase bill, marked the apogee of Gladstone's foolish attempts to try to counter the changes that had taken place in Irish society concerning the upper class. Consequently, the two interconnected bills of 1886 were seriously flawed, and even if they had become law, it is doubtful that they could have satisfied opinion in Ireland. The fundamental weakness of the schemes, as argued, was Gladstone's unyielding desire to restore the Irish upper class to their rightful position, thereby going against the grain in large parts of Ireland.

He was still hostile to large schemes of peasant purchase. As he told Spencer on 23 December 1885:

There is, however, something most grave in the idea of bringing about a wholesale emigration of the resident proprietors and depriving society of those who should be its natural heads and leaders.³⁴

The drafting of a land purchase bill did not constitute a *volte face* on Gladstone's behalf. Essentially, it had been forced upon him by Spencer and Morley, whose support was paramount if Gladstone was to form a viable third ministry and a reconstituted Liberal Party that was not just concerned with the sectional interest of Home Rule. Their condition for support of a Home Rule Bill was the settlement of the land question. On this issue Spencer was clearly in advance of Gladstone and seemed more willing to accept the changes that were prevalent in Irish society, as a letter written on 2 February 1886 illustrates:

I therefore have come to the conclusion that we must try to come to terms with the National Party in Ireland ... It is the only chance of settling Ireland ... It is odious to have to deal with men who have tolerated methods of agitation ... but they are the chosen representatives of Ireland ... *The Landlords must be bought out.* [My italics]³⁵

Gladstone, however, refused to accept this; he 'subscribed to every word' in Spencer's letter except the phrase "bought out"³⁶ That Gladstone was still hoping for the landlord to play an active role in Irish society is further exemplified by his opposition to compelling the tenant to purchase if the landlord chose to sell (the latter had the option). Thus on 13 March 1886 Gladstone prepared the following cabinet memorandum:

Are we bound in honour or policy to do more than give to the landlords of Ireland fair optional terms of withdrawal from their position? Why should we not do this, and having done this, leave the land question to Ireland herself?³⁷

In perfect continuity with his previous arguments over purchase, Gladstone still believed that if it was left to the Irish, once they had been given Home Rule, their intrinsic conservatism would come to the fore and they would want to preserve the position of the landlord.

With relative ease, on 20 March 1886 he reduced the sum of money that was to be made available to buy out the landlords from £120 million to £60 million. Whilst any explanation of his motives for reducing the sum must take account of the widespread unease in many circles concerning the potential and substantial risk to the Treasury if the Irish defaulted on their repayments – especially since such large amounts of money were involved – it is surely no coincidence that Gladstone had been forced to agree to compulsory purchase on behalf of the tenant five days before.³⁸ Gladstone's decision to halve the amount of money available can therefore be seen as a desperate attempt to counteract the compulsory element of the bill, severely curtailing the Irish landlords' ability to sell, preventing them from leaving Ireland and thus compelling them to take an active role in the newly reconstructed Irish society. Against this background, in Gladstone's eyes, land purchase threatened to un-

dermine his objective of social reconstruction, and for that reason one must conclude that he was no more reconciled to extensive purchase than he had ever been.

Conclusion

In his 'Notes and Queries on the Irish Demands', published in 1887, Gladstone remained firmly convinced that:

The natural condition of a healthy society is, that governing functions should be discharged by the leisured class ... when the leisured class is disposed as it is to a very large extent in Ireland, that indicates that a rot has found its way into the structure of society³⁹

In Gladstone's opinion the rift that separated the gentry from the people had been produced by the Union. This had led to landlord absenteeism and had transferred 'the centre of Ireland's special interests and placed it out of Ireland.'⁴⁰ Accordingly, when a legislative body was re-established in Dublin,

'the position held by the leisured and landed classes of Ireland as towards the people, will be entirely changed.' Home Rule would therefore restore the Irish upper

class to their rightful position as society's leaders since they would no longer be associated with an alien country. Gladstone believed that the Irish were at heart very conservative: 'The religion, the character, and the old traditions of the Irish are all in favour of them leaning upon the leisured classes, and desiring to be represented by them.'⁴¹ It was this desire that underpinned Gladstone's design for an Irish assembly. His ultimate purpose was to bring together the most important classes, ranging from the upper class to the small farmer and instil a spirit of cooperation.⁴² Whilst Gladstone's adoption of Home Rule had indeed arisen out of his changed attitude towards the Act of Union – he had become convinced of its historic unjustness and that it was ill-conceived – he had not ceased to work for the

'The natural condition of a healthy society is, that governing functions should be discharged by the leisured class ...'

closer integration of Ireland into the United Kingdom. On the contrary, his adoption of Home Rule was an acknowledgment that if this integration was truly to be achieved then the relationship between the two islands needed to be revised. Gladstone was no less a unionist in 1886 than he had been in 1838, 1853 or in 1868. The only difference in 1886 was that he had become a unionist with a small 'u' rather than with a capital 'U'.

Unfortunately, the design envisaged by Gladstone was at odds with the stark reality of Irish society. As argued above, the tenants not merely had little desire to cooperate with the landlords outside of Ulster; they had become hostile to them. How then, are we to account for Gladstone's continuing and unyielding attachment to such outdated principles? Was he simply ignorant of developments in Irish society? Given that Irish problems had occupied much of his time in the previous six years, such an explanation is hardly convincing. Admittedly, Gladstone's sources of information in 1885–86 were somewhat limited and partial. Apart from Parnell, who subscribed to a social conservatism very similar to Gladstone's, he made no effort to gauge other nationalist opinion. However, any argument which suggests that Gladstone was unaware of the Irish upper classes' position cannot be sustained. He had been receiving reports ever since Forster was Irish Secretary, and letters from landlords themselves, which should have left him in no doubt about their diminished power. As we have seen, Spencer continued to echo these views in 1886.

Given his resolve to re-engineer Ireland to his social specifications, it is doubtful that Gladstone could have been swayed from his objectives even if had been better informed about developments in Irish society. Indeed, it may well have been the case that it would have made him *more* determined, having learnt the real extent of the landlords' diminished power. As Professor Vincent comments, Gladstone 'could not see much beyond a reformed landlordism because he had no wish to...'⁴³ In reality it was simple obstinacy that prevented Gladstone from jettisoning his social conservatism in relation to Ireland. Deep

down, even he realised that the landowner was 'the salient point of friction.'⁴⁴ But such an admission merely serves to confirm his obstinacy.

Above all, it can be argued that his refusal to countenance any extensive scheme of land purchase served to perpetuate the discord prevalent in Irish society. As Professor Matthew comments, 'the continuance of the overwhelming Protestant land-owning class meant that there would be more land agitation, which in turn would mean more coercion ... it was the landowners that were the cause of the disorder.'⁴⁵ Whilst it can be argued that Gladstone's initiatives towards Ireland stemmed from the unhappy realisation that the Irish upper classed were not in a position to act as he would have them do, the important point is that he refused to accept that this was final. As a consequence, his initiatives were not merely aimed to allow the upper classes to resume their leading position if circumstances permitted; rather, they were designed to encourage the upper class to play a leading role by reversing, or at the very least halting, their deteriorating position. As a result, many of his initiatives were half-hearted and ineffective. His strict adherence to a socially conservative outlook prevented him from implementing a series of more extensive reforms which might have gone a long way to defusing some of the tensions in Ireland.

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Simon and Southwark, Bermondsey

How it all began

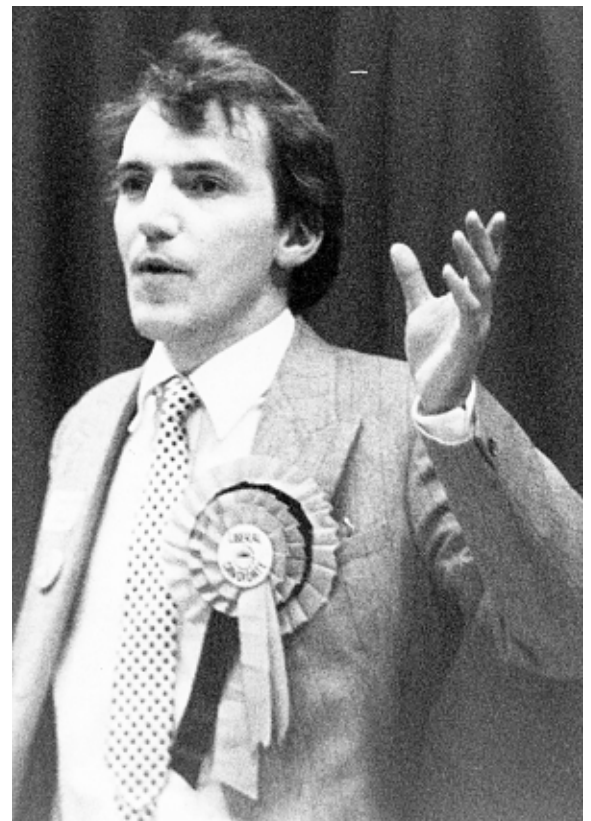
By 1980 I had for some time occupied the (voluntary) post of Head of Fund Raising at Liberal Party Organisation HQ. I had been quite ill and, during my lengthy convalescence, in August the then Secretary General of the party, Wyn Hugh Jones, asked me whether I had some time on my hands to do a research job for him.

Hugh Jones was of the opinion that Bob Mellish, the Labour MP for Bermondsey, wanted to be appointed to head the London Docklands Development Corporation. If this happened, Mellish would have to resign and a by-election would be called. Hugh wanted me to spend some time in the constituency in order to assess the political situation in great detail. With that information he would decide whether to support a campaign to try to win a by-election, or only have a 'paper' candidate. At the previous general election, in 1979, Liberal support in Bermondsey had been, to put it mildly, very poor – 6.8%.

I think I then spent approximately ten days in Bermondsey. I spoke to many people quite indiscriminately: in queues at bus stops, in labour exchanges, and unemployed groups on street corners. I knocked on doors in a wide range of streets and tower blocks. I spoke to people in pubs and parks. Wherever I could find someone who was willing to stop and chat for a few moments, I asked questions. What was good about living in Bermondsey? What was bad? How efficient was the local council, Southwark Borough? Did they think the council was honest or dishonest? Was the council's housing policy effective? What were their job prospects? What were the youth clubs like? What did they think of their MP? And so on.

I carried a clipboard with me – most people seemed to think that carrying a clipboard gave me

some sort of authority to ask questions – and made copious notes. I was astonished at some of the replies. The general consensus was that the council was corrupt or inefficient, and a minority thought both. Although most voters were sympathetic to Labour their current opinion of Mellish was not high. A significant number had heard that he wanted the Docklands Development job and were not at all pleased. Life in inner-city London was hard and miserable. In Bermondsey more than ten percent were unemployed, and the proportion was increasing. Many people lived and worked in almost Dickensian conditions.



For an MP to desert them for a plum well-paid job did not go down well at all. I must emphasise that at no time did I attempt to influence an opinion given. I asked questions, and supplementaries, as objectively as possible.

I also found a very weak constituency Liberal association. If I remember correctly there were about six members, one of whom had been the parliamentary candidate. I was not over-impressed. I then prepared a lengthy report listing all the data I had collected, including all the pros and cons, and gave it to Hugh Jones. He nearly fell off his chair when he read the conclusion. Unfortunately I never kept a copy. But in essence my opinion was Bermondsey could be won if:

1. The right work was done and, most importantly, started straight away.
2. The right candidate could be found to fight the coming Greater London Council election and continue to fight the by-election.
3. There were about eighteen months to two years before a by-election was called.

Hugh asked me whether I would present the report to David Steel. I agreed and an urgent meeting was arranged in the leader's office. Clement Freud MP, the party's By-election Committee chair, was present. David was courteous and offered me a cup of

tea while he and Clement read my report. Steel's reaction was one of surprise and of extreme doubt, but Freud suggested that David should take account of the fact that I had won more elections than I had lost – albeit at local level only.

Steel then asked me whether I would put my money where my mouth was. I replied that I was not a rich man and had not the sort of money to finance a campaign. I did, however, say that I was ready to go to Bermondsey every day and do my damndest to get an organisation going which could win a by-election. I made only one condition: I asked Steel to find £500 and give it me as pump-priming money to start the campaign going. We discussed the matter in great detail for about an hour. In the end he agreed and the money was forthcoming a little later.

To begin with I worked with the local members. I needed local knowledge and what scant records they had. I bought a Gestetner duplicator, stencils, paper and ink. I found a local office room. I had my own typewriter. I started canvassing in the Four Squares Estate on Drummond Road. My policy was that as soon as I found a problem – they were very easy to find – I reported it to the council and demanded action. I then printed and circulated a brief 'action taken' report to the residents in the



vicinity of the problem. Frequently a family member in the household where the problem was found would do the delivery for me. During canvassing, whenever I found a deliverer in a street or a tower block, I left that area and went to the next street or tower block looking for more problems and more deliverers. Quite a few deliverers became members.

I discovered that a man called Ron Tindall, then living in Stamford Hill, had been the Liberal agent at the last general election. Ron turned out to be a most likeable chap and we got on very well. He was Bermondsey-born, a dedicated Liberal and trade unionist and his father had been a local Labour councillor. His local knowledge was invaluable. When I first spoke to him he was reluctant to come back to Bermondsey to help, as he was totally disillusioned with the ineffectual local Liberals. Fortunately for me he became most enthusiastic once I told him what I had been able to achieve in a few short weeks. He joined me, and a little while later he agreed to move back to Bermondsey to live. Once he arrived things began to move more quickly and my weekly reports to Hugh Jones began to be quite optimistic.

After about three months of hectic work we had an effective delivery system in three wards – I think they were Rotherhithe, Riverside and Bricklayers – with about eighty members. I then phoned Hugh Jones and begged him to look for an activist who would be a

Cleaning up the town hall – Simon Hughes in the 1982 local elections.



suitable choice to be selected as a candidate by the expanded membership. A few days later he told me about a young barrister recently returned from working in Brussels and living just a few yards outside the constituency. He remarked that 'if you and he get on then the sparks will surely fly'. He arranged for the three of us to have lunch on a Tuesday at the National Liberal Club. The barrister was Simon Hughes.

I took to Simon immediately. His credentials were impeccable. He was a life-long Liberal, already heavily involved with a youth club just off the Old Kent Road, full of energy, determination and what we used to call in the army, 'fixity of purpose'. I like to think he took to me as well. After lunch Hugh left us. Simon and I sat talking about Bermondsey and the potential for a win for another two hours. He had considerable legal commitments through his chambers but, as we parted, he said he would let me know his decision whether to join me or not in two or three days.

He phoned me on the Friday morning and said: 'Yes. I'm with you - I'll start on Monday'. I answered, saying 'Why not start tonight? I've got canvass cards already pasted up for the Four Squares. I'll pick you up from your chambers at six o'clock and we'll start canvassing tonight'. He replied: 'You're a devil for work - but OK'. And so the campaign really did get under way. Simon was an excellent candidate. He put



David Steel and Simon Hughes in front of the 'Simon' pub in Bermondsey.

in hours and hours of dedicated work and the voters of Bermondsey were clearly impressed by his vitality, integrity and dedication to achieving improvements in their living and working conditions. As he started so has he carried on during all these years.

At the GLC elections the following May he shot the Liberal vote up from 3% (1977) to 16% (1981) and rose from third to second place. He created an optimistic feel among the membership and, by the quality of his organisational and leadership skills, obtained the loyalty of thousands of voters. After his by-election win in February 1983, he also became the inspiration behind the first bridgehead win at a ward by-election, when Ron Tindall became the first

modern Liberal on Southwark Borough Council.

Gradually I was happy to be able to work myself out of the job of being 'the father of Bermondsey', as younger and fitter local members took over. Apart from winning and holding my own council seat, Simon's win in February 1983 at the by-election caused by Bob Mellish's resignation was one of the most pleasurable and satisfying experiences of my political career.

David Rebak joined the Liberal Party in 1963, and has been a councillor, parliamentary candidate and founder member of the Association of Liberal Councillors. He is currently nursing the Enfield Southgate constituency to health.

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'Crinks' Johnstone

Some time in the later 1930s, the youthful Jo Grimond was invited to take part in a hare shoot on the Highland estate of Sir Archibald Sinclair. Grimond later recalled in his *Memoirs*:

My most notable memory of that shoot was of a vast and puffing gentleman heaving into sight over a rise in the ground, trailing his gun behind him in the heather. It was Crinks' Johnston (sic), a Chief (sic) Whip of the Liberal Party and friend of the Sinclairs and the Bonham Carters. He was not a man given to exercise even of the mildest sort.²

The figure of Harcourt 'Crinks' Johnstone heaved across the history of the Liberal Party from the 1920s until his death in 1945. In his day, he was difficult to ignore, a 'regency figure ... immense, noisy, intelligent ...'.³ Sinclair's daughter, Catherine, has described Crinks as 'great fun, full of love for life, sensuous and engaging. One of the most charming men I knew in the 1930s'.⁴ However, Johnstone does not appear in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and failed to gain an entry in the recently-published *Dictionary of Liberal Biography*. There is a short sketch in Colin Coote's *The Other Club*, in a chapter entitled 'Eminent Unknowns', where Johnstone is described as the least remembered and greatest character to hold the secretaryship of the Club.⁵

Why Johnstone's career is now so comprehensively forgotten is curious. He was a key figure in the Liberal Party Organisation and parliamentary party between the wars. He was at the forefront of the factional struggle with Lloyd George in the 1920s. He spent much of his abundant personal wealth to subsidise the cash-strapped party and from 1931–45 was a leading member of the leadership group around Samuel and Sinclair. Apart from Sinclair, Johnstone was the most prominent Liberal minister in the wartime coalition in which he served as a middle-ranking minister for five years. This portrait attempts to fill the gap by delineating the main outlines of his career.

'An aristocrat to his finger tips, but a radical of the first water'

'An aristocrat to his finger tips, but a radical of the

first water',⁶ on his paternal side, Johnstone came from the North Yorkshire family of Vandenberg-Johnstone of Hackness Hall, a land-owning and political dynasty near Scarborough, which had its aristocratic origins in the Scottish family of Johnstones ennobled as the Earls, later Marquesses, of Annandale in the seventeenth century. Crinks' grandfather was the First Baron Derwent, created in 1881. There were two illustrious and formidable forebears: Archbishop (1808–47) Harcourt of York, and Sir William Harcourt, who served as Home Secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer under Gladstone, and Chancellor and Leader of the Commons under Rosebery. Crinks is sometimes described as a Whiggish throwback, but this is not quite accurate. The family tradition was more Peelite and Gladstonian than Whig, and in the case of Sir William Harcourt, with whom Crinks had some striking resemblances of physique and personality, even radical and modern in outlook.⁷ Crinks' great-grandfather, Sir John Vandenberg Johnstone (1799–1869), a follower of Sir Robert Peel, gravitated into the emerging Liberal Party in the 1850s and was succeeded as Liberal MP for the family seat of Scarborough by his son, Sir Harcourt, later the First Baron Derwent (1829–1916). His fourth son, Hon. Sir Alan Johnstone, a diplomat, who served as ambassador to Copenhagen (1905–10) and the Hague (1910–17), was Crinks' father. His mother was Antoinette Pinchot of New York. Harcourt was their only child, born on 19 May 1895.⁸

No doubt the Pinchot side of the family had a major influence on Crinks' outlook. His Uncle Gifford was one of the pioneers of the US environmental movement and a leading figure in Theodore Roosevelt's Progressives. He was twice Governor of Pennsylvania in the 1920s and '30s. Another uncle, Amos, was a radical and one of the founders of the US Civil Liberties Union. Antoinette ('Nettie') shared the family's liberal activism.⁹

Harcourt was educated at Eton and Balliol College, Oxford, graduating in 1919. He was later noted for his considerable, though well-hidden, intellectual capacity and erudition.¹⁰ During the First

World War he served with the Rifle Brigade and on the General Staff.¹¹

Johnstone's political career got off to a flying start. He was a respectable runner-up as Asquithian candidate for Willesden East at the 1922 general election and won a memorable by-election there in March 1923 with a majority of over 5,000. He faced a much tougher fight at the 1923 general election thanks to the intervention of a Labour candidate, but squeezed in by 114 votes. Aged only twenty-seven, he immediately made an impact in the parliamentary party – in March 1924, for example, he was one of the leaders of the Liberal attack on the Labour Government's plans to construct five new cruisers, which exposed divisions in opinion on both the Liberal and Labour benches.¹²

Johnstone lost his seat in the Liberal electoral disaster at the 1924 general election and was out of Parliament until 1931. He focused instead on the Liberal Candidates Association, becoming its secretary. The LCA was perhaps the liveliest body in the party, a semi-parliamentary body with great prestige as many of its members were ex-MPs. The Asquithians in particular looked upon it as the parliamentary party of the future, possessing all the qualities which were lacking in the present rump of MPs led by Lloyd George.¹³

Crinks and Lloyd George

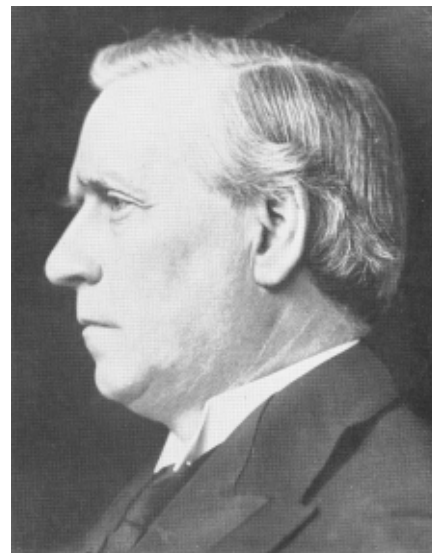
Johnstone was fiercely committed to the Asquithian faction; it is said that he kept a picture of Asquith by his bedside.¹⁴ This alignment was hardly surprising given his aristocratic background, Balliol education, and personal friendships among the Asquiths and their entourage.¹⁵ But there were also ideological differences. Crinks was a committed free-trade economic liberal¹⁶ and did not share Lloyd George's populist radicalism. In 1925, for example, he took a leading part in reining back Lloyd George's ideas for sweeping land nationalisation. But he also detested Lloyd George's political style and character. In June 1926, at the height of the Asquithians' campaign against Lloyd George, Johnstone published a

letter in the *Wiltshire Times* describing him as 'a man devoid of political honesty ... to me Mr Lloyd George seems to have but few of the virtues with which he is popularly credited and all the vices which his political record only too amply displays'.

The Asquithians, and Johnstone personally, suffered a great setback in the showdown with Lloyd George in June 1926. Lloyd George had distanced himself from the rest of the Liberal leadership's critical line towards the General Strike, and Asquith was persuaded by Johnstone and others to move decisively to expel Lloyd George from the party. Johnstone, and Pringle, the chairman of the LCA, publicly endorsed rumours that Lloyd George had met three Labour leaders at Philip Snowden's house and had offered to transfer himself and his fund to the Labour Party. Lloyd George faced his opponents at a meeting of the LCA on 11 June and demolished their case; Johnstone was forced to retract his allegation.¹⁷

Following this episode, and Asquith's illness and death, Lloyd George was able to take a firm hold on the leadership and to launch the Liberals' last great bid for power of 1926–29. The Asquithians, Johnstone prominent among them, were marginalised. Johnstone failed by 149 votes to capture the eminently winnable seat of Westbury at a by-election in June 1927, where Lloyd George was conspicuously absent from the campaign.¹⁸ Johnstone remained out of tune with the direction in which Lloyd George was taking the party. In February 1929 he wrote to Runciman that 'our real business over the next three months is to get ourselves returned to Parliament and specially to get a majority – or a strong minority – returned which will be hostile to LG. To do this we may have to compromise a little our natural inclinations.'¹⁹ However, Johnstone was again defeated at Westbury in the 1929 general election, this time by sixty-seven votes.

Johnstone was once more in the vanguard of the Liberal opposition to Lloyd George's leadership after the election. In January 1930 he wrote in *The Times* of the 'miasma of bad faith



Harcourt Johnstone's hero: H. H. Asquith, Liberal leader 1908–26 and Prime Minister 1908–16

which the leadership of Mr Lloyd George connotes', and continued: 'Those of us in particular who are free traders feel more confidence in Messrs. Snowden and Graham [the Labour Chancellor and President of the Board of Trade] than in Mr Lloyd George, with his patchy fiscal history and his roving political eye.'²⁰ Yet despite his antipathy to Lloyd George, there is no indication that Johnstone contemplated following Simon, Runciman and others into partnership with the Tories when the Liberal National faction broke away in 1930–31. It seems that his fierce personal commitment to the Liberal Party and free trade barred the way.²¹

He returned to Parliament at the 1931 general election for South Shields, with a majority of 10,000 over the Labour incumbent, after the Tory had stood down. Lloyd George had by now split with the party and Johnstone joined the leadership of the Samuelite group as a whip. The party was in a parlous state. Powerless to stem the tide towards protectionism in the face of the huge Conservative majority and the Liberal National defections, the Samuelites remained uneasily in the National Government until September 1932 (and continued to support it from the back-benches until 1933), devoid of any coherent political strategy. During 1932 when the issue of free trade offered, to party strategists, the hope of rekindling Liberal fortunes, Harcourt



'Mr Lloyd George, with his patchy fiscal history and his roving political eye' – David Lloyd George, Liberal leader 1926–31 and Prime Minister 1916–22

Johnstone was a leading campaigner against protectionist import duties. He was quoted by the *Manchester Guardian* as stating, on 5 March 1932, that: 'I regard the fiscal policy of the National Government as wholly mischievous. I can see no provision in the Import Duties Act which can do anything but harm for the country' – a theme on which he was repeatedly to campaign until the 1935 election.

However, the party was demoralised and, without Lloyd George's Fund, penniless. Johnstone was given the task of fund-raising, but the party was increasingly dependent on a few wealthy benefactors, notably Viscount Cowdray (until his death in 1933), Johnstone himself, and his fellow MPs, James de Rothschild and Sir Hugh Seely.²² Johnstone was very wealthy, with a large inheritance from his parents, supplemented by a huge win in the Calcutta sweep (like many of his Liberal and Conservative peers he never allowed politics to get in the way of Ascot). As well as subsidising the Liberal Party, he was famously generous with racing tips and lavish gifts of food and drink – for example, a gigantic bottle of brandy which he gave to Jo and Laura Grimond as their wedding present.²³

As the 1935 election approached, the leadership circle became increasingly desperate over the party's poor prospects. There were suggestions that

the party might re-form into a pressure group supporting progressive candidates regardless of party. Johnstone was firmly opposed to throwing in the towel and called instead for the party to announce that it would fight on a broad front: 'We must keep up the bluff until the last moment or decide here and now to disband the Liberal Party as an organised political entity.'²⁴ In the event the Liberals were able to field only 161 candidates in 1935, and lost a further twelve seats. Samuel and Johnstone, who at least according to anecdote, was not an assiduous constituency member,²⁵ were amongst the leading casualties.

After the 1935 election Johnstone remained active and became the right-hand man of Sinclair, the new leader, despite Sinclair's pro-Lloyd George position for much of the proceeding fifteen years. Sinclair kept Johnstone on as chairman of the Liberal Central Association, even though the Chief Whip traditionally held the post and Johnstone had lost his seat.²⁶ Under Sinclair's influence Johnstone was even persuaded to build bridges with the Lloyd George family group of MPs and bring Megan and Gwilym Lloyd George back on to the Liberal benches, therefore reuniting two of the three groups into which the party had split in 1931.²⁷ He worked closely with Sinclair in shaping the Liberal Party's opposition to Chamberlain and appeasement.²⁸

Into government

However, Johnstone's return to political prominence and Parliament was sudden and unexpected, owing more to his long friendship with Churchill than his standing in the Liberal Party. Johnstone was a member, and from the early 1930s to 1945 co-secretary with Brendan Bracken, of the Other Club, the political dining club founded by Churchill and F. E. Smith in 1911, which continued to act as a bridge between Churchill's friends in the Liberal and Conservative parties throughout the inter-war period. When Churchill came to power in May 1940, he appointed Johnstone to the non-cabinet post of Minister for Overseas Trade, responsible

jointly to the President of the Board of Trade and the Foreign Secretary. He was returned unopposed, under the wartime electoral truce, for Middlesbrough West, one of the few remaining Liberal seats, in August 1940. His elevation seems to have caused some resentment amongst the Liberal parliamentary group who had been passed over for appointment to the government, and also amongst the die-hard Chamberlainites in the Conservative Party, who gave Johnstone a hard time in the House. According to Harris, 'the young Tories took pleasure in ragging him and asking him awkward questions, but to do him credit he gave as good as he received'.²⁹ He was never a popular or widely-respected House of Commons man, mainly because of his style. 'Tall, florid of face, with a heavy moustache, he looked – and in many ways was – like a man-about-town of an earlier generation ... many in the House of Commons who did not know his fundamental seriousness and well-equipped mind tended at first to underrate him.'³⁰

However, Johnstone had other friends on the Conservative benches apart from Churchill. Oliver Lyttelton, his President at the Board of Trade in 1940–41 left this portrait of Johnstone in his memoirs:

Finally ... [at] the Department of Overseas Trade ... It was a happy chance that the incumbent was 'Crinks' Harcourt Johnstone, a life-long friend. He had devoted much of his private fortune to support the Liberal Party; he was a connoisseur of wine, with real knowledge; he was highly educated, well-read, fond of racing, and a first-rate bridge player. He gave the impression – and intended to give it – that he was idle and disinterested. It was a piece of protective colouring. I saw a number of pages and memoranda which he wrote when Secretary of the Department. No-one was ever able to convict him of putting on paper either an unwise or a slipshod sentence. His conclusions were supported by a thorough investigation of the facts, and informed by sound and logical sequences. He had a very few intimate friends, but to them he gave an affection and loyalty which he strove to conceal by an astringent and critical manner. I was one of those friends.³¹

Johnstone's brusqueness was legendary. According to Coote he was invariably

ill-mannered and contemptuous. But Coote, Percy Harris and others testify to the kindness and generosity he hid behind this gruff exterior.³² A perceptive tribute by one of his civil servants noted that 'under his bluff exterior was masked a shy and sensitive nature which rendered him diffident in the hurly-burly of public life, but at his desk and in council he was at his best. He quickly discerned the crux of any problem and equally quickly decided the line of action to be taken: once he had made up his mind he was no friend of compromise. His outlook was never negative ...'³³

The role of the Liberals in the wartime coalition is an under-researched area,³⁴ so it is difficult to gauge Johnstone's contribution. The Liberals certainly carried little political clout. It is unclear how far Sinclair's and Johnstone's personal connections with Churchill counted. Something of both Johnstone's character and his close relationship with Churchill can be gleaned from a letter Johnstone wrote in April 1940 commenting on staff changes at the Admiralty: 'I can't help wondering whether it isn't deliberately calculated so as to load you with work as to make things impossible. Your Financial Secretary and Civil Lord are a couple of nit-wits ... and in other respects it is to be the same rotten old tune played by the same rotten old band. Until we have got rid of the four old ladies of Munich [Chamberlain, Halifax, Simon and Hoare] we shall do no real good in spite of your efforts.'³⁵

Perhaps significantly, Johnstone's name does not appear in the main volumes of Gilbert's mammoth history of Churchill's wartime premiership (although some of Johnstone's correspondence is published in the Companion Volumes), nor in the memoirs of Anthony Eden, one of the cabinet ministers he reported to for much of the period. This may merely reflect the fact that overseas trade was not the most dramatic field of activity during the war years. Nevertheless, Johnstone was minister for five years in an important area of economic policy. He was also Sinclair's representative on Attlee's War Aims Committee, where Harcourt shared a table with not only Attlee but



Harcourt 'Crinks' Johnstone 1895–1945

with the big guns of Kingsley Wood, Halifax (replaced by Eden after December 1940), Bevin and Duff Cooper. This committee evolved into the important Post-War Committee on Foreign Relations.

Foreign Office files at the Public Record Office show that Johnstone maintained a fierce independence of spirit within Churchill's coalition government. A lengthy exchange of correspondence with two members of the War Cabinet, Arthur Greenwood (Minister without Portfolio) and Anthony Eden (Foreign Secretary), shows Johnstone truculently arguing for the Liberal Party voice to be consulted in matters of policy ahead of decisions being taken in the War Cabinet. Writing to Eden in July 1941, Johnstone stated that 'coalitions are a nuisance, but we have one and must try and make it work ... It is far more necessary that there should be preliminary talks with either Sinclair or myself than with Greenwood since the Labour Party has three representatives in the War Cabinet and can therefore put its

point of view with great force at the final stage, while the Liberal Party is not represented at all.' So insistent was Johnstone that he should be involved and consulted that Eden complained to Sinclair about his henchman. Sinclair supported Harcourt's insistence on being consulted, replying to Eden that 'Crinks is well informed and has clear-cut opinions. He is at least as formidable an individual as Arthur Greenwood.' As a result of this exchange Eden offered and held regular one-to-one briefing sessions with Harcourt to update him and seek the Liberal input into emerging issues in the fields of post-war reconstruction planning, foreign trade and foreign relations.³⁶

Johnstone was appointed a Privy Councillor in 1943. There are indications that he was one of the few voices questioning the emerging Labour-Conservative consensus on post-war reconstruction. In June 1944, for example, he was arguing powerfully against the proposed massive post-war house-building programme as too large and too rapid. With considerable long-term

foresight, he disputed the desirability of wholesale redevelopment and re-planning of towns and suggested that the programme would put excessive pressure on resources and the middle-class taxpayer.³⁷

Johnstone remained very close politically to Sinclair throughout the war, stoutly defending him from Beaverbrook's attacks on his handling of the Air Ministry early in the war,³⁸ and siding with him in the internal party debate over the party's strategy as the end of the war approached. Sinclair and Johnstone were both suspected of wishing to carry on Liberal participation in the Churchill coalition after the war. They also seem to have opposed the efforts of Lady Violet Bonham Carter and others to reinvigorate the party by bringing William Beveridge into the leadership.³⁹

Johnstone died in March 1945. The Tory MP 'Chips' Channon, who knew him socially, paid tribute to his prodigiously unhealthy lifestyle and, unconsciously, to his unwavering Liberalism:

Crinks Johnstone died suddenly last night from a stroke. He was only forty-nine, and can really be described as having dug his grave with his teeth, for all his life he over-ate and drank ... I rather liked him, though I long ago recognised that he was a Liberal hypocrite.⁴⁰

Johnstone can easily be dismissed as a colourful anachronism, an Edwardian, Whiggish figure whose political influence depended on his wealth and personal ties with the Asquiths, Sinclair and Churchill. Certainly his prominence in the Liberal Party between 1931–45 highlights an important aspect of the nature of the party in its years of sharpest decline: its dominance at the centre by a small circle of grandees who socially had much in common with the Tory elite, but for whom party loyalty and free trade ideology were an insuperable barrier separating them from the Conservative Party. But Johnstone was more than this. He was a major influence on the development of strategy and economic ideas in the Liberal Party of the 1930s and was a perceptive if unfashionable thinker at the centre of the wartime debates on reconstruction and war aims. The last significant Lib-

eral economic minister deserves to be rescued from oblivion.

Dr Jaime Reynolds specialised in East European politics at the LSE, but has a long-standing interest in Liberal Party history. He works for the Environment Directorate-General of the European Commission. Ian Hunter is researching 'The Liberal Party and the wartime coalition 1940–45' for a PhD at St Andrew's University.

- 1 Johnstone's nickname 'Crinks' was apparently derived from the wrinkled face he had in infancy – C. R. Coote, *The Other Club* (1971) p. 127.
- 2 Jo Grimond, *Memoirs* (1979) p. 69.
- 3 R. Rhodes James (ed), *'Chips': The Diaries of Sir Henry Channon* (1967).
- 4 Conversation with Ian Hunter, October 1999.
- 5 Coote, op. cit. p. 127–29.
- 6 Roy Douglas, *History of the Liberal Party 1895–1970* (1971), p. 230, quoting T. D. Nudds.
- 7 See Roy Jenkins, *The Chancellors* (1998), pp. 35–65, for an excellent portrait of Sir William Harcourt, which makes this point.
- 8 *Debrett's Baronetage, Knightage and House of Commons 1867; Who's Who*; M. Stenton, *Who's Who of British MPs*, vols 1–3. Sir William Harcourt was the cousin of the First Baron Derwent.
- 9 Antoinette Eno Pinchot (1868–1934) was the daughter of James Wallace Pinchot (1831–1908) a New Yorker who made a fortune in the wallpaper business. Information on the family can be found on the website of the Pinchot Organisation, a US environmental foundation (<http://www.pinchot.org>) and in a special issue of *Pennsylvania History*, vol. 66, number 2 (spring 1999). We are indebted to Char Miller and Carol Severance for help with sources on the Pinchots. Professor Miller is shortly to publish a biography of Gifford Pinchot.
- 10 Percy Harris, for example, noted that Johnstone had a very good mind, was a man of wide culture and was excellent at his departmental work – P. Harris, *Thirty Years In and Out of Parliament* (1947), p. 151. Another fellow Liberal MP, Robert Bernays, recorded in his diaries in 1934 that 'Harcourt Johnstone is really an infinitely abler man than he is credited with being. He made an extraordinarily good speech' – Nick Smart, *The Diaries and Letters of Robert Bernays 1932–1939* (1996), p. 132. See also Chandos quoted below. Johnstone produced solid and well-researched articles on economic and industrial themes for Liberal publications in the 1920s and '30s.
- 11 *Who's Who*.
- 12 C. Cook, *The Age of Alignment – Electoral Politics in Britain 1922–29* (1975), p. 239.
- 13 T. Wilson, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party 1914–35* (1966), p. 66.
- 14 Coote, op. cit., p. 129.
- 15 See for instance D. McCarthy (ed.), *HHA – the Letters of the Earl of Oxford and Asquith 1922–27* (1934) and A. C. Murray, *Master and Brother – Murrays of Elibank* (1945).
- 16 It was said that he read the left-wing *New Statesman* every week simply in order to disagree with it – Sir A. McFadyean, *Recollections in Tranquillity* (1964), p. 202.

- 17 This paragraph and the preceding one are largely based on Wilson, op. cit., pp. 358–59, and J. Campbell, *Lloyd George – the Goat in the Wilderness 1922–31* (1977), p. 146–47.
- 18 Campbell, op. cit., p. 149.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 230.
- 20 Wilson, op. cit., pp. 381–82, 386, quoting *The Times* 16.1.30.
- 21 According to Percy Harris, no friend of Johnstone's, Crinks was offered a good Tory seat if he would only call himself a National, but he spurned the suggestion as an insult – P. Harris, op. cit., p. 151.
- 22 Douglas, op. cit., p. 230.
- 23 Coote, op. cit., pp. 127–28.
- 24 T. Stannage, *Baldwin Thwarts the Opposition – the British General Election of 1935* (1980) p. 101; G. DeGroot, *Liberal Crusader – the Life of Sir Archibald Sinclair* (1993), pp. 105–6 quoting HJ to Lord Lothian 19.11.34.
- 25 Coote records the anecdote of a fellow MP who saw Crinks entering a sleeper at King's Cross on a night when a blizzard was raging. 'What on earth are you doing?' he asked. 'I am going to my constituency.' 'That's bad luck on a night like this.' 'Yes, and what makes it worse is that I shall probably have to go next year as well. – Coote, op. cit., pp. 128–29. In Crinks' defence it should be pointed out that the idea of MPs nursing their constituencies is largely a post-1945 phenomenon.
- 26 To the chagrin of the new Chief Whip, Sir Percy Harris. According to Harris, Johnstone was Sinclair's greatest friend from Eton days and helped him write his speeches. Harris, op. cit., p. 151.
- 27 Johnstone was by 1934 convinced of the need to reintegrate the Lloyd George group – Stannage, op. cit., p. 101.
- 28 For instance see his letter to *The Times* 15.7.39 answering the Liberal pro-appeasers led by J. A. Spender.
- 29 Harris, op. cit., p. 151. There is no reason to doubt Harris' view that Johnstone's Other Club links were crucial in his elevation to office. Other Liberal members of the Club, Sinclair, Jimmie de Rothschild and Hugh Seely, were also given appointments in the Churchill coalition.
- 30 *The Times* 3.3.45.
- 31 Viscount Chandos (Oliver Lyttelton), *The Memoirs of Lord Chandos* (1962).
- 32 Coote, op. cit. and Harris, op. cit., p. 151.
- 33 A. M., 'Right Honourable Harcourt Johnstone – An Appreciation', *The Times* 6.3.45.
- 34 Though the contribution of the Liberal Party to the Churchill coalition government is currently the focus of a doctorate being researched by Ian Hunter at St Andrew's University.
- 35 M. Gilbert, *The Churchill War Papers*, volume 1, p. 959.
- 36 Public Record Office, FO/954/22.
- 37 Corelli Barnett, *Audit of War – the Illusion and Reality of Great Britain as a Great Power* (1986), pp. 244–45.
- 38 DeGroot, op. cit.
- 39 M. Pottle, *Champion Redoubtable – The Diaries and Letters of Lady Violet Bonham Carter 1914–45* (1998), pp. 308, 316.
- 40 Rhodes James, op. cit., Channon diaries 2.3.45. In fact Johnstone was ill for some years before his death, suffering from severe headaches – 'Right Honourable Harcourt Johnstone – An Appreciation', *The Times* 6.3.45 and *The Times* 10.3.45.

Report

1974 Remembered

Fringe meeting, 19 September,
with Tim Beaumont, Viv Bingham, Sir Cyril Smith,
Paul Tyler MP and Richard Wainwright
Report by Neil Stockley

At the general election of 28 February 1974, some six million people, the highest number ever, voted for the Liberal Party. Fourteen Liberal MPs were elected, a post-war record, and the party came second in 146 seats, also an unprecedented achievement. No party had a majority in the Commons, and the Conservative Prime Minister, Edward Heath, needed the support of both the Liberals and the Ulster Unionists to remain in office. For the first time in a generation, the Liberals were in an influential position in Parliament.¹ A quarter of a century on, a panel comprising Tim Beaumont, Sir Cyril Smith, Viv Bingham and Richard Wainwright, chaired by Paul Tyler,² shared some interesting memories with the History Group fringe meeting at Harrogate.

First, some scene setting. The 1970–74 Parliament saw the standings of both major parties sink to their lowest levels since the war. After the Conservatives tried to stoke up the economy, the trade balance deteriorated drastically and prices rose at the fastest rate in decades.³ Heath's U-turns on industrial policy and his failure to improve workplace relations further dented the Government's credibility. Meanwhile, Labour was bogged down in splits and divisions, most notably over Europe. The climate of political disillusionment left the Liberals well positioned for a fresh revival in their fortunes. During 1972–73, the party enjoyed a series of local government successes and five stunning parliamentary by-election victories.⁴

The first such win was at Rochdale in October 1972. The victor, Sir Cyril Smith, recounted how a variety of authorities, including an eminent academic, a 'news fella from party HQ', and Tony Greaves told him that he had no chance of winning. But win he did, taking the seat from Labour with an eleven per cent swing, a feat Smith attributed to his community profile, awareness of local issues and a strong base of Liberal and Methodist support. Sir Cyril argued that his victory created the momentum for the other by-election victories because 'the essential thing for Liberals [was] persuading people that you can win'. The next by-election was two months later, when Sutton was won from the Conservatives. Next were Ripon and Isle of Ely, in July 1973. Tim Beaumont, who was aide to the successful Isle of Ely candidate, Clement Freud, delighted the audience with his recollections of an amateurish but cheerful campaign [see box]. The last by-election win was at Berwick-upon-Tweed, in November 1973.

Within days, Heath's embattled government was embroiled in a new confrontation with the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). When the Prime Minister refused to depart from his incomes policy and accept the miners' thirty-five per cent pay claim, the NUM called an overtime ban. Heath immediately declared a state of national emergency and, effective on 1 January 1974, a three-day week. With a national miners' strike threatened, he called a general election for 28 February,

ostensibly to ask the electorate to resolve the question of 'who governs' but, in reality, to seek a somewhat ambiguous mandate.⁵ The Liberal campaign adroitly exploited the government's acute economic and industrial problems and the deep disillusionment with the major parties. Its call for non-adversarial politics and moderate government that put the national interest first struck a chord with the public. Some polls showed that in just three weeks, the Liberals' popularity more than trebled, from seven per cent to over twenty per cent.⁶

Viv Bingham wistfully recalled the heady atmosphere of the campaign. 'The positives for us were so great ... the excitement of Jeremy on television, radio and in the newspapers ... an opinion poll which gave us thirty per cent and the lead ... the excitement from all the by-elections ... it was the most exhilarating of the six I have fought as a candidate.' The issues of the campaign played to the Liberals' strengths – 'the miners strike, when Thorpe was the last person to try to get negotiations revived, the three-day week, high inflation – and we had ideas to put to people for tackling those problems'. He recounted that the *Financial Times* credited the Liberals with having the best-costed economic plan. This should be food for thought for those who still believe that policies are irrelevant to electoral success.

One member of the audience recalled the 'fantastic enthusiasm' and his surprise when people phoned the local Liberal campaign headquarters to offer money immediately after Thorpe's party political broadcasts. Another called the Liberal campaign an 'exciting experience' and remembered hurrying home each evening to watch Thorpe on television.

Richard Wainwright outlined the innovations of the Liberal campaign. He saw the 'community politics' techniques pioneered by Liverpool's Sir Trevor Jones ('Jones the vote') as instrumental to the party's success. But he also viewed the party's 'special seats' strategy, led by Thorpe himself, as particularly important. Based on an initiative that had helped Russell Johnston win Inverness in 1964, certain constituencies

received extra resources, some money and regular guidance and were 'monitored by Jeremy himself to the most rigorous standards'. (So much for the myth that 'target seats' were a 1990s' invention!) The operation had to be kept secret, he explained, both to prevent the other parties from neutralising the Liberal campaign and to avoid internal acrimony.

Despite the campaign's excitement and innovation, the results were a huge disappointment. Bingham remembered being particularly exasperated at the electoral system, as the Liberals won nineteen per cent of the votes cast but barely two per cent of the seats. But the party's total vote fell well short of the 22–23 per cent ratings shown by leading polling organisations just days before the election. Indeed, the Marplan poll taken the weekend before polling day put the Liberals' support at twenty-eight per cent, enough for a rich harvest of seats.⁷ A first-time candidate from the election believed that the party lost two million potential votes in the five days before polling day. ('For no apparent reason, it just drifted ... you could feel it slipping away on the Monday and Tuesday.') However, the panel did not discuss the possible reasons for the late slump in support. Did the public suddenly get 'cold feet' about the prospect of greater Liberal influence?

Jeremy Thorpe arrives at Downing Street for talks with Edward Heath, 2 March 1974



Or had the party failed to give sufficiently clear indications about what it would do with greater strength in the Commons?

Indeed, when Heath found himself without a Commons majority, the Liberals had no real answer to the crucial question of how they would use their new leverage. Worse still, they had no agreed process for finding one. On the Saturday after polling day, Heath offered Thorpe a Conservative–Liberal Coalition, with a cabinet post for himself. Whilst the two men have offered differing accounts of the extent to which Thorpe was attracted to such an arrangement, and whether or not he asked to be made Home Secretary,⁸ they certainly agreed that he would consult his party.

Liberal MPs, activists and supporters were up in arms, convinced they were being stitched up. Cyril Smith's memories were instructive:

In retrospect, perhaps one or two us over-reacted but ... my phone never stopped ringing for the whole of that weekend from all over the British Isles, and every single one said 'we didn't vote Liberal to put Heath back in power'. There is no way we could have gone into coalition after that election. My problem was during that weekend I kept seeing things on television – 'Mr Thorpe's gone to Downing Street' – but my colleagues and I knew nothing. I was angry with Jeremy at the whole but in retrospect he had his hands full. On the Sunday morning, I got [a call] from [Chief Whip] David Steel asking me, on Jeremy's behalf, what I felt. That pleased me a little more but one thing that worried me was that it was on TV that [Thorpe] was having meetings with certain Liberal peers about what he should do. I told [Steel] that 'I'm against' and to tell Jeremy that 'today's men will settle the party's policy, not yesterday's men.' I realise now the criticism was unfair but [until the Sunday morning] I hadn't a clue what was going on apart from what was on television.

Interestingly, Tim Beaumont, one of the peers with whom Thorpe met, recalled that they were

unanimous that 'we could not prop up [Heath] who had failed to govern, and had called the election and lost', and 'even more important, the arithmetic did not add up', for the combined Conservative and Liberal totals were still a few seats short of an overall majority.

The Commons parliamentary party met at 11 a.m. on Monday, 4 March. Paul Tyler recalled that the media were due to arrive at noon. 'It took a quarter of an hour for Thorpe to recognise, as he had already recognised, that the two crucial issues were that Heath had been defeated and that the arithmetic did not stand up.' The parliamentary party agreed, unanimously, according to Cyril Smith, to turn down the Prime Minister's supplementary offer of a Speaker's Conference on electoral reform, with no guarantee that the findings would be adopted, and to call instead for an all-party government of national unity. If that were not possible, the Liberals would support a minority Conservative government on the basis of a mutually agreed programme. Heath and his colleagues could not accept this and he immediately resigned, clearing the way for Harold Wilson to form a minority Labour government. Tyler was at some pains to rebut 'the great deal of misinformation about what happened that weekend ... people still say the Liberals were pushing for more. It wasn't like that ... Heath was desperate to hang on to power, having been so soundly defeated. He was looking for any way to save himself.'

Cyril Smith looked back on the short-lived 1974 Parliament with some affection. The Conservatives would not move a vote of no confidence against the Wilson government, for fear of precipitating a new election at which they would surely suffer an even more convincing defeat. 'One night, we went and sat on the official Opposition front bench to show who was the real Opposition and [Conservative MP] Maurice Macmillan walked in and tried to shove me off. I said to him: "Look, Maurice, I'm twenty-eight stone". He gave it up as a bad job and we carried on.'

But, as Richard Wainwright made clear, it was a very difficult period for the Liberal Party. Everyone recognised

Isle of Ely By-Election

Tim Beaumont

The Isle of Ely by-election was my finest Liberal hour. Cle Freud [the successful Liberal candidate] had been my food and wine correspondent on the magazine *Time & Tide* and had become a personal friend. When he told me that he wanted to fight a parliamentary seat for the Liberals, we spread out copies of the *Times Guide to the House of Commons* on my drawing-room floor and worked out which MP in a winnable seat was most likely to die. I am far from clear how he got on to the approved list.

Then Sir Harry Legge-Bourke died and there was a by-election. The Tories selected a young London stockbroker, with no East Anglian connections, to fight this rather idiosyncratic seat. His lowest point was a live telly meeting for all three candidates. Cle had planted a question as to what the candidates thought of a body with a daunting acronym – MAFDAS, I think it was. The Conservative fell into the trap and said it was ‘a good thing’. Cle then challenged him as to what the acronym meant. He suggested it was a farmers co-operative, whereas it turned out to be the Mid-Anglian Family Doctors’ Aid Scheme.

The local Liberal Party consisted of three men, three women and a dog and did not believe that local government seats should be fought on party lines. We quickly discovered that Cle knew no Liberal policy although his reflexes were impeccably liberal. I used to sit at the table at public meetings and answer most of the questions until at one meeting a voter intimated that they wanted the organ-grinder, not the monkey. I

thought that a bit hard since if you analysed the situation I *was* the organ-grinder.

Then we got into a routine. After the morning press conference we decided what policy we were going to plug next. Hilary Muggridge [Beaumont’s assistant] used the hotel’s payphone to call Peter Knowlson [Director of Research] at HQ and found out what our policy was. It then became the theme of the evening speech and the subject of the next day’s press conference. We were lucky not to have the top Fleet Street reporters until the last week, since the general verdict in the national press was that Cle had no chance.

We skated over a lot of thin ice. Cle was a director of the Playboy Club and Victor Lowndes appeared with a Rolls Royce full of bunny girls in miniskirts at one of the village meetings, and had to be directed by Hillary to a local hostelry. There Cle joined them after the meeting and no-one went home till morning. At one meeting a voter asked whether we really thought that the non-conformist worthies of East Anglia would vote for director of the Playboy Club. As we were preparing to answer this quite tricky question, another voter asked why they should not, since the last member but one had been Jimmy de Rothschild, a Liberal with a string of racehorses and ‘a Jew to boot’.

It must have been the fun by-election of all time. As to its significance, we can only answer, in the closing words of Arnold Bennett’s *The Card*: ‘What important cause has it been associated with? Why, the immortal cause of cheering us all up!’

that, within a matter of months, a new election would have to be held. ‘The spring and the summer are difficult times for intensive electioneering,’ he reflected, ‘it was asking a lot of the party – two elections in one year [were] very hard on people’. Wilson finally went to the country in October and won an overall majority of three seats. The Liberal share of the vote dropped by one per cent and the party suffered a net loss of one seat compared to February.⁹ Tim Beaumont wryly observed that ‘One More Heave’, the campaign slogan for the October election, was adopted ‘against the better judgement of a great many of us’. But the fringe did not have time to address the strategic, tactical and organisational shortcomings of the second campaign, most notably the absence of a robust strategy for an electoral contest under a Labour government and the party’s

failure to address the critical ‘balance of power’ issue.¹⁰

For all the wistful memories and intriguing insights, the meeting will probably also be remembered for an unfortunate incident. At the back of the room sat Jeremy Thorpe, now old and crippled by illness. When he tried to speak during a brief question period, the chair curtly refused to call him, much to the regret of most present. When the meeting closed and we all left, the lost triumph of 1974 seemed so much longer ago.

1 The result was: Labour 301, Conservatives 297, Liberals 14, SNP 7, Plaid Cymru 2, United Ulster Unionist Council 11, SDLP 1, Others 2.

2 Tim (now Lord) Beaumont was Chairman of the Liberal Party campaign in February 1974. At both elections, Sir Cyril Smith was returned as MP for Rochdale, which he had won in a by-election in October 1972. Viv Bingham fought Heywood & Royton at both elections. In February, Richard Wainwright won back the Colne Valley seat he had lost in 1970, and was re-elected in October.

Paul Tyler won Bodmin by nine votes in February, but was defeated in October.

3 See Sir Alec Cairncross, ‘The Heath government and the British economy’ in Stuart Ball and Anthony Seldon (eds.), *The Heath Government 1970–74* (Longman, 1996), pp. 139–60, and Edmund Dell, *The Chancellors* (Harper Collins, 1996), Chapter 13.

4 See Chris Cook, *A Short History of the Liberal Party 1900–92* (Macmillan, 1993), pp. 152–55.

5 See John Campbell, *Edward Heath: A Biography*, pp. 599–603 and Dennis Kavanagh, ‘The fatal choice: the calling of the February 1974 election,’ in Ball and Seldon, *op. cit.*, pp. 351–70 at pp. 365–67.

6 See David Butler and Denis Kavanagh, *The British General Election of February 1974* (Macmillan, 1974), pp. 128–33, pp. 44ff.

7 Michael Steed, ‘The Electoral Strategy of the Liberal Party,’ in V. Bogdanor (ed), *Liberal Party Politics*, pp. 73–98 at p. 87.

8 Edward Heath, *The Course of My Life* (Coronet, 1998), p. 518 and Jeremy Thorpe, *In My Own Time* (Politico’s, 1999), pp. 113–18.

9 The Liberals gained Truro but lost Bodmin and Hazel Grove. In addition, Christopher Mayhew, a sitting Labour MP who had defected from Labour in July, failed to take Bath.

10 See William Wallace, ‘Survival and Revival’ in Bogdanor, *op. cit.*, pp. 43–72 at pp. 68–69, and Steed, *op. cit.*, at pp. 85–88.

Reviews

The men and their times

Roy Jenkins: *The Chancellors* (Macmillan, 1998)

Reviewed by Colin Darracott

This book contains nineteen essays about all the Chancellors of the Exchequer from Lord Randolph Churchill, who took up the post in 1886, to Hugh Dalton, who resigned in 1947. It is not a series of records and assessments of their performances as chancellors, nor is it a detailed sixty-year history of state fiscal and monetary management.

Except for four of them, each piece is a personal vignette of the man's character, life and career, with brief but adequate contexts, and Jenkins' views of his subjects as gentlemen of the establishment and of public office. (The four exceptions are Asquith, Lloyd George, Baldwin and Winston Churchill, who have been so extensively written about, including by Jenkins in the case of Asquith and Baldwin, that there seemed no point in doing much more than provide resumé of their circumstances and

performances at the Treasury, thus providing a modicum of continuity.)

There is plenty of judgement about the character of the men and the efficacy or otherwise of their deeds, whether as chancellors or in other public offices. For example, Jenkins is scathing about the unwholesomely ingratiating character of Sir John Simon, the Liberal defector of the 1930s and later one of the wartime (and, in Jenkins' view, satisfactory) chancellors. He is very amusing about Sir John Anderson (later Lord Waverley), as a man of monumental rectitude, and an unstoppable achiever through the sheer inertia of huge and dull authority. The description of the latter reminded me of someone, and I realised later that, as described, Anderson bears marked similarity to Jenkins himself.

He also quotes the famous line on the First Lord of the Admiralty: 'Goschen has no notion of the motion of the ocean'. As a Chancellor of the Exchequer, Goschen was much less memorable. He is surprisingly defensive about Winston Churchill as chancellor, who is commonly criticised for taking sterling back to the gold standard, whereas here we are told about the enormous persuasion required to make him do it.

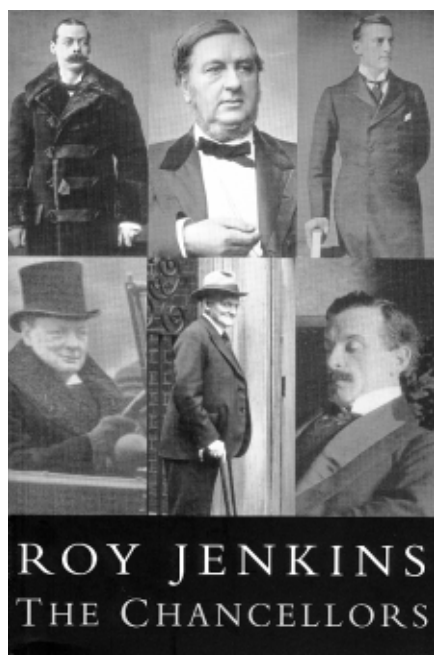
I also thought Jenkins was more than fair to the Chamberlains, Austen and Neville, to whom history has not been generous. Austen has been frequently seen as his father's failed attempt at cloning himself, but Jenkins, while not underplaying Joseph's overpowering influence, grants some credit to Austen as a man, and to some extent portrays him as a victim of

circumstances in his failure to make it to the very top, or to leave a recognised mark on history. Neville does not escape descriptions such as narrow-minded and self-righteous, but is somewhat redeemed by being an efficient minister, notwithstanding his – ultimately tragic – big failure.

The overall impression of the men and their times is that the establishment threw up a mix. There are occasional men of brilliance: Asquith, Lloyd George and Winston Churchill – flawed, but truly historical. There is much mediocrity: Harcourt, Hicks Beach, McKenna, Anderson (notwithstanding his grandeur). But mostly you are left with the impression that there is mostly dross: especially unlucky Bonar Law, Snowden, the two Chamberlains and Simon. In other words, these essays are some pictures, glimpses as if in cameos, of some men who played their parts in the relative decline of the nation, and a few who strove against the grain.

You trust Jenkins with his opinions, because he seems to be balanced enough with the evidence and never truly nasty or encomiastic. It is a very good read indeed: light, informative and entertaining, journalistic rather than learned. Jenkins manages to cram in lots of information and also creates a gentle historical flow. For those not recently well-read about the history of the last 150 years, this book may rekindle an interest. For those who have been students of the detail of the period, the book humanises some of the players, and brings others out of obscurity, but it is not meant to be an historical analysis. The language, as ever, is pleasurable, except where Jenkins indulges his habit of using obscure, ugly words (such as fructuous, bombinating, eleemosynary). There's about eight like this, but at least he didn't use ratiocination, his favourite word of all.

Jenkins doesn't write about living people or the recently dead in the way he does here. I understand why he doesn't, but it's a pity, because if he wrote about all the chancellors since Dalton, we'd be reminded of many we know and grew up with in our press and media. And with Jenkins as our guide, that would be enlightening and fun.



Of Liberals and Liberalism

Duncan Brack and Robert Ingham (eds.): *Dictionary of Liberal Quotations* (Politico's Publishing, 1999)

Reviewed by Tony Greaves

This is a nice smart book in an attractive dust-wrapper with over 2000 quotations 'by and about Liberal Democrats, Liberals and Social Democrats'. It's another collaboration between the Liberal Democrat History Group and Iain Dale at Politico's and it's another 'why hasn't it been done before?' job.

I now declare certain interests. Tony Greaves makes a couple of minor appearances, and Liber Books have copies on sale. In that spirit, this is of course a book that every Liberal Democrat should have on their shelves ... More impartially, that is still true. Readers of *Liberal Democrat News* will know that I'm a fan of quotations, and if you have to write articles or make speeches you'll want this collection. Well done to the eds.

I wondered how to set about reviewing such a book. First I made a quick and rather random list of famous Liberal quotes I remembered, and looked them up. I found Campbell-Bannerman's 'acts of barbarism' but not Asquith's 'acts of blind revenge'. Gladstone ('trust in the people ...'), Grimond ('sound of gunfire') and Steel ('go back to your constituencies') turned up on cue, but I was surprised to find that 'if goods do not cross frontiers armies will' is attributed to Lady Violet Bonham Carter rather than to Richard Cobden as I had long supposed.

At first I couldn't find the famous Liberal bit from the Book of Isaiah ('But the liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand') which must have been the text for many a disgracefully political sermon in the chapels of yore. Then I found it with this elegant King James wording in Bob MacLennan's delightful foreword, which is the best thing in the

book! It turned up later under 'Bible' – silly me, thinking to look for 'Isaiah' – but with a slightly different wording which must come from one of the slightly sloppy attempts to 'modernise' the Good Book.

I was pleased to find Penhaligon's 'stick it on a piece of paper' but disappointed to find a fairly feeble offering from Trevor Jones 'The Vote' of Liverpool rather than the rousing 'But the votes, fellow Liberals ... I love the votes!' from his famous presidential address to the Liberal Assembly.

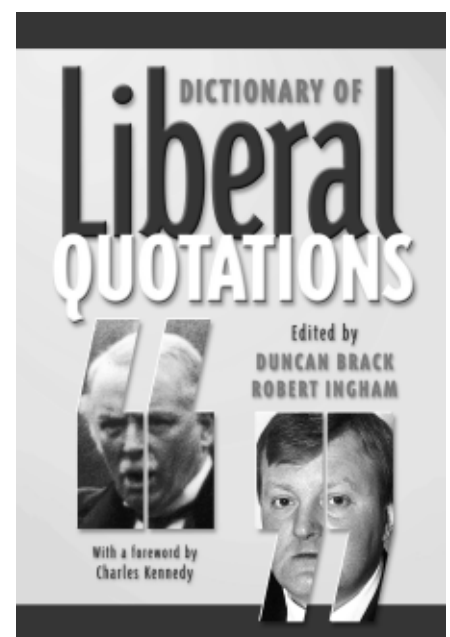
Of course, no collection can include everything. But the overall balance of this one is disappointing. There is too much from the non-Liberal wing of the old SDP – from and about those people like David Owen who do not belong here. There are rather a lot of inconsequential quotes from obscure Americans who may or may not have been Liberals of a sort. Even Thomas Jefferson, who certainly does merit inclusion, begins to weary the reader's interest after nine full pages and more to come! I would have omitted at least a quarter of the entries, which appear to have been dredged up in a trawl of existing collections, and (I suspect) the Internet, for 'liberty', 'freedom' and 'democracy', rather than liberalism as such, from anyone and any perspective. The most ludicrous entry is a comment on 'freedom' from *Mein Kampf*. This goes far beyond items 'by and about Liberal Democrats, Liberals and Social Democrats' and in my view simply does not belong here.

In similar vein there are four pages of Burke and four of Bagehot that I would happily junk. But there is a very big hole consisting of Liberals and the Liberal Party for about forty years after the Great War. Of course

Lloyd George and Keynes are here, though Beveridge is a little disappointing. And lots of Asquithian 'wit', not least from the ascerbic tongue of Lady Vi. But of the rest? The people who kept Liberal ideas and the Liberal Party afloat during the long desolate years and to whom we owe so much? Here's a count at some random: Elliott Dodds two, Richard Wainwright one, Desmond Banks none, Ramsay Muir three, Donald Wade none, Enid Lakeman none. So the Dictionary falls down rather, for this era at least, in another of its functions – to provide dippers-in with some understanding of the history, and historic thought, of our movement.

Just one more gripe. The index is not entirely adequate for such a book since it's based only on words rather than short phrases, and if you look up words like 'liberalism' or 'democracy' it's useless. Presumably it was generated in a modern electronic kind of way rather than by the old-fashioned midnight candle and quill pen! And there is no list or index of the authors, or indeed in many cases any sufficient explanation of who they are or were.

But these are the gripes of a reader seeking perfection. A second edition may get closer, and in the meantime we have a useful and entertaining book to keep close at hand on the desk, by the bedside or in the bog.



Letters

Clement Davies: a brief reply

Robert Ingham

E mlyn Hooson is to be congratulated for his excellent paper on the life of Clement Davies (*Journal of Liberal Democrat History* 24) which included many fresh insights into his life and career, not least the discussion of Davies' problems with alcohol. Hooson makes a brave attempt to restore the traditional image of Davies as a great but underestimated Liberal leader, well expressed in Douglas' history of the Liberal Party, which has been tarnished in recent years.¹ Rather than concentrate on Davies' greatest triumph – his decision to refuse a cabinet post in Churchill's 1951 government, which almost certainly saved the Liberal Party from extinction – Hooson takes in the full sweep of Davies' career, bringing his academic and legal abilities to the fore as well as several previously little-known aspects of his public work.

As Hooson acknowledges, any assessment of Davies' career must account for its many twists and turns, including his years as a National Liberal MP. Nevertheless, Hooson's account ignores several episodes which cast a shadow over Davies' record as Liberal leader. I am in no position to offer a definitive assessment of Davies' life and career as a whole – I too eagerly await a full biography – but I tend to agree with those historians, such as K. O. Morgan, who have used terms such as 'ineffectual' and 'erratic' when describing Davies' record.

First, Hooson does not mention that Davies was, along with several Conservative MPs, a member of the Anglo-German Fellowship before the Second World War. According to a contemporary account, 'at meetings of the

Anglo-German Fellowship, leading Nazis advertise the merits of Germany's internal and foreign policy; the Society recommends and advertises the writings of Nazi politicians; it shows and advertises Fascist films; it arranges a "German Educationalist" to address teachers in this country; it arranges invitations for its members to attend the Nazi Congress at Nuremberg'.² Davies' position with Unilever may have influenced him to join this organisation, but it must be questioned how a Liberal could have supported an organisation designed to promote links between the British establishment and the Nazi regime.

Secondly, there is much work to be done if Davies is to be acquitted from the charge of being an erratic Member of Parliament. After spending most of the 1930s as a National Liberal supporter of an essentially Conservative government he metamorphosed into a left-wing Liberal during the Second World War. He, and his close ally Tom Horabin, were members of the Liberal Action Group, later Radical Action, and were described as the 'twin spirits of Liberal oppositionism in the wartime Parliament'.³ Davies was privately a supporter of those Liberals who broke the electoral truce to fight wartime by-elections, an attitude which put him radically out of kilter with the Liberal leadership.

As Liberal leader he made Horabin, who had penned in 1944 a personal manifesto, *Politics Made Plain*, which owed little to official Liberal policy, his chief whip. Horabin must surely have been the only chief whip of modern times to have left his own party while still in charge of party

discipline! Davies and Horabin adopted a strategy of out-flanking Labour from the left, which relied upon Labour being less radical in office than they had promised during the 1945 election campaign. Still attending Radical Action conferences as Liberal leader, Davies admitted that this had failed, arguing at a weekend meeting in Brackley in April 1946 that all Labour lacked was a 'war cabinet' to implement their programme.⁴ There is evidence that later, before the 1951 election, Davies was in talks with Tom Reid, Labour MP for Swindon and an ally of Herbert Morrison, to agree a joint policy programme intended to gain Liberal support for the teetering Labour Government.⁵ In March 1951 Philip Noel-Baker remembered Davies telling him that 'somehow the two progressive parties *must* get together to save the world'.⁶ Yet Davies acquired a reputation as a right-wing leader and the election manifestos upon which he led the Liberal Party into battle lacked the whiff of his wartime radicalism.

Hooson helps explain this apparent paradox when he quotes Davies' letter to Gilbert Murray, in which Davies bemoans the splits which any act of definite leadership on his part would be bound to cause. One problem was Davies' lack of authority within his own party. He was for several years described only as chairman of the Liberal MPs, rather than Liberal leader, because his colleagues would have preferred to see Sir Archibald Sinclair lead the party.⁷ Sinclair's inability to regain Caithness & Sutherland in 1950 was the only reason why Davies continued as Liberal leader thereafter. Davies' National Liberal past counted against him as far as many senior Liberals were concerned. Violet Bonham Carter wrote bitterly to Sir Gilbert Murray of what she regarded as Davies' 'Tory' past and described Davies as 'a jellyfish who drifts on every tide and has no spine or bone of principle in his whole make-up. He has no mind of his own and goes wherever he is pushed and pulled'.⁸

Finally, Hooson's praise for Davies'

Enquiries

The Liberal Democrat History Group receives many requests for help for information about incidents, or individuals, in the history of the Liberal Party, SDP or Liberal Democrats.

This new column reprints some of the queries, and also some of the replies. We hope readers can help with the former, and will be interested in the latter!

Liberal cartoonist

Brian Jones, of Leeds, asks us for help with his interest in the cartoonist Sir Francis Carruthers Gould.

‘He was a (very) Liberal cartoonist, knighted in 1906, no doubt for his election cartoons, and drew for the *Westminster Gazette*, and *Tirl* amongst many.

Apart from a monograph produced by the Cartoon Centre at Canterbury and a manuscript autobiography in the House of Lords Record Office (fairly illegible, written in his old age in the 1920s) I have been unable to discover much about him.

Apart from half a dozen of his drawings and quite a number of his books, I

know little about him.

But it was nice to see such a blatantly biased liberal cartoonist when I first came across his work. I have a letter from Lord Rosebery to Carruthers Gould written after the “khaki election” of 1900, thanking him for his election cartoons with the thought that either Liberalism is dead or the British have lost their sense of humour!

I would welcome any information about him.’

Please send any information you have to the Editor (see page 2 for contact details). If enough material is collected, we hope to run an article about Carruthers Gould in a future issue of the *Journal*.

Scottish victories over Labour

Jim Wallace QC MP MSP, Deputy First Minister in the Scottish Executive, asked us to find out when was the last time the Liberals gained a seat from Labour in Scotland at a general election – following Nicol Stephen’s gain of Aberdeen South (a Labour seat in Westminster) in the Scottish Parliament in May 1999.

The answer is never, at least under ‘normal circumstances’. Gains under abnormal circumstances were as follows:

1931: Dundee – a two member-seat which the Liberal (Dingle Foot) fought together with a Conservative

1931: Paisley – Conservative withdrew to permit Liberal victory

1931: Edinburgh East – Conservative withdrew to permit Liberal victory

1923: Stirling & Falkirk Burghs – no Conservative candidate

1922: Kirkcaldy Burghs – National Liberal gain, no Conservative candidate (National Liberal MP later stood as Liberal candidate)

Clement Davies: a brief reply

continued

leadership of the Liberal Party extends little further than the essentially negative decision to reject a cabinet post in 1951. I cannot readily think of a single policy initiative associated with or launched by Davies during his eleven-year spell at the helm of the Liberal Party. On the crucial debates – about co-ownership of industry and free trade – Davies was silent. Although Hooson mentions Davies’ commitment to European integration, the Liberal Party’s attitude to even this issue was not settled until after Davies retired.⁹ One issue, concerning the abolition of identity cards, was presented on a plate to Davies in 1951,

but, although he asked a couple of relevant questions in the House of Commons, the campaign for abolition was primarily extra-parliamentary and there was not a word on the issue in the Liberals’ 1951 election manifesto.¹⁰

In conclusion, I suspect that the terms ‘ineffective’ and ‘erratic’ apply rather well to Clement Davies. Other politicians described him as such and so did the majority of the eighty or so Liberal activists from the era that I have interviewed in the course of my research.¹¹ Davies’ life and career do certainly require greater study, but I think it would be unduly generous to describe him as an underestimated politician.

- 1 R. Douglas, *History of the Liberal Party 1895–1970*, 1971, p. 277.
- 2 S. Haxey, *Tory MP*, 1939, p. 207.
- 3 D. Johnson, *Bars and Barricades*, 1952, p. 217.
- 4 Minutes of Radical Action meeting at Brackley, 7 April 1946, Lancelot Spicer papers (private).
- 5 Morgan Phillips papers.
- 6 M. Jones, *A Radical Life: the Biography of Megan Lloyd George 1902–66*, 1994, p. 215.
- 7 For instance see J. Rasmussen, *The Liberal Party: Retrenchment and Revival*, 1966, pp. 41–43.
- 8 Letters from V. Bonham Carter to G. Murray, 6 April 1950 and 18 May 1950.
- 9 See *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* 11 (June 1996), p. 11.
- 10 *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* 17 (winter 1997–98), pp. 16–17.
- 11 Morgan Phillips described Davies as extremely ineffective in correspondence with M. Starr, June 1952.

Archives

Liberal Party Archives at the National Library of Wales

J. Graham Jones

Ever since the foundation of the National Library of Wales in 1909, the Department of Manuscripts and Records has acted as a national archival repository, and has acquired and preserved the papers of a number of prominent Welsh Liberal politicians. Many of the generation of distinguished Liberal politicians who had been closely associated with the movement to set up a National Library in the late nineteenth century were themselves professional men, often barristers, solicitors or academics, or else they came from a commercial background, and were thus archivally minded, fully sensitive to the historical significance of their papers, and thus to the necessity of preserving them in good order.

By the 1970s, however, there was a growing awareness that many politicians and political activists were simply unaware of the historical importance of the papers which they acquired, and so too the officials of local political parties and pressure groups. Many significant groups of political papers and the records of local parties had ceased to exist. During the whole of the 1970s, not a single significant Liberal archive had come to hand. It was in order to rectify these deficiencies that the Welsh Political Archive was established at the NLW in the spring of 1983. Its original remit was wide-ranging: 'to co-ordinate the collection of all materials – manuscript, printed and audio-visual – concerning politics in Wales'. So hard-hitting has been the impact of the Archive that the intervening seventeen years have

witnessed a sharp upsurge in the inflow of political archives, including those of the Liberal Party.

This account is confined to archives and collections of papers dating from about 1885. Only significant archives and groups of records are listed. A comprehensive guide to small archives and stray items relevant to the history of the Liberal Party would have led to a list of inordinate length.

David Lloyd George papers

In any consideration of the personal papers of Liberal politicians, precedence must be given to those of David Lloyd George, Liberal MP for the Caernarfon Boroughs, 1890–1945, Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1908–15, and Prime Minister, 1916–22. The most extensive group of his political papers, those which he bequeathed to his second wife Frances, and which she subsequently sold to Lord Beaverbrook in 1949 (and hence originally held at the Beaverbrook Library) are now in the custody of the Parliamentary Archive (the Record Office at the House of Lords). But the National Library of Wales now holds no fewer than seven important Lloyd George archives, six of them acquired during the last twenty years. At the beginning of 1910, after Lloyd George, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, had agreed to a government grant of £4,000 to the embryonic National Library of Wales (as well as a special grant of £500 a year for two years for cataloguing manuscripts), his close political associ-

ate Sir John Herbert Lewis, Liberal MP for Flintshire (then parliamentary secretary to the Local Government Board), wrote to thank him effusively for this 'courageous act', proceeding, 'The Library will be at, I hope, a very distant date your literary mausoleum'.¹ This hope has by now been largely fulfilled. The seven Lloyd George archives may be enumerated as follows:

1. Brynawelon group (NLW MSS 20,403–93): Purchase 1969
2. Earl Lloyd-George Papers (NLW MSS 21,787–92, NLW MSS 22,514–37, and NLW ex 1069): Purchase 1982 and 1987
3. William George Papers: Purchase 1989
4. Olwen Carey-Evans Papers (NLW MSS 22,823–37): Purchase 1990
5. A. J. Sylvester Papers: Purchase 1990
6. Viscount Tenby Papers (NLW MSS 23,657–71): Purchase 1996
7. Frances Stevenson Family Papers: Purchase 2000

Among these archives, two groups of papers are quite outstanding – Lloyd George's letters to his first wife Dame Margaret within the Brynawelon group, and those to his brother William in the William George Papers. Lloyd George was at no time a prolific correspondent, writing very sparingly to both personal friends and political associates. But he did write regularly, often daily, to his wife Margaret, who (at least during the early years of their marriage) much preferred the domestic tranquillity of Cricieth to the political bustle of Westminster, and to his younger brother William, who conscientiously ran the Cricieth-based family legal practice Lloyd George & George, and who acted as Lloyd George's election agent and ever-loyal political lieutenant within the Caernarfon Boroughs. Lloyd George wrote secure in the knowledge that both groups of letters would be perused anxiously and proudly by his revered uncle and mentor Richard Lloyd ('Uncle Lloyd'). Many of the series of some 2,000 letters from Lloyd George to Dame Margaret, 1885–1936 (NLW MSS 20403–42) have been edited and published by Professor Kenneth O. Morgan.² The even longer series of

3,292 letters from Lloyd George to William, 1886–1917 – often fuller, more revealing and more intensely political than his epistles to Margaret – have been used by only a small number of writers and researchers. The William George Papers also include ten pocket diaries kept by the young Lloyd George from 1878 (when he was only fifteen years of age) until 1888.

The papers of Lloyd George's devoted principal private secretary from 1923, *Albert James Sylvester (1889–1989)* include many files of correspondence and papers potently illuminating his employer's activities and aspirations after his fall from power in 1922. There is also a long series of very detailed typescript diaries which include much important material beyond that published by Colin Cross in 1975.³ Among the Viscount Tenby Papers purchased in 1996 is much material concerning *Major Gwilym Lloyd-George, first Viscount Tenby (1894–1967)*, the Liberal (later National Liberal) MP for Pembrokeshire, 1922–24 and 1929–50, who later served from 1951–57 as the National Liberal and Conservative MP for Newcastle-upon-Tyne North, and who became Home Secretary and Minister for Welsh Affairs under Prime Ministers Churchill and Eden.⁴ The most recent acquisition, purchased only in January of this year, is a small 'residue' of the papers of *Frances Stevenson, the Dowager Countess Lloyd-George of Dwyfor (1888–1972)*, which Ruth Longford used as the basis of her graphic and vivid study of her grandmother published in 1996.⁵

The Brynawelon group also includes a few of the papers of *Lady Megan Lloyd George (1902–66)*, the youngest of the five children of David and Margaret Lloyd George, who was the Liberal MP for Anglesey, 1929–51 (in the former year becoming the first-ever woman MP in the history of Wales), and, who, having formally embraced socialism in April 1955, served as the Labour MP for Carmarthenshire, 1957–66.⁶ A notoriously lax correspondent, Megan was woefully negligent of her personal papers, and rarely kept a diary of any kind. The National Library was, therefore, delighted in 1993 to succeed in

acquiring a long sequence of more than 700 letters, 1940–57, from the Labour MP *Philip Noel-Baker (1889–1982)* to Megan with whom she shared a very close, if intermittent, relationship from 1936 until 1956. Mervyn Jones's highly acclaimed biography of Lady Megan is largely founded on this substantial series of letters.⁷

Although small groups of correspondence and papers and stray items will undoubtedly come to light in future, it may be noted with confidence that no major Lloyd George archive now remains in private hands.⁸

Contemporaries of Lloyd George

The National Library also holds substantial archives of the papers of many of the distinguished Liberal politicians who were Lloyd George's early contemporaries at Westminster. Among them are:

David Davies, Llandinam (1880–1944). MP for Montgomeryshire, 1906–29; parliamentary private secretary to D. Lloyd George when he was Minister of Munitions and Prime Minister, 1916–17; founder of the New Commonwealth Association; created the first Baron Davies of Llandinam, 1932.

Sir Owen M. Edwards (1858–1920). MP for Merionethshire, 1899–1900; first chief inspector of schools in Wales under the new Welsh Education Department, 1907.

Thomas Edward Ellis (1859–99). MP for Merionethshire, 1886–99; second Liberal whip under Gladstone, 1892; chief whip under Rosebery, 1894. There is also a substantial group of papers relating to T. E. Ellis among those of his close friend and confidant *D. R. Daniel (1859–1931)*, and among those of his son *Dr T. I. Ellis (1899–1970)*.

Sir Samuel T. Evans (1859–1918). MP for Mid-Glamorgan, 1890–1910; Solicitor-General, 1908–10; President of the Divorce, Probate and Admiralty Court, 1910–18.

Thomas Gee (1815–98). Liberal journalist, author and publisher. Editor of the

highly influential *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*.

Sir John Herbert Lewis (1858–1933). MP for Flint Boroughs, 1892–1906, Flintshire, 1906–18, and the University of Wales, 1918–22; Junior Lord of the Treasury and a Liberal Party Whip, 1905; parliamentary secretary to the Local Government Board, 1909–15; Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, 1915–22.

A. C. Humphreys-Owen (1836–1905). MP for Montgomeryshire, 1894–1906; close confidant of Stuart Rendel.

Stuart Rendel (1834–1913). MP for Montgomeryshire, 1880–94, first chairman of the Welsh Parliamentary Party from 1888; close friend to W. E. Gladstone.

J. Bryn Roberts (1847–1931). MP for the Eifion division of Caernarfonshire, 1906–18.

D. A. Thomas (1856–1918). MP for Merthyr Tydfil, 1888 – January 1910, and for Cardiff, January–December 1910; Baron Rhondda, January 1916; Viscount Rhondda, June 1918; President of the Local Government Board, 1916–17; Food Controller, 1917–18.

Also in the custody of the National Library are groups of papers of the following Liberal politicians and public figures:

A. H. D. Acland (1847–1926). MP for Rotherham, 1885–99, and for the Chiltern Hundreds, 1899–1919; created 13th Baronet in 1919.

Sir Alfred T. Davies (1861–1949). Permanent Secretary to the Welsh Department of the Board of Education, 1907–25.

Ellis W. Davies (1871–1939). MP for the Eifion division of Caernarfonshire, 1906–18; unsuccessfully contested Caernarfonshire in 1918; MP for the Denbigh division of Denbighshire, 1923–29.

Sir Joseph Davies. Commercial statistician; close associate of D. Lloyd George; member of the 'garden suburb' during World War One.

Matthew L. Vaughan Davies (1840–1935). Unsuccessfully contested Cardiganshire as a Conservative in 1885; MP for Cardiganshire, 1895–1921; created Baron Ystwyth, 1921.

Sir E. Vincent Evans (1851–1934). Prominent London Welshman, notable *eisteddfodwr*, and president of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion.

J. Victor Evans (1895–1957). Liberal candidate for Pontypridd, 1929, and Merthyr Tydfil in the 1934 by-election.

Sir Ellis Jones Ellis-Griffith (1860–1926). Unsuccessfully contested the Toxteth division of Liverpool, 1892; MP for Anglesey, 1895–1918; chairman of the Welsh Parliamentary Liberal Party, 1912; Parliamentary Secretary to the Home Office, 1912–15; unsuccessfully contested the University of Wales, 1922; MP for the Carmarthen District, 1923–24.

Professor W.J. Gruffydd (1881–1954). MP for the University of Wales, 1943–48; prominent Welsh poet and literary critic.

E. Morgan Humphreys (1882–1955). Prominent Liberal journalist and author; corresponded regularly with many Liberal politicians.

E. T. John (1857–1931). MP for East Denbighshire, 1910–18; introduced the Government of Wales Bill in the House of Commons in 1914; joined the Labour Party, 1918, and was defeated in East Denbighshire in the ‘coupon’ general election; stood in Brecon & Radnor in the general elections of 1922 and 1924, and in Anglesey at a by-election in April 1923.

Sir Henry Haydn Jones (1863–1950). MP for Merionethshire, 1910–45; generally antagonistic to D. Lloyd George.

Sir Rhys Hopkin Morris (1888–1956). Independent Liberal MP for Cardiganshire, 1923–32; arch-opponent of Lloyd George; first regional director of the BBC in Wales, 1936–45; MP for Carmarthenshire, 1945–56. There is no party political material among these papers.

J. Herbert Roberts, Baron Clwyd (1863–1951). MP for West Denbighshire, 1892–1918. ‘Some Memories of my Life’ (1937 typescript) (NLW MS 16861C).

The diaries of the *John William Morris, the Lord Morris of Borth-y-Gest (1896–1979)*, the distinguished judge, also include many revealing references to David Lloyd George. There is some material relating to Lloyd George among the papers of his early biographer *W. Watkin Davies (1895–1973)* and in the papers of *T.J. Evans (1863–1932)*, who corresponded with many prominent Liberal politicians of his generation. There are some papers relating to the history of the Liberal Party in Wales in the following personal archives: *Charles E. Breese, Rev. Gwilym Davies, Alderman R. J. Ellis, Aberystwyth, Dr T. I. Ellis, H. Tobit Evans, Alderman J. M. Howell, Aberaeron, T. Mervyn Jones, R. Silyn Roberts and Sir Daniel Lleufer Thomas.*

In 1986 the National Library was able to purchase interesting groups of papers of a father and son, both of them Liberal MPs – *Arthur John Williams (1830–1911)*, MP for South Glamorgan, 1885–95, who came to prominence as one of the primary founders of the National Liberal Club in 1881; and *Eliot Crawshay-Williams (1879–1962)*, assistant private secretary to Winston Churchill at the Colonial Office, 1906–08, and MP for Leicester, 1910–13, when he served as parliamentary private secretary to David Lloyd George who was then Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Dr Thomas Jones CH papers

Also closely associated with Lloyd George was Thomas Jones (1870–1955), who was appointed Secretary to the National Health Insurance Commissioners in 1910, and, largely through Lloyd George’s influence, became Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet in 1916. He served four successive prime ministers – Lloyd George, Bonar Law, Stanley Baldwin

and Ramsay MacDonald – until his retirement in 1930.⁹ A very large archive of Jones’ papers (amounting to 295 bound volumes and twenty-six boxes of papers and volumes) is held at the National Library, concerning many aspects of governmental activity and Welsh life, most of them superbly catalogued by the late Professor Gwyn A. Williams in the 1950s. Class Z comprises a long series of Dr Jones’s diaries, 1899–1937, which he had privately printed in Switzerland, and which include material beyond that available in the published diaries. Jones’ daughter was the *Baroness White of Rhymney (1909–99)* who, as *Eirene White*, served as the Labour MP for East Flintshire, 1950–70. It is anticipated that Lady White’s own papers will be received at the Library very shortly.

Clement Davies papers

Lloyd George is not the only Liberal Party leader whose papers are held at the National Library for a substantial archive of the political and personal papers of E. Clement Davies (1884–1962) has also been deposited by his widow and son.¹⁰ Davies, the Liberal MP for Montgomeryshire, 1929–62, and party leader, 1945–56, never kept a diary or penned his reminiscences. The papers, disappointingly thin for Davies’s ‘Simonite’ period in the thirties, are much fuller for the years after 1945 and contain rich sources for the history of the Liberal Party, Welsh affairs and Montgomeryshire politics. Among the many prominent Liberals who feature in the list of correspondents are Lady Violet Bonham Carter, Jo Grimond, Gilbert Murray, Philip Rea, Sir Herbert Samuel, Sir John Simon and Sir Archibald Sinclair (Lord Thurso). There are also important groups of the papers of Clement Davies’ wife Mrs Jano Clement Davies (1882–1969) and his son Mr Stanley Clement-Davies (b. 1920). The Clement Davies Papers remain under embargo; intending researchers must secure the prior written permission of Mr Stanley Clement-Davies, London.

Party records

An independent Welsh Liberal Party was established for the first time only in 1966. In the wake of the merger of the Liberals and the Social Democratic Party in 1988, a substantial group of records of the WLP was donated to the National Library. These include an incomplete set of the minutes of the executive committee and the general council dating from 1967, the correspondence files of Lord Lloyd of Cilgerran, party treasurer and chairman of the Liberal Party's Law Panels, and an array of subject files concerning local government, party organisation, conferences, campaigns and elections. There is a further series of files relating to individual constituencies, and substantial groups of pamphlets, leaflets and minutes. Papers dating from the last ten years are subject to an embargo, and intending searchers must secure written permission to view them.

The WPA also received the minutes of the short-lived SDP Council for Wales when it was reconstituted in 1988. These are complemented by the records of numerous local SDP branches in Wales, among them Ceredigion & Pembroke North, and the Dyfed Area SDP (both donated by Professor Glanville Price of Aberystwyth), the West Glamorgan Area Party, the Vale of Glamorgan Party, and the Monmouth group. Also in the custody of the Library is a small corpus of the papers of *Mr Jeffrey Thomas (1933–89)*, Labour MP for Abertillery, 1970–83, who joined the SDP very early in its history in 1981. Mr Thomas subsequently stood as the SDP candidate for Cardiff West in the general election of 1983, and later rejoined the Labour Party in 1986.

Among local Liberal Party archives, outstanding sets of records have come to hand from (predictably) the two areas where the Liberal tradition has remained buoyant throughout the twentieth century – Montgomeryshire and Cardiganshire. In both cases fascinating minute books date from the 1920s, providing vivid testimony to the sometimes tumultuous course of political life in these counties, and they

are supplemented by correspondence files, financial records, subject files, press cuttings and political ephemera. The Cardiganshire records are complemented by correspondence and papers donated by *Dr E. Roderic Bowen (b. 1913)* (Liberal MP for the county, 1945–66) in 1984 (NLW MSS 22,015–18) and 1995. The latter deposit includes the papers of *Harry Rees* of Lampeter, the local party's secretary and registration agent in the 1920s. Smaller groups of records derive from the Caernarfonshire and the Vale of Glamorgan constituencies.

The Library has also purchased from the Newport Library a photocopy of the minute book, 1886–89, of meetings of the Welsh Liberal MPs (NLW Fac 627). NLW MS 21,171D is the minute book, 1886–91, of the North Wales Liberal Federation. The Library also holds a small group of records deriving from the 1955 Liberal Party Conference held at Llandudno.

Modern personal papers

The National Library holds groups of papers of the following Liberal politicians and local activists:

Emlyn Hooson (Lord Hooson). MP for Montgomeryshire, 1962–79. Lord Hooson's written permission is required before access to his extensive papers may be granted.

Emrys O. Roberts (1910–90). MP for Merionethshire, 1945–51.
Lord Ogmore (1903–76) (formerly David Rees Rees-Williams). A former Labour MP, 1945–50, he joined the Liberal Party in 1959; Liberal Party President, 1963–64.

Sir Alun Talfan Davies (b. 1913). Independent candidate in the famous University of Wales by-election in 1943; stood as a Liberal in the Carmarthenshire division in the general elections of 1959 and 1964, and Denbighshire in 1966; an activist within the Welsh Liberal Party.

Dr Ben G. Jones (1914–89). Liberal candidate for Merionethshire, 1959.

Mrs Mary Garbett-Edwards (1893–1986). Local Liberal agent in

Montgomeryshire to Clement Davies and Emlyn Hooson.

Dr George Morrison. An activist within the Welsh Liberal Party and the Ceredigion & Pembroke North constituency.

Merfyn Jones. An activist within Aberystwyth, the Ceredigion & Pembroke North division, the WLP and the Liberal Party. His papers include four minute books, 1921–69, of the Aberystwyth Liberal Association.

The contemporary Liberal Democrats are represented in the papers of the following individuals:

Mr Clive Betts. Welsh Affairs correspondent of the *Western Mail*.

Mr Gwyn Griffiths. The last chairman of the Welsh Liberal Party before it merged with the SDP in 1988. A member of the WPA Consultative Committee.

Mr Peter Sain ley Berry. A former Liberal who was a founder member of the SDP in 1981, and who stood as the party's candidate at Swansea West in 1983, Pontypridd in 1987, and Pembroke in 1992.

Rev. Roger Roberts. Stood as the Liberal candidate at Conwy in the general elections of 1987, 1992 and 1997.

W. E. Gladstone papers

This account began with a description of the extensive papers of David Lloyd George. It is perhaps fitting that it should close with a reference to holdings relevant to W. E. Gladstone (1809–98). Stray letters written by Gladstone may be found in a number of archives held by the National Library, among them the papers of Lewis Llewelyn Dillwyn MP, Stuart Rendel MP, Henry Richard MP and Sir Henry Hussey Vivian MP.

The Library has also purchased complete microfilm copies of the most extensive archives of the Gladstone Papers in the custody of St Deiniol's Library, Hawarden, and the British Library as published in the microfilm series *The Papers of the Prime Ministers of Great Britain*, edited by the

late Professor Colin Matthew of Oxford (MFL 54).

Microfilms

Among the extensive microform holdings of the National Library which are of political interest are:

MFC 9–10 Archives of the British Liberal Party (Harvester Microfilms)

MFC 9 Pamphlets and Leaflets
Parts 1–4 1885–1974 4 boxes of microfiche

MFC 10 National Liberal Federation Annual Reports, 1877–1936. 1 box of microfiche

MFL 36 British Political Party General Election Addresses

The National Liberal Club Collection from Bristol University (Harvester Microfilms): Part 1: General Election Addresses, 1892–1922 (12 reels); Part 2: General Election Addresses, 1923–31 (16 reels)

Further election addresses and political leaflets deriving from parliamentary and by-elections after 1945 may be found among the papers of the *Rev. Ivor T. Rees* of Swansea, who has also donated an extensive collection of index cards bearing details of many of the candidates who stood in British parliamentary elections between 1910 and 1983. The Welsh Political Archive, too, has accumulated a near complete set of the election addresses and leaflets issued by Liberal candidates in Welsh constituencies in the general elections of 1983, 1987, 1992 and 1997, parliamentary by-elections in Wales, elections to the European Parliament and the 1999 Welsh Assembly elections, together with some material deriving from local government elections in Wales. These are in addition to the items held by the Library from earlier parliamentary and local election campaigns.

The Library's Sound and Moving Image Collection, established in 1980, has built up a substantial archive of video and audio tapes of programmes of Welsh political interest, including news bulletins, discussion programmes

and debates, and election broadcasts. The NLW is one of only five institutions in Britain permitted to record television and radio programmes off-air. An agreement has been reached with the Local Elections Unit of the University of Plymouth for the exchange of data relating to Welsh local elections. In recent years most of the web pages produced by the political parties have been printed out in hard copy and preserved; this is especially true of those relating to the 1997 general election and to the referenda on devolution in Scotland and Wales, and the 1999 Welsh Assembly elections.

As one of the six copyright (or legal deposit) libraries, the NLW can claim a free copy of almost every monograph or periodical number published within the United Kingdom. The bookstock of about 4.5 million volumes held by the Department of Printed Books includes many relating to British and Welsh politics, together with long runs of journals and newspapers, many of the last-named now on CD-ROM. Finally, the Department of Pictures and Maps holds extensive archives of photographs and portraits, posters and cartoons, many of Liberal politicians.

Welsh Political Archive lectures

In 1987 the Archive instituted an annual public lecture, thirteen of which have been delivered to date. Each has subsequently been published in booklet form, and all remain in print and are available for purchase from the Library. The following would be of particular interest to students of the history of the Liberal Party:

John Grigg, *Lloyd George and Wales* (1988)

Lord Blake, *An incongruous partnership: Lloyd George and Bonar Law* (1992)

Lord Hooson, *Rebirth or Death?: Liberalism in Wales in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century* (1994)

Lord Prys Davies, *Welsh Political Developments in the Twentieth Century* (2000)

In 1989 the Archive also produced a booklet entitled *The 1987 General Election in Wales*, giving the results of the 1983 and 1987 general elections in Wales, with an authoritative introduction by distinguished psephologist Dr Denis Balsom, now a political consultant with HTV and a member of the WPA Consultative Committee.

Access and availability

The reading rooms of the National Library are normally open to accredited readers from 9.30 am until 6.00 p.m. on weekdays, and from 9.30 am until 5.00 p.m. on Saturdays. The Library is closed on Sundays, Bank Holidays and during the first full week in October. Admission (for a few days) is by reader's pass which may be issued upon production of an identification document such as a passport, bank card or driving licence. Readers wishing to make more extensive use of the Library's resources may make application for a five-year reader's ticket. Holders of readers' tickets may consult the holdings of the Welsh Political Archive, but access to some records and papers of recent date is restricted by embargo. Readers are, therefore, advised to make appropriate enquiries before visiting the Library.

How are the holdings best approached?

Since 1985 the Welsh Political Archive has published a biannual *Newsletter*, twenty-eight numbers of which have hitherto seen the light of day. Each issue contains details of the archives and items which have been accessioned during the course of the previous six months. This is probably the best starting point for the student of the history of the Liberal Party. Earlier accessions may be traced through the Library's *Annual Reports* which have been published ever since 1909, and which are now available for searching on a free-text data base. The *Guide to the Department of Manuscripts and Records* (Aberystwyth, NLW, 1994) is a most helpful annotated survey of the archive groups and collections in

the custody of the Department of Manuscripts. It is hoped that a 'Guide to the Welsh Political Archive' will be published at some point in the future. Almost all departmental lists and catalogues are now available for consultation at the public search room of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, Quality House, Quality Court, Chancery Lane, London, WC2A 1HP. Many have also been published commercially in *The National Inventory of Documentary Sources* (NIDS), a microform series produced by Chadwyck-Healey. All catalogues produced since the mid-1980s (and some earlier ones) may be searched on-line on ISYS-WEB. The

Library's web pages may be accessed at <http://www.llgc.org.uk/>. The members of staff responsible for the Welsh Political Archive are pleased to respond to enquiries concerning its archival holdings.

J. Graham Jones is the Assistant Archivist, The Welsh Political Archive, Department of Manuscripts and Records.

1. J. Herbert Lewis to D. Lloyd George, 23 February 1910, cited in John Grigg, *Lloyd George and Wales* (Aberystwyth, 1988), p. 9.
2. Kenneth O. Morgan (ed.), *Lloyd George Family Letters, 1885–1936* (Cardiff and Oxford, 1973).
3. Colin Cross (ed.), *Life with Lloyd George: the Diary of A. J. Sylvester, 1931–45* (London, 1975).
4. See J. Graham Jones, 'Major Gwilym Lloyd-

George, first Viscount Tenby', *National Library of Wales Journal* (forthcoming).

5. Ruth Longford, *Frances Lloyd George: more than a mistress* (Leominster, 1996).
6. See J. Graham Jones, 'A breach in the family: Megan and Gwilym Lloyd George', *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* no. 25 (Winter 1999–2000), 'Special Issue: Political Defections', 34–39.
7. Mervyn Jones, *A Radical Life: the Biography of Megan Lloyd George, 1902–66* (London, 1991).
8. J. Graham Jones, *Lloyd George Papers at the National Library of Wales and Other Repositories*, to be published by the National Library of Wales during 2000, provides an overview of each of these archive groups.
9. E. L. Ellis, *T.J.: a Life of Doctor Thomas Jones, C.H.* (Cardiff, 1992) is a comprehensive and authoritative biography.
10. J. Graham Jones, 'The Clement Davies Papers: a review', *National Library of Wales Journal*, Vol. 23 (1983–84), 406–21.

Research in Progress

If you can help any of the individuals listed below with sources, contacts, or any other information — or if you know anyone who can — please pass on details to them. Details of other research projects in progress should be sent to the Editor (see page 2) for inclusion here.

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.*

The political life and times of Josiah Wedgwood MP. Study of the political life of this radical MP, hoping to shed light on the question of why the Labour Party replaced the Liberals as the primary popular representatives of radicalism in the 1920s. *Paul Mulvey, 112 Richmond Avenue, London N1 0LS; paulmulvey@yahoo.com*

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 Worpleston 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 have been Chairmen. *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.*

Liberal foreign policy in the 1930s. Focussing particularly on Liberal anti-appeasers. *Michael Kelly, 12 Collinbridge Road, Whitewell, Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim BT36 7SN*

The Liberal Party and the wartime coalition 1940–45. Sources, particularly on Sinclair as Air Minister, and on Harcourt Johnstone, Dingle Foot, Lord Sherwood and Sir Geoffrey Maunder (Sinclair's PPS) particularl welcome. *Ian Hunter, 9 Defoe Avenue, Kew, Richmond TW9 4DL; ian.hunter@curtishunter.co.uk*

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.*

History Group news

A Liberal Democrat History Group Fringe Meeting

Liberalism in the West

The West Country has a special place in the Liberal tradition. Home to Isaac Foot and his sons, Thorpe, Penhaligon, Pardoe ... For much of the post-war period, the Liberal Party's parliamentary representation rested largely on the South West English MPs, along with their colleagues in the rest of the 'Celtic fringe'.

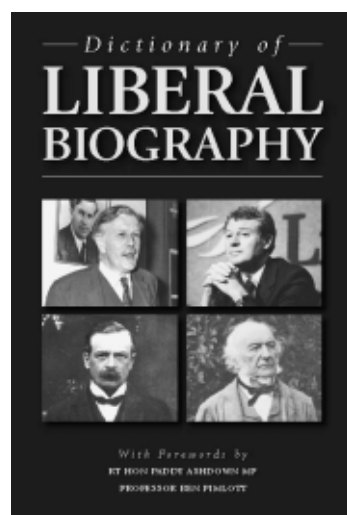
Michael Steed (University of Kent) and **Adrian Lee** (University of Plymouth University), discuss the survival and strength of Liberalism in the West Country, at a meeting in the city that was the stronghold of the Foot dynasty. Chair: **Matthew Taylor MP**.

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Harold Macmillan

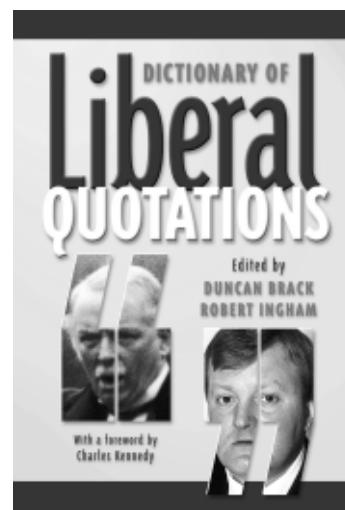
All the world over, I will back the masses against the classes.

W. E. Gladstone

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