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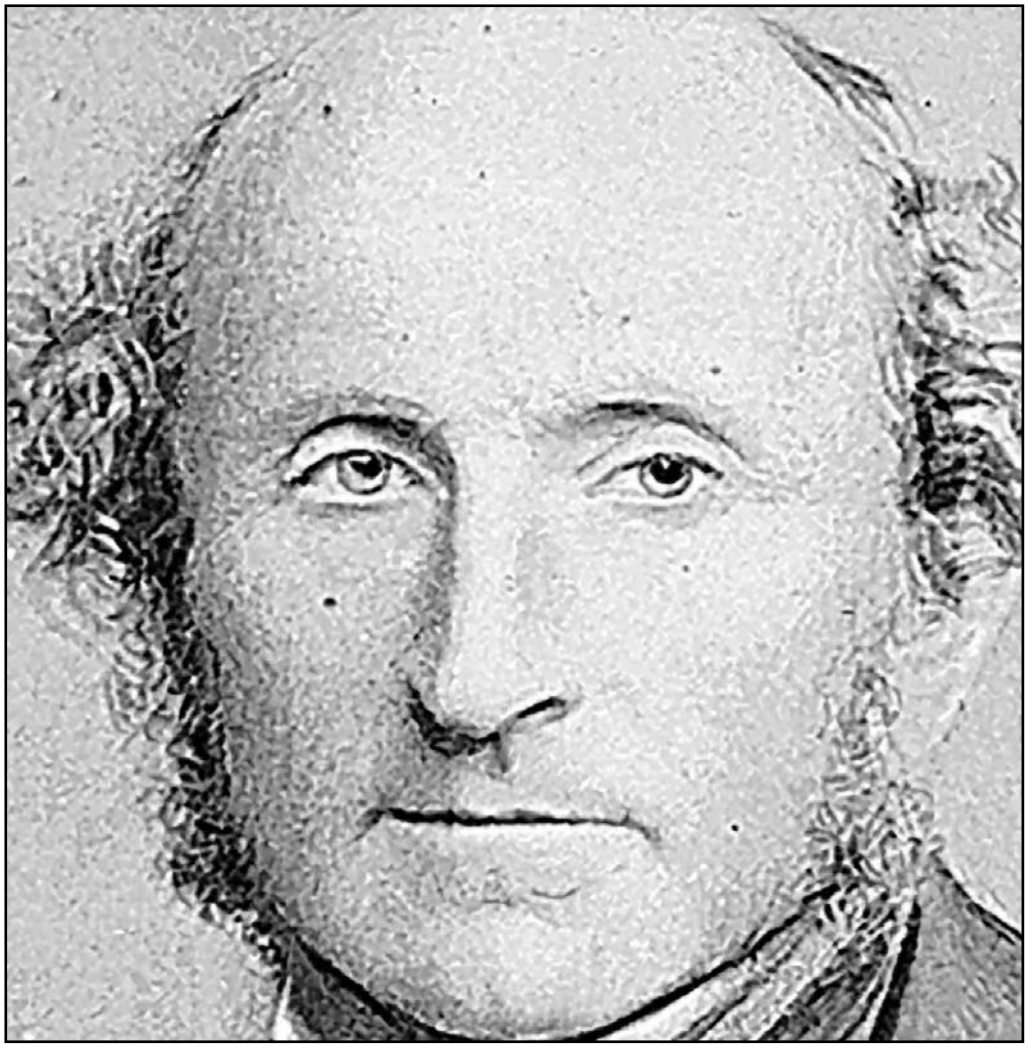
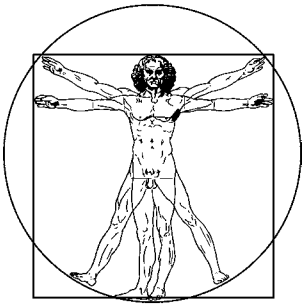


The greatest Liberal



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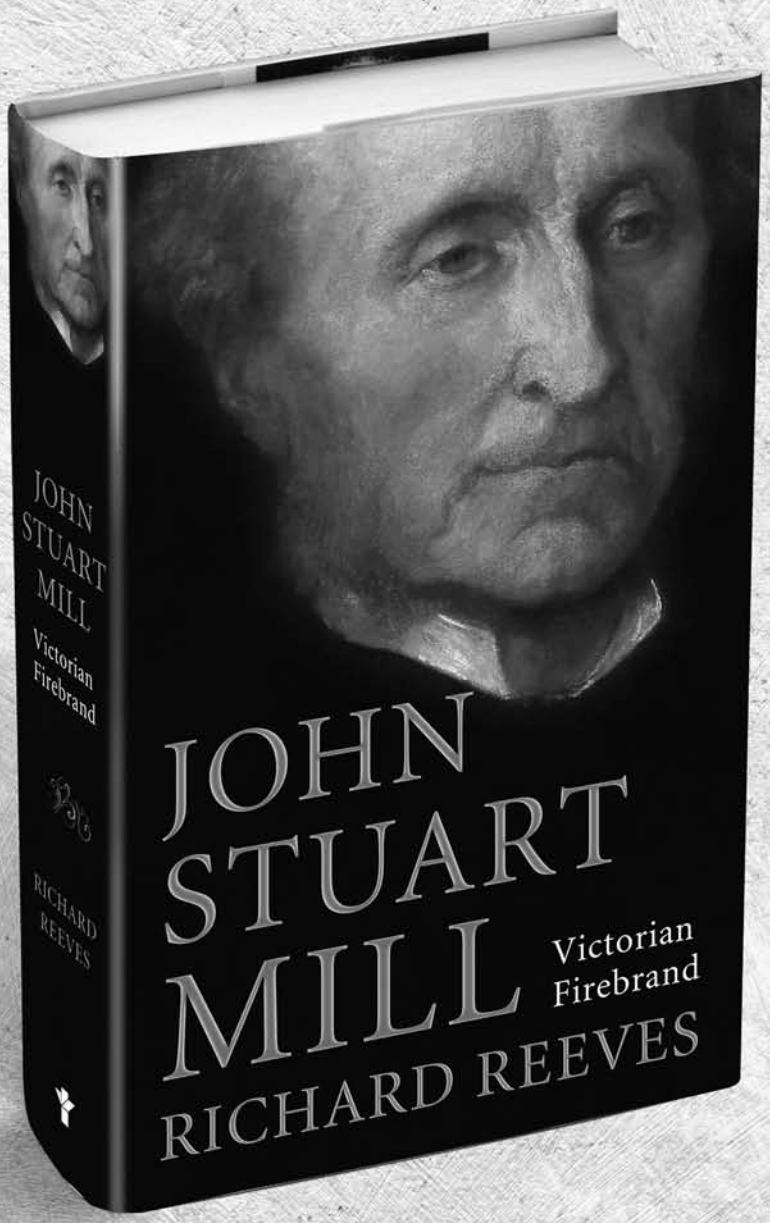

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Journal of Liberal History

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Liberal Democrat History Group

The Liberal Democrat History Group promotes the discussion and research of topics relating to the histories of the Liberal Democrats, Liberal Party, and SDP, and of Liberalism. The Group organises discussion meetings and produces the *Journal* and other occasional publications.

For more information, including historical commentaries, details of publications, back issues of the *Journal*, and archive and other research sources, see our website at: **www.liberalhistory.org.uk**.

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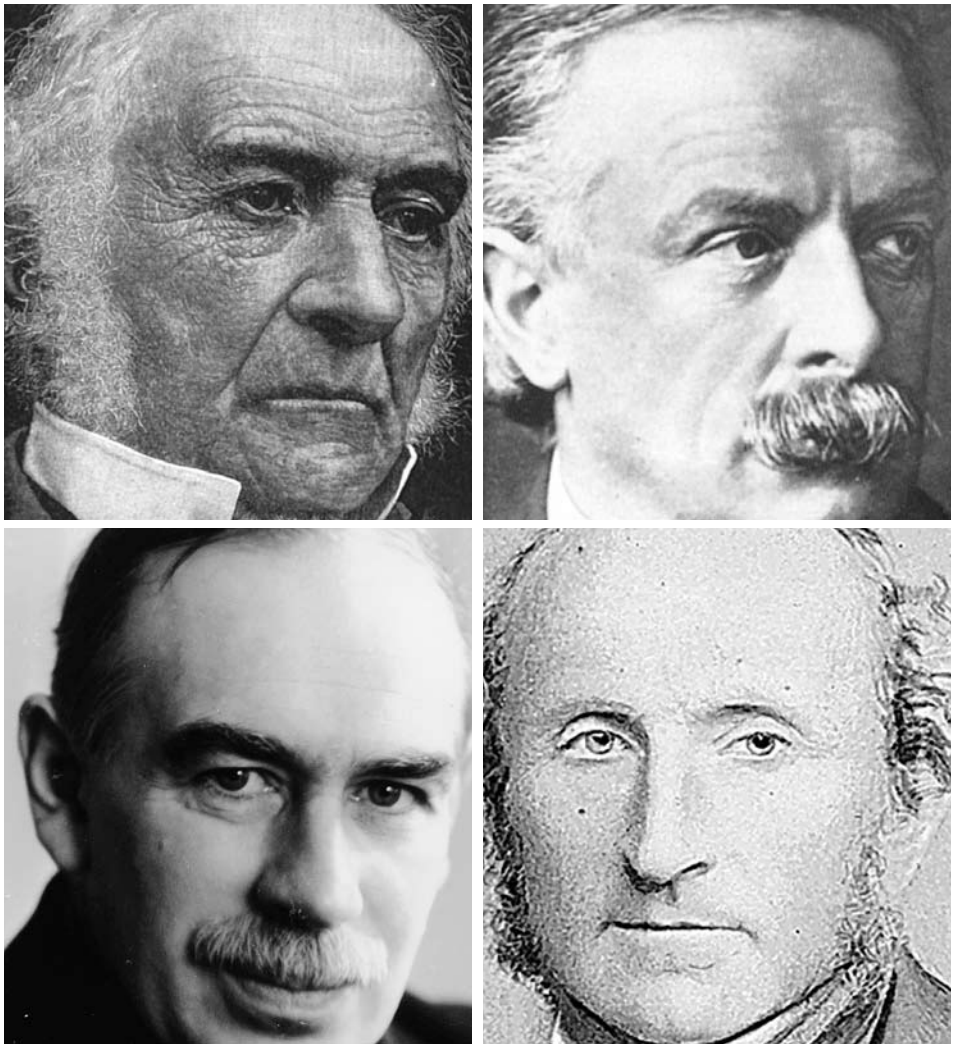
THE GREAT
JOHN ST

So who was the greatest Liberal, as voted for by History Group members and Liberal Democrats at the autumn party conference? By now, you know the winner was John Stuart Mill but when the packed hustings meeting at Brighton gathered to hear the candidates' champions, the question was very much still an open one. The meeting was one of the best the History Group has ever organised, not least because the speakers showed an enjoyable readiness to attack each other's choices, as well as defend their own. In order that readers who were not present can enjoy it to the full, the report below reproduces the speeches more or less verbatim, including interjections and asides. Report of fringe meeting, 19 September 2007, Brighton, by **Duncan Brack** and **Graham Lippiatt**.



TEST LIBERAL: TUART MILL

Four candidates were presented by leading academics and Lib Dems: Keynes, by Lord Tom McNally, leader of the Liberal Democrats in the House of Lords; Gladstone, by Lord Paddy Ashdown, leader of the party 1988–99; Mill, by Richard Reeves, a former *Guardian* journalist and author of a biography of Mill (see page 2 for a special offer for *Journal* readers); and Lloyd George, by Lord Kenneth Morgan, the distinguished historian. The meeting was chaired by Martin Kettle of *The Guardian*.

Martin Kettle: We've got four top speakers talking about four top Liberals, and the first one is going to be Tom McNally, who is putting the case for John Maynard Keynes.

Tom McNally: John Maynard Keynes

My claim that John Maynard Keynes is the greatest ever Liberal is based on both historical perspective and contemporary relevance. In the twentieth century it was Keynes who provided the theory, the practical policies and the intellectual firepower which allowed the political leaders of the democracies to offer a third way when faced with the totalitarian alternatives of left and right. Today he remains a beacon of sanity for those who do not believe that Adam Smith's hidden hand, or trickle-down, will either provide social justice or remove the blights of poverty, ignorance and disease from the world.

He also makes a direct claim on this audience as a party activist. We enjoy his inheritance to this day through the Liberal Summer School, which he founded and which today bears his name. He very nearly stood for Parliament in the party's interest on more than one occasion. He was the intellectual driving force behind the 'Yellow Book', still one of the most relevant policy documents published by any political party in British history, and he ended his days as a Liberal peer in the House of Lords. He was principal adviser to the Liberal Party when in 1929 it received 23 per cent of the vote and 56 seats, a result the party was not to achieve again for three-quarters of a century. What is more, historians now agree that the Keynes-inspired Liberal manifesto of 1929 was by far the most practical in addressing the economic crisis then facing the country.

Left: the final four – top: Gladstone, Lloyd George; bottom: Keynes, Mill

However, Keynes was not just right about the response to depression, slump and high unemployment in the 1930s. Long before he wrote *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, which was the embodiment of what we call Keynesianism, it is amazing to see how often Keynes made policy proposals which were rejected at the time only to be adopted later when other policies had failed.

Keynes was advocating central-bank control of interest rates and money supply eighty years before Gordon Brown – unashamedly stealing Liberal Democrat policy – made it a reality.

As an adviser to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, after the First World War, he tried hard to persuade the Americans to stay in Europe and to use their strength and economic position to promote European reconstruction. Instead, and against his advice, a punitive peace was imposed which had within it the seeds of future conflict. In one of his first great contributions to policy development, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, he wrote: 'if we aim at the impoverishment of central Europe, vengeance, I dare predict, will not limp', and the assessment of his biographer Lord Skidelsky, is thus: 'The Second World War came after the Great Depression, which brought Hitler to power. The Great Depression in turn was brought about by the failure of economic leadership in the 1920s. Had Keynes's 1919 programme been carried out, it is unlikely that Hitler would ever have become German Chancellor.'

Alas, it was a quarter of a century later that Keynesian ideas underpinned the war aims of the democracies in the Second World War. Along the way, Keynes had seen his advice rejected in 1925 by Churchill, when as Chancellor of the Exchequer he made the disastrous decision to return to the Gold Standard; and, as I've already indicated, he again saw his advice rejected, this time by the electorate, in the 1929 general election.

A lesser man may have opted then and there for the academic life amidst the comforts of King's College, Cambridge, but already the storm clouds were gathering, as the Stalinist terror took hold in Communist Russia, and Hitler and the other fascist dictators began the crushing of democracy in Europe. Economic depression, mass unemployment and the collapse of world trade caused the question to be asked whether the economic models inherited from the nineteenth century were adequate to the new age. To put it bluntly, it was asked whether societies based on political pluralism, civil liberties and the rule of law could deliver economic prosperity and social justice. It was at this point that, to my mind, Keynes showed his true greatness. Keynes's response was *The General Theory*, a distillation of many of the ideas he had been proposing for thirty years.

Our modern world was created by that book. It enabled policy-makers after the Second World War to construct a more durable and lasting peace than had been made in 1919. It encouraged the United States to play its part in the reconstruction of Europe, from which it had retreated in the 1920s, by bringing forward the Marshall Plan. And along with another Liberal, Beveridge, Keynes provided Attlee's 1945 Labour government with the policy engine-room to make it, along with the 1906 Liberal government, one of the two great governments of social reform in the twentieth century.

And make no mistake: Keynes knew what he was doing and why he was doing it. Listen to what he wrote to President Roosevelt on 31 December 1931:

Tom McNally puts the case for Keynes; Paddy Ashdown behind, seated

> You have made yourself the trustee for those in every country who seek to mend the evils of our condition by reasoned experiment within the framework of an existing social system. If you fail, rational choice will be gravely prejudiced throughout the world, leaving orthodoxy and the revolution to fight it out.

Now I am well aware that for the last thirty years, neo-liberals, neo-conservatives, and various other neos have been in the ascendancy. As *The Financial Times* put it in an editorial on 24 December 1993, 'Adam Smith has vanquished Marx and immobilised Keynes'. Immobilised, but not vanquished – for I think there is a growing awareness that we may again have the need of Keynes and his wisdom. As George Monbiot wrote in *The Guardian* on 28 August 2007, 'Neo-liberalism, if unchecked, will catalyse crisis after crisis, all of which can only be solved by greater intervention on the part of the state' – something which has been amply illustrated this week.

Joseph Stiglitz, a former Chief Economist at the World Bank, put it equally bluntly: 'You cannot rely on markets to create societies that work'. And perhaps *The Guardian* headline of 28 August said it all: 'City bonuses hit record high with £14 billion pay-out. Executives fuel spiralling demand for luxury goods among growing inequality.' Faced with such everyday evidence before our eyes, it is absurd to claim that Adam Smith has triumphed while Keynes has failed. On the contrary, the wisdom of Keynes re-echoes in our own time with a new urgency.

It was Keynes who rescued economics, the dismal science, and made it the tool of social reform. It was he who realised that liberal democracy required not just the freedom which allowed each individual to develop his or her talent to the full, but also a commitment from society as a whole to provide every citizen with a certain quality of life.

In its obituary on his death in 1946, *The Times* called Keynes 'the most influential economist since Adam Smith', but it was the Labour Chancellor of the day, Hugh Dalton, who in his tribute summed up the essence of Keynes: 'he taught us to unite reason with hope'.

I always feel that you should end up with a quote from the lad himself, and for that reason I am grateful to Rachel Sylvester of *The Daily Telegraph*, who quoted Keynes in her column only the other day: 'This party has always included Whigs and Radicals. The Whigs are really just sensible Conservatives. The Radicals are just sensible Labour men. And the Liberals? – well, they're just sensible.'

Martin Kettle: Thank you very much, Tom.

There were many of us, I think, who slightly regretted that Paddy Ashdown didn't make the final four as one of the candidates. He appears to have been disqualified from that because he's alive – and I think on the whole we've definitely got the better of the deal, and he's going to talk now; he's going to put the case for W. E. Gladstone.

'This party has always included Whigs and Radicals. The Whigs are really just sensible Conservatives. The Radicals are just sensible Labour men. And the Liberals? – well, they're just sensible.'

Paddy Ashdown: William Ewart Gladstone

There's a sort of codicil to Martin's little story. Apparently there is somebody in this audience – a lady, I believe – who actually came up and complained that I was not on the list. If she identifies herself, I'll make sure she gets a peerage … oh, no, that would have been Lloyd George, wouldn't it?

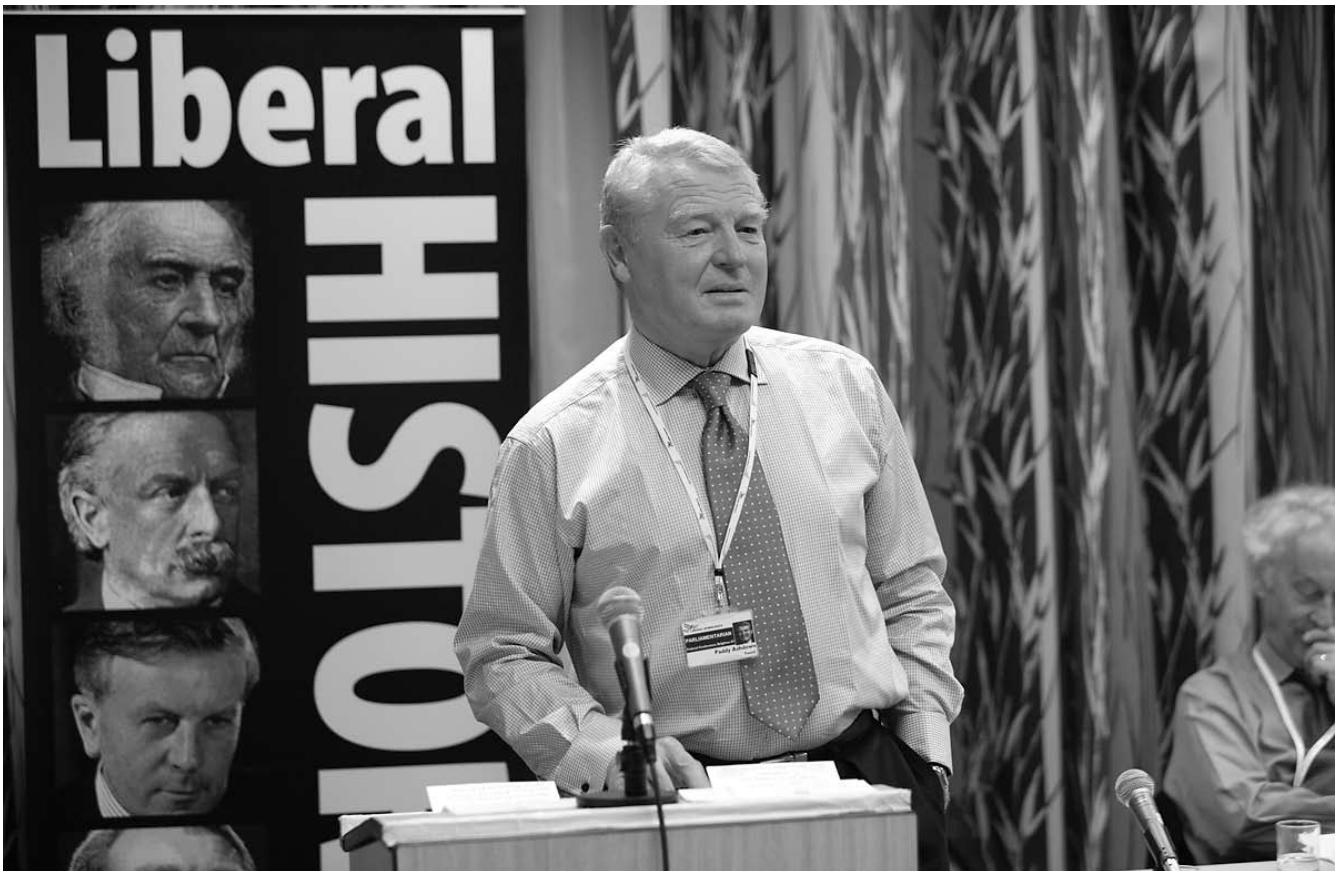
I have to say, you've asked me to do some tricky things in this party, but proposing to you Gladstone as the greatest Liberal is not the most difficult thing you have asked me to do.

I will not pretend to you for a moment that he was a perfect man. He started life, I have to tell you, as a Tory – but we all have our youthful indiscretions from time to time; I started off supporting Labour for a little bit, until I grew up.

He was not, I think, a bundle of laughs. His wife once said of him: 'Oh, William, if you were not such a great man you would be very boring.' (My wife has said similar things of me – without the kind bit at the beginning.) He was – how shall we put it? – quite obsessive. When he was Prime Minister, Downing Street was a gloomy place. (I guess it is now, too, under Gordon. I have this vision of our present Downing Street, you know, as Camelot turned into Gormenghast – a great pulsating palace of light under Blair, and Brown comes in, and all is darkness, and all you see is a single guttering candle shining out of a casement window. Well, it was a bit like that under William Ewart Gladstone.)

He would be, from time to time, a little – how shall we put it? – self-righteous; not, again, something wholly unknown in our recent Prime Ministers. One of his opposition, a man called Labouchere, exasperated with him in the House of Commons, said: 'I do not mind the Right Honourable gentleman pulling the ace of trumps from his sleeve, but I wish he would not pretend it was the Almighty who put it there.' So not entirely a man without flaws – though who is? But great he certainly was.

A great spirit, above all. Roy Jenkins, in his book, describes him even in old age as a force of nature, a man of magnificent presence, and a spirit larger than his times. He was seen across the whole of Europe as the spirit of liberty. He was seen as the person who gave inspiration not just to liberals but to a whole great liberal movement that swept across Europe and brought freedom and human rights. He was seen as a man who stood up for the underdog, who was



Paddy Ashdown puts the case for Gladstone; Kenneth Morgan, behind, seated

unquenchable in his admonition – his condemnation – of brutality.

I was driving across the plains of Hungary – that's a good line, isn't it? – in 1992. Karadzic had asked me to go and see him, because I'd just been to Sarajevo and I'd been complaining that the international community should intervene. Karadzic asked to see me, and I flew in with Russell Johnston. (You know, every Lord has to be named after something which is connected with their career, so we used to call him Russell Johnston of Heathrow Departure Lounge. I have been across customs posts in the farthest reaches of Europe, and people have said: 'your Russell Johnston just came through last week'. He is a great Liberal and a great man.) Russell and I were sitting in the car, and suddenly the local radio, the Serb radio, burst into life and I asked the driver what it said, and it said: 'we'd like to announce that the descendant of Gladstone has just entered Serbia' – more than a hundred years later.

A great spirit – a great man in all senses of the word, but above all, a great Liberal. If you go to the National Liberal Club today, there, carved on the stone as you go in, in indelible letters, are these words: 'The principle of Liberalism is trust in the people, qualified by prudence. The principle of Conservatism is mistrust of the people, qualified by fear.' True then, true today.

A great Liberal. A great radical. He said this: 'a radical is a Liberal who is in earnest'. (Well, only up to a point.) And he was a great leader of our party. He formed it, he brought it to its most magnificent position in government – I'll come to that in a minute. He once said: 'What is a good leader for but to tell his party when they are wrong?' (I wish I could have come across that quote before!)

But it is for none of these reasons that I propose him to you. The truth is that this transcendental idea which we believe – the only idea which is relevant to our time – is useless, or nearly useless, unless it is brought to government, unless the thing that we believe in – the great idea of Liberalism – informs the governance of our nation. He was a great governor, a great Prime Minister. He brought these ideas that you and I adhere to, that we've committed our lives to – he didn't just articulate them, he didn't just inspire people with them, he governed this country according to them, and changed the face of Britain.

And that's what we have to do as a party. It's useless if we become a polite debating society. He made the compromises for power and for government, and he showed what could be done with them – and that's what we have to do. So he was a great governor, a great Prime Minister, our greatest; he governed well at home and he was respected across the world. And he governed with vision. Remember Ireland. Remember his call for Home Rule. Remember when that was voted down by the House of Commons, he understood the significance of that vote. 'If you do not

do this', he said, 'this country, and its genuine wish for freedom, will begin to haunt our future' – and so it has; he knew what was happening.

His voice, ladies and gentlemen, echoes down the years, as do his achievements. Listen to this, and here I will end, I don't need to say more. This is Gladstone, in the second Midlothian campaign; this is Gladstone speaking to Britain when he was in the opposition; this was Gladstone claiming to be a Prime Minister again, when Britain was gripped by jingoistic fervour no less violent than we have seen in recent years in the Falklands War; this is Gladstone saying that what we were doing was morally wrong. He had the courage to say it, and what is more the British people had the courage to elect him as Prime Minister as a result. He was speaking of a conflict of that time which is a conflict of our time. He was talking about the invasion of Afghanistan – not by coalition forces, not under a UN Security Council resolution, but by Britain, in the Second Afghan War. And he said this:

> Do not forget that the sanctity of life in the hill villages of Afghanistan amongst the winter snow is no less inviolate in the eye of Almighty God as can be your own. Do not forget that He who made you brothers in the same flesh and blood bound you by the laws of mutual love; and that love is not limited to the shores of this island, but it spreadeth across the whole surface of the earth, encompassing the greatest along with the meanest in its unmeasured scope.

Oh, that we had Prime Ministers today with that moral purpose, that moral vision. More important – more important – what he proposed was a proposition of morality for his time. In our interdependent world, those immortal words comprise in my view the only recommendation for survival in ours.

What he proposed was a proposition of morality for his time. In our interdependent world, those immortal words comprise in my view the only recommendation for survival in ours.

The greatest Liberal – can there be another?

Martin Kettle: I was a little worried when Paddy said he would finish with a quote from Gladstone, because, as you know, Gladstone's speeches could go on for many hours. That was marvellous; thank you, Paddy.

I was sorry when I saw the list of candidates that everybody voted for that the name of C. P. Scott didn't make the final four. After all, The Manchester Guardian*, which I represent here today, has an important role in Liberal history, I think for good and ill. However, we do have a former colleague of mine, Richard Reeves. He's the author of a shortly-to-be-released book on John Stuart Mill, and he is going to put the case for Mill.*

Richard Reeves: John Stuart Mill

Thank you, Martin. I wish that my publisher was here when I was trying to persuade him that there was a market for books about nineteenth-century Liberals; it was a difficult sell. If you all pre-order the book through Amazon, or Waterstone's, then it'll be a tearaway success. You don't actually have to buy the book – of course, it'll be the icing on the cake if you do choose to do so, but merely pre-ordering it apparently has a sort of electric effect on the publisher! It's published in the third week of November.

It's quite difficult following Paddy Ashdown on Gladstone – he's a tough act to follow – but I hope to be saved by the man for whom I am speaking, John Stuart Mill.

I think we all agree, so far, anyway, that greatness is about impact. It's about effecting change in the world: changing economies, changing ideas, changing political structures, changing societies. It's about the impact both in their own day and their legacy too. So we seem already to be agreeing what greatness is. Mill had a similar view; he was contemptuous of those who, he quoted this: 'strutted and fretted their hour upon the stage', and he had an unbounded contempt for all those lives 'who made a great noise in their day, and leave the state of mankind no better than it was when they found it'.

Of course, we're not only looking for greatness, we're looking for a great Liberal. I wasn't planning to go negative so early in the debate, but everyone else is, so … Keynes, I think, is fairly easily dispensed with. Yes, a very influential economist, but a *Liberal* economist? Tougher argument, I think. I'd argue actually that Mill was a better Liberal economist than Keynes, and when you hear the kind of paean from his speaker for state intervention then I think you know something's gone awry if we're describing him as a great Liberal. And to close the case against Keynes, he wrote an essay in 1925 – a lovely essay, actually, but it's entitled: *Am I am Liberal?* And you have to ask, you know, if he didn't know, then …

So we're not after just the best Liberal economist, or Liberal politician, Liberal political activist, Liberal orator, or even Liberal philosopher, but the greatest Liberal – and that's a much tougher demand, and that's where I think Mill can strike his claim. Of course, as the greatest Liberal intellect, or philosopher, his claim's pretty irrefutable; it's hard to argue against it. His masterwork *On Liberty* remains the gospel of Liberalism. Published in 1859, the same year that the Liberal Party was born, it's never been out of print since. It was published across the world within two years and is argued over to this day, not only in seminar rooms but in the House of Commons and on television. Chris Huhne quoted John Stuart Mill when he was asked about

the smoking ban in public places during the leadership campaign. (Mill was also quoted on the other side of the debate, by the way, which would have pleased him, but Huhne had the better of the Mill scholarship, for the record.)

In *On Liberty* there's this sentence: 'The only purpose for which power can rightfully be exercised over another member of a civilised community against their will is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant.' This famous principle – the harm principle – the only reason you can regulate my behaviour is to stop me harming somebody else – is the most quoted sentence in the history of philosophy, and there is no newspaper columnist who doesn't have it somewhere as a kind of save that they can plop into any column on the regulation of personal behaviour. The harm principle remains the cornerstone of the Liberal faith.

So he's still argued about, he still provokes and irritates, and he still inspires. Goethe, who Mill had a sort of passing admiration for, said that the true test of the greatness of a man is his posthumous productivity. (I rather like that; so Paddy, you know, all is not lost; don't take your own mortality too much to heart.) Posthumous productivity? Well, it seems to me, you know, Mill's been dead for a hundred and thirty-four years, but he's still a very busy boy; he's still quoted everywhere, and his words still echo.

So that's the case for him as an intellectual – but I have a much bigger case for Mill, which is that he wasn't just a philosopher; he was an activist and a firebrand too. He supported the freedom to choose birth control – at a time, of course, when that was still illegal. At the age of seventeen, on the way to work, he's crossing St James's Park and he finds a dead baby wrapped in a bundle under a tree – not an uncommon occurrence in 1823. Mill didn't go and write about it; Mill toured the streets of London with a friend, distributing literature on birth control, for which he was arrested and thrown in jail. He spent at least two nights in jail as a result of this crime, which was then hushed up, for the rest of his life, because it was seen as something that would reflect badly on him – but today, it can only be seen as a true testament to his greatness. How many of his competitors tonight were jailed – at least, deliberately – for their beliefs in Liberalism?

He wrote, in *The Subjection of Women*, one of the finest polemics for gender equality, still today considered by feminist academics to be one of the greatest testaments to feminism. But he didn't only do that. As an MP, he introduced the first bill to give women the right to vote, in 1867. He proposed an amendment to change one word in the 1867 Reform Bill – one word to make it gender-neutral, to change the word 'man' to the word 'person'. He got 73 votes to his side – which wasn't bad, in 1867 – and he was described by Millicent Fawcett as the true originator of the British suffrage movement. Here's what William Gladstone – seeing as we're going negative …

[Tom McNally: this is his Guardian *training, of course. Martin Kettle: it's called balance, Tom. Paddy Ashdown: just don't talk about fallen women. Richard Reeves: I said negative, not cheap – though, actually, they didn't charge him, did they?]*

… this is what William Gladstone said about women's suffrage in 1892. He opposed women's suffrage, because he was afraid of what would happen to women if they got involved in politics. He said: 'it would mean inviting her – woman – unwittingly to trespass upon the delicacy, the purity, the refinement, the elevation of her own nature which are the present sources of her power.' Well, that's Gladstone twenty-five years after Mill tried to introduce absolute equality.

In *On Liberty*, Mill wrote the best argument for free speech ever written; but he also, as an MP, fought Disraeli to a standstill and ensured that, after reform demonstrations in 1866, the Royal Parks would be available to public protest. A corner of Hyde Park, to this day, is a testament to his memory.

As a politician he was good at rhetoric – good at partisan rhetoric – during his period in Parliament. He is known as having described the Conservatives as 'the stupid party', but to really feel the full force of his political ability you have to hear the whole quote. This is what he said in Parliament when he had been criticised by the Conservatives:

> What I stated was that the Conservative Party was by the law of its constitution necessarily the stupidest party. Now, I do not retract this assertion, but I did not mean that Conservatives are generally stupid; I meant that stupid persons are generally Conservative … I do not see why honourable gentlemen should feel that position at all offensive to them, for it ensures their always being an extremely powerful party. There is a dead solid force in sheer stupidity such that a few able men, with that force pressing behind them, are assured of victory in many a struggle; and many a victory the Conservative Party have indeed owed to that force.

'I did not mean that Conservatives are generally stupid; I meant that stupid persons are generally Conservative.'

That's Mill on stupidity. His prescience about political trends – of course, on women's rights, but also he anticipated that unless the Liberal Party (and he tried to persuade Gladstone to this effect) supported working-class candidates that they would go somewhere else. He supported George Odger, for example, who was forced by the Liberals to withdraw his candidacy from the seat of Chelsea, and went

off, in a bit of a huff, to form something called the Labour Representation League instead. The rest, of course, is history. So he saw that the Liberals were in danger of being eclipsed once full suffrage came.

And he also advocated proportional representation. He was the first MP to produce a bill for proportional representation, also in 1867. He said that proportional representation would be the sheet-anchor of democracy, and the principle of fair play to all parties and all opinions without distinction.

So he was ahead of his time. He described himself as an 'advanced Liberal'; by his own admission, he was advanced. He was a feminist. He was an anti-racist – on Governor Eyre, and on the civil war in the States – and he was a strong proponent of proportional representation. How can anybody who wasn't all of those things seek the mantle of the greatest Liberal?

And at the heart of his vision is an unquenchable optimism about the power of individual men and women to lead good lives of their own choosing. In *On Liberty* he wrote:

> The worth of a state, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it … A state which dwarfs its men, in order to make them more docile instruments in its hands, even for beneficial purposes, will find that with small men no great thing can really be accomplished; and that the perfection of machinery to which it has sacrificed everything will, in the end, avail it nothing, for want of the vital power which, in order that the machine might work more smoothly, it has preferred to banish.

John Stuart Mill brilliantly articulated a Liberal vision and how that would apply – in philosophy, in economics, in politics, in society – which remains iconic and inspirational to this day.

At the heart of his vision is an unquenchable optimism about the power of individual men and women to lead good lives of their own choosing.

More importantly, he fought for that vision with all the tools at his disposal, from his teenage years until the day of his death in 1873.

He would not seek this prize. He had no Westminster Abbey funeral, no honorary doctorate; he eschewed all of those prizes, but despite the fact that he would not have sought it we must surely award it to him, because in John Stuart Mill you see not only the best evidence of Liberalism's great past, but the best hope for Liberalism to have a great future.

Martin Kettle: Thank you very much, Richard.

I noticed that Richard didn't have time to get on to the subject of David Lloyd George and women – perhaps our next speaker will be able to do so. No discussion of the history of Liberalism in this country can possibly be allowed to develop without a Welsh dimension. Kenneth Morgan is one of Britain's great historical biographers – he's recently published a terrific biography of Michael Foot – and he is going to put the case for David Lloyd George.

Kenneth O. Morgan: David Lloyd George

Chairman and friends, it's relevant to first mention, I think, the foreword that Alan Taylor wrote in a biography that I wrote of Lloyd George thirty-odd years ago: 'our greatest ruler since Cromwell'. So he was; he was the greatest Liberal of them all, and in peace and in war arguably a greater Prime Minister – about to join in Parliament Square, I gather, a whole range of Tory Prime Ministers – Canning, Peel, Derby (God knows why he's there), Disraeli, Churchill, and another Tory, George V.

There are two main reasons why Lloyd George should unquestionably receive your vote. The first is that he, and he alone, added a social dimension to the idea of Liberalism. Liberalism – the Liberal Party – scarcely had a meaningful social philosophy before him. Gladstone, who was born in 1809, simply didn't understand the sociology of politics. Mill, with all respect, had no real view of society; his main interest in freedom, which is very important, of course, was freedom of thought, not other kinds of freedom. Keynes said, explicitly, that he wasn't interested in social justice at all; it is, he said, 'the best possession of the party of the proletariat' (there's the Cambridge man for you).

In 1906, Lloyd George alone linked the old Liberalism of civic justice with the New Liberalism of social reform. Nobody else could do that in that government; not Asquith, not Grey, not Haldane; he was the most important Liberal ever.

Secondly, Lloyd George combined vision and dynamism with artistry in the uses of power. In peace and in war, the Liberal danger – I'm not a member of your party, so I say this, possibly causing offence – the Liberal danger is high-mindedness, intellectual elitism, distaste with power; there's plenty of that in both Mill and Keynes, in my view. Lloyd George was different (and so was Gladstone, as Paddy has said) – he transformed society, he helped to win a war, he redesigned our world, from Northern Ireland to Palestine.

Neither Mill nor Keynes – wonderful men – ever handled power. Neither of them was at ease with democratic power. Mill, like Tocqueville, was very worried about the democracy for which he voted. It's very characteristic, I think, that he supported the secret ballot before it happened, and then opposed it after it had happened, because, he said, people should use independence of judgement. I don't think you could imagine this wonderful man, John Stuart Mill, ever actually running anything – nor, I suspect, in those respects could Keynes, who was a Cambridge don (as an Oxford

don, I know the limitations of that breed).

Lloyd George led a coalition, but he was always a Liberal. We've heard about Gladstone – he wasn't just a Conservative, he was a very right-wing Conservative; he was called the 'hope of the stern, unbending Tories', and throughout his career he was committed to traditional institutions: the landed aristocracy, the Church, Oxford University, the most reactionary college in Oxford University. He called himself an 'out-and-out inequalitarian'. And so it was, as we've heard, in relation to women. A very interesting case is the American Civil War, where Gladstone supported the South; he said that Jefferson Davis had created a nation. He placed no particular imperative on the abolition of slavery, and it is worth saying – Paddy has gone, I'm sorry that he can't answer – that Gladstone's own family made their money from slave labour in Jamaica. I never recall Gladstone ever uttering one word of regret or shame about that – it's not in Roy Jenkins's book, and I don't think Paddy could find any example either. Lloyd George's hero, whose bust is there in his home in Llanystumdwy, was Abraham Lincoln, the great emancipator, the great hope of liberalism.

Lloyd George was always a Liberal: in 1918, in 1931. As we've heard, Keynes wrote this famous essay, *Am I a Liberal?*, and on the whole the answer seems to be no. He said he wasn't in favour of social justice, or many of the things Liberals supported, so I think Lloyd George was far more consistent.

Lloyd George's career at every stage enhanced a dignified Liberalism. In his early period, up to 1906, he supported devolution, and the claims of Wales, which was very prophetic. He was a tremendous opponent of the Boer War – quite as courageously as anything we've heard about Gladstone. He persuaded Campbell-Bannerman to meet Emily Hobhouse, and she imposed the words 'methods of barbarism'. We've had methods of barbarism in Iraq; Lloyd George is the inspiration for those of us who stood up in Parliament on the Labour side and criticised and attacked and condemned the treasonable and criminal attack on Iraq, and Lloyd George was our inspiration, as a young man who represented a marginal constituency; if anyone showed guts, it was Lloyd George on that occasion.

Lloyd George combined vision and dynamism with artistry in the uses of power.

At the Board of Trade and at the Treasury, in the Liberal government, he proclaimed a new vision of social citizenship: pensions, national insurance, the basis of the modern welfare state, as has rightly been said by Tom. The People's Budget was financed by taxing the rich (your leader is in favour of hammering the rich; if you're in favour of your leader you should vote for Lloyd George!) and this approach to government carried on right through to 1914. He and that other great man, Herbert Asquith, are a tremendous partnership not only in pushing through the welfare state but in taming and neutralising much of the House of Lords as an obstacle to reform. (It's very comic, incidentally, that three of us come from that House this evening.)

As a war leader – and Liberals are very difficult to lead at a time of war – he was quite an inspiration. With Churchill, he made many key contributions to the winning of the war; as Minister of Munitions, in starting the convoy system to protect the merchant fleet; in sustaining morale. He was not a chauvinist man; there was no Vansittart Plan from Lloyd George in 1918 to destroy Germany. He focused above all on the purposes for which the war was being fought, and in his view they were Liberal purposes. As Prime Minister, even during wartime there was a considerable impetus for social reform, for national insurance, for education (with the great Liberal historian, H. A. L. Fisher), starting the Ministry of Health, the beginning of subsidised housing, and votes for women – Mill courageously began the campaign for votes for women, but it was Lloyd George, in power during the war, who brought it to a conclusion and gave women the vote, and unlike Gladstone he always, always, supported female suffrage.

At the Paris Peace Conference he was a Gladstonian, championing Balkan nationalism, and afterwards he was the one man who tried to moderate the excesses of Versailles. Tom, in his interesting and selective range through the writings of Keynes, mentioned *The Economic Consequences* of 1919, accurately and correctly, of course. He should also have quoted *A Revision of the Treaty* by Keynes in 1922, who said that in fact over the intervening three years, Lloyd George had been carrying out many of his ideas – most of his ideas – about reparations, about trying to re-establish trade and commerce in Europe, and so on.

Ireland – Ireland is not to his discredit; he produced a permanent settlement in Ireland. Pitt, Peel, Gladstone, Asquith – all failed. Lloyd George produced a solution – not a perfect solution, but it has brought more peace to that unhappy island than we have known over the last one hundred years.

And in the inter-war years, he was, I think, Tom would agree – or perhaps he wouldn't? – anyway, he was the first politician to see the point of Keynes. He took up Keynes. *We Can Conquer Unemployment*, the Yellow Book – these are Lloyd George's creative crystallisations of what Keynes believed. And he remained a constructive, radical man – very appropriate that his last vote was in 1943 on behalf of the Beveridge Report.

Lloyd George's impact went far beyond the Liberal Party. He

is a world figure. Churchill and Bevan (as I know because I've spoken to them both), Michael Foot and Harold Macmillan all regarded him in many ways as their political hero. Overseas, Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt, and their the new nationalism, and New Deal, owed a great deal to Lloyd George; and John F. Kennedy was another one who frequently cited LG. He achieved things that nobody else could: the welfare state, a fuller democracy, a vision of a new world order based on reconciliation.

He could spin – nobody used newspapers better than Lloyd George; he even tried to buy *The Times* on one occasion – but essentially, unlike Tony Blair, he worked with men and women of ideas: Beveridge, Rowntree, Hobhouse, Masterman, Keynes, Henderson, Ramsey Muir, and indeed, C. P. Scott of *The Guardian*, who was, in peace and in war, a tremendous ideological support for him. It was said, by C. F. G. Masterman after 1923, 'when Lloyd George returned to us, ideas returned to the Liberal Party'.

Gladstone, Mill and Keynes all had privileged backgrounds – they were all wealthy people. Lloyd George was an outsider; the Liberal Party championed outsiders. He was Welsh in an English world; he was a Baptist; he was a relatively poor man, with very little education. He was a natural democrat, he was one of the great mass leaders, and yet personally, as they said, he could charm a bird off a bough.

In my view, Lloyd George's career was Britain's moment of modernity. He belongs to the ages, and most certainly, sure as hell, he belongs to this party conference.

Discussion

After the proposing speeches, a number of points from the floor were made both for and against the candidates. Several interventions pointed out the difficulties in comparing men of ideas and men of action; some speakers felt that it was ideas that mattered more, and at least one preferred the philosopher to the economist as a matter of principle.

In Keynes's defence it was pointed out that Keynesian economic policies had not been discredited; the fault lay with those politicians who had tried to apply them in circumstances (high levels of inflation) in which Keynes himself had warned that they would not work. On the other hand, Keynes's penchant for silk dressing gowns was felt to cast a negative light on his claim to the title.

Gladstone was praised for his support for Home Rule, for his giving away bits of the Empire in his search for international collaboration, and for his clear moral vision, for example over the Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria. On the other hand, his first speech in Parliament had been in support of slavery.

Lloyd George was praised as an inspiration, a brilliant orator and debater. He was credited with being one of the first to warn of the dangers of Hitler. The debit side included a mixed record on Ireland (for example, over the brutality of the Black & Tans), his sale of peerages ('at least it raised money for the party', as someone pointed out), his willingness to abandon Liberal principles in order to win the war, and his splitting of the party in 1916–18. One speaker felt that he could have supported Lloyd George if he'd died in 1918.

While Mill was lauded for his Liberal vision, it was pointed out that he was a supporter of capital punishment. One speaker, however, revealing that Mill's books had helped change his own mind, pointed to the influence he had, reaching far beyond the Liberal tradition and making people more sympathetic to the Liberal cause to this day.

Lloyd George was attacked for his sale of peerages ('at least it raised money for the party', as someone pointed out).

Unfortunately, Paddy Ashdown had had to leave before the end of the meeting (for a clashing engagement), but summing-up speeches were given by the remaining three speakers.

Tom McNally: Keynes

First of all, I should have explained that I didn't indulge in either the cheap populism or the personal attacks of the other three speakers – because I went first, and I didn't realise that in this high-minded gathering that was fair game! But let's face it – all four of them would have had problems with *The Sun* and the *News of the World* at some stage during their careers.

We've had that very interesting split between the men of ideas and the men of action, and it's a perfectly fair one, but why I back Keynes is because what he did in the 1930s was to give politicians in the democracies the confidence and the intellectual firepower to take on totalitarianism.

In the twenty-first century, we have another challenge: whether we can retain our civil liberties, our human rights, against attacks from terrorism and organised crime. I believe that what Keynes showed is that the political systems could work.

There are those that tell us that globalisation takes many things out of the control of the political machines, the forces of democracy, the accountability to Parliament. I think that Keynes's enduring gift to civil liberties and to politics is that he showed us the way that politicians could use the machineries of government to defend civil liberties in a liberal democracy. It's his enduring legacy.

Yes, he is an economist, and we know that economists are men trained to predict the past – which we've seen again this week – but he was more than an economist; he was one who believed in the ability of people,

Great Liberals: final-stage result

Candidate	*First preferences*	*Eliminate Keynes*	*Eliminate Lloyd George*
Gladstone	192	+ 20 = 212	+ 96 = 308
Keynes	69	–	–
Lloyd George	187	+ 22 = 209	–
Mill	274	+ 24 = 298	+ 96 = 394
Non-transferable		+ 3 = 3	+ 17 = 20
Total	722	722	722

through the political process, to control their destinies for the common good. And I think that is a legacy which makes him the greatest Liberal of them all.

Richard Reeves: Mill

I reject the distinction between men of action and men of ideas, at least as far as Mill's concerned. My whole case is based on the fact that actually he was both. Of course, today we remember him mostly through his writing, but when Mill died, and there was a memorial fund to establish a statue to him – which did eventually rise up on the Embankment – there was such a row about his radicalism, on land reform, in particular, and on contraceptive issues, that Gladstone, who had publicly supported the memorial, had publicly then to withdraw his support from it, because Mill was seen as too controversial a figure for him to support. So lose this whole idea of Mill as sitting in a study, churning out books.

Those books remain powerful and resonant now, but at the time he was a radically engaged partisan, and it is that, I think, that makes him great. So he is the one that straddles this divide between men of action and those of ideas. Two months before his death he was ejected from the Cobden Club, a free-market club that he'd been a member of, because he was supporting significant increases in inheritance tax on landowners. He came to a strong view that there was a distinction between unearned wealth and earned wealth; he said, of those who earned their wealth simply through the fact of being landowners, that their money 'fell into their mouths as they sleep'. I think that today he'd be worried about the people who are the money-owners, the ones who are making money simply because they've already got so much money, and are reshaping the capital markets as a result. It was that radicalism that forced him to be publicly thrown off the books of the Cobden Club, two months before his death. This was not an ivory-tower philosopher. The Land Tenure Reform Association remains radical to this day.

Vote for Lloyd George or Gladstone if you wish to revel in your glorious past. Vote for Mill if you wish for a glorious future.

Yes, Gladstone was good on Ireland, but Mill was ten years ahead of him. Yes, Lloyd George introduced legislation to give women the vote, but not equal rights; only women over the age of thirty were able to vote. It wasn't until 1928 that women got the right to vote on the same basis as men – and after watching that vote from the House of Commons gallery, Millicent Fawcett, perhaps the best feminist campaigner in our history, led a delegation of women – where? She led them to the statue of John Stuart Mill on the Embankment to lay flowers in his memory, as the man who had started that battle which had finally been won.

John Stuart Mill died in Avignon, where his wife was buried. She was an inspiration to him, but after her death he continued to write, he continued to work; his last words, to his step-daughter, were: 'you know I have done my work'. When he was buried, there were only four people present – because, of course, Avignon was a long way away in those days – there were four at his funeral, but as Charles Dickens said, the more truly great the man, the smaller the ceremony.

There were only four people at Mill's graveside, but the very fact that he can change your mind, sir, through reading his pages – if you read Mill today, it reads as if he's talking about us, not the nineteenth century.

Vote for Lloyd George or Gladstone if you wish to revel in your glorious past. Vote for Mill if you wish for a glorious future.

Kenneth O. Morgan: Lloyd George

The unique case for Lloyd George is the case for democracy, for democratic citizenship. He is the only one of these four who is really a democrat.

Gladstone, as I've said, believed in inequality. He talked about trusting the people, but he only trusted very few of them; 'trust the people' is a very misleading slogan for Gladstone. John Stuart Mill had many fine qualities, but was afraid of mass public opinion, the tyranny of the majority. Much of his writings are concerned with the dangers that democracy would bring. Keynes said that in the class war, he was on the side of the educated bourgeoisie.

Lloyd George alone accepted the imperatives of the democratic age. Like Franklin D. Roosevelt, whom he greatly resembled, he was at ease in putting dynamic ideas into practice, through what he also called the 'new deal'. In so doing he also recognised the importance of the public intellectual – Rowntree, Beveridge, Fisher, Scott, and, I have no doubt, had he been alive, John Stuart Mill; he and Lloyd George would have made a wonderful partnership in getting those additional women the vote.

Lloyd George was a unique inspirational force, like no one

else in our country, over thirty years. He was a fierce partisan, a Liberal partisan in making Britain a more equitable society – and he was far more radical than any Labour Prime Minister has been. He believed in disestablishment: disestablishment of the church, disestablishment of special interests, disestablishment of the privileged groups in society – yet he also could work for consensus. That is what led so many Liberals to criticise what happened in 1918, but somebody had to come to grips with the problem. Asquith had nothing to offer: he was offered a job in 1918 – the Lord Chancellorship – and he turned it down.

Lloyd George brought in Labour from the cold, he worked with progressive businessmen, he worked towards a planned society on Keynesian lines, while always being committed to the individualist ethic and civil liberties. Internationally, after 1918 – I do not agree that the record after 1918 is so bleak – he was perhaps the only one of the peacemakers who grasped the revolution created by the First World War, the collapse of the great empires of Hohenzollern and Habsburg and Romanov. He alone fought for moderation and for European security. Afterwards, and as someone from the floor said, he was a devastating critic of the National Government in its failures of appeasement, right down to 1940.

One last point: Lloyd George would have been the best company. Beaverbrook once was asked to compare Churchill with Lloyd George, and he said Lloyd George would have been more fun. So vote for Lloyd George, vote for fun, vote for inspiration, vote for the greatest Liberal who ever lived, and ruled this country.

Volunteer Assistant Editor wanted

The Liberal Democrat History Group is looking for a volunteer to help with editorial work on the group's website.

The Group promotes the discussion and research of the histories of the Liberal Democrats, Liberal Party and SDP, and of Liberalism. We do this through meetings, our quarterly *Journal of Liberal History*, occasional books and our website, **www.liberalhistory.org.uk.**

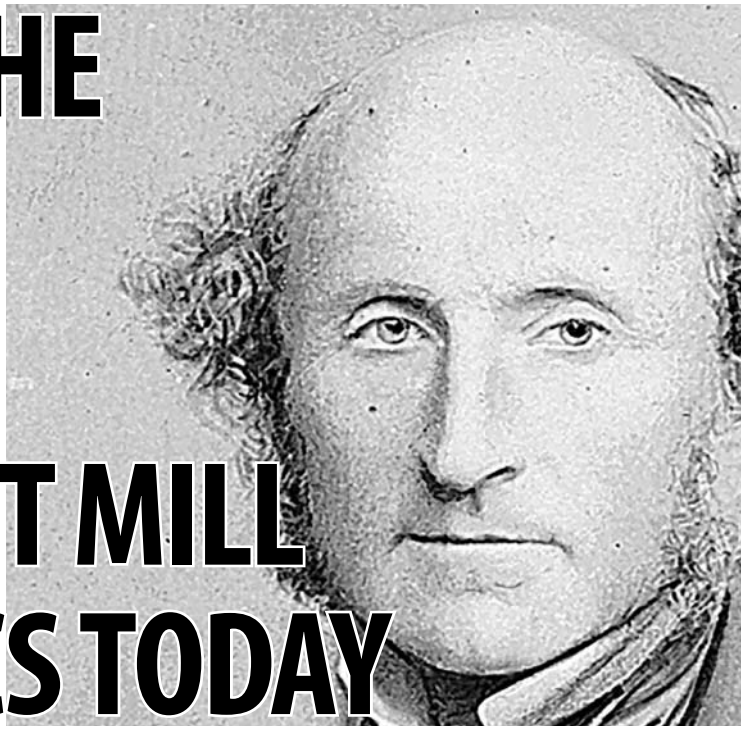
Originally established to carry news about our activities, the website has since grown substantially through the ongoing *Liberal History Online* project. As far as we aware, nothing anywhere else on the web makes available such a wide range of pages, links and electronic documents covering major topics and personalities in British Liberal history. We need someone to help us develop *Liberal History Online* by:

- Reviewing and editing the existing material
- Working with the committee to identify gaps and additional material required
- Commissioning further materials for the project

A background in modern British history would be helpful, but even better would be experience in editing and proof-reading internet publications. No special technical knowledge is necessary other than basic familiarity with computers and the web. This is an interesting voluntary position with the scope for further involvement with the activities of the Group and its *Journal*.

Please apply to Mark Pack at mark.pack@libdems.org.uk.

LEARNING THE LESSONS OF HISTORY: JOHN STUART MILL AND POLITICS TODAY



In the second of our new series of articles, 'Learning the Lessons of History', **Richard Reeves** writes about the Liberal thinker and activist he championed in our 'Great Liberal' contest: John Stuart Mill.

When he talked about the importance of liberty in modern Britain, Gordon Brown cited John Stuart Mill. But what would the original liberal make of today's politicians?

John Stuart Mill (1806–73)

'I LOVE LIBERTY by taste,' wrote Alexis de Tocqueville to his new friend, John Stuart Mill, in 1836, 'equality by instinct and reason'. Mill had just put the liberal French aristocrat on the English-speaking map with a review of his *De la Democratie en Amerique*: but it was his own 1859 masterpiece, *On Liberty*, which gave Victorian liberals their call to arms – the Liberal Party was formed later the same year – and became the New Testament of liberalism.

Mill has recently been voted Britain's Greatest Liberal, and his book is frequently quoted by politicians seeking a dash of gravitas and a splash of liberalism for their speeches. Rhetorically, the cause of liberty is prospering. David Cameron insists on the label liberal conservative, David Miliband proudly declares himself a liberal socialist, and Gordon Brown recently gave a speech on liberty in which he mentioned the L-word 74 times. The Prime Minister told a stirring 'British story of liberty'; but no amount of contortion of this narrative allowed him to move smoothly on to compulsory ID cards and two-month imprisonment without charge. Brown appears to have warmed a little to Mill: in 2005 he declared that 'most of us reject Mill's extreme view of liberty', but in his more recent offering quoted with approval Mill's view that compulsion was sometime necessary to support and maintain liberal societies – 'there are many positive acts for the benefit of others which he may rightfully be compelled to perform'. (Mill had in mind duties such as giving evidence in court.)

The Conservatives are also attempting to wrap themselves in liberal clothing. They can point to their opposition to ID cards and apparently greater commitment to giving individuals more power over the operation of monolithic public services; warm noises about

co-operatives also hint at a more liberal outlook. But there is nothing remotely liberal about Tory attitudes to families, international cooperation or rights in the workplace.

The Liberal Democrats have a default claim to the liberal mantle, although it is not always greatly treasured: Paddy Ashdown tried to persuade his party to become simply the Democrats. The Lib Dems still have a strong Fabian faction, represented by the old SDP-ers, the latest incarnation of what Keynes dubbed the 'watery Labour men' of the liberal movement. Under Nick Clegg it seems likely the party would become a more clearly liberal democratic, rather than social democratic, party.

For all the warm words, liberalism itself is in poor political health. The two main parties are playing liberal costume games, while the third, because of first-past-the-post voting, remains a bit-player of the political world. Current discussions of 'liberty' almost always end up focusing on the narrow, legalistic concept of civil liberties – a vital issue, but only one branch of liberalism. There is grave danger that when civil liberty is detached from the deeper liberalism which underpins it, the issue appears as the nitpicking concern of peers, pressure groups and professors. For many of those arguing for our civil liberties, their value is self-evident: but this may no longer be generally the case. Our freedoms cannot be adequately defended as self-evident, abstract rights, only as vital ingredients of a good life and as the essence of a good society. Without liberalism, liberty is fragile.

Free speech is not a human right, but a human need: only by constantly subjecting our opinions to criticism and possible refutation can knowledge advance. 'If all mankind plus one were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion,' wrote Mill, 'mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one opinion than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.'

Real liberalism – Liberalism with a capital L – has at its heart a vivid picture of a valuable human life: one in which people have the space, resources and responsibility to develop themselves as individuals and to choose their own path. A liberal society is one in which each individual is the author of their opinions and the architect of their own life plans. Mill, in *On Liberty*, wrote: 'The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way'. This liberty, described as 'sovereignty within' by Wordsworth, very often requires the state to exercise restraint – but sometimes needs action from government: compulsory education for children, for example, is a properly liberal measure. The greatest enemy of liberty is not coercion, but dependency: on the views of others in the making of life decisions; on the labour of others for income – for example, an idle landowner getting rich 'in his sleep'.

The freedom for adults to live as they choose – so long as they do not harm or depend on others – is an essential dimension of liberalism. Diverse lifestyles act as what Mill called 'experiments in living', from which general lessons can be drawn. So, if cohabitation turns out to be a less successful familial model than marriage, the results will be there for all to see and absorb, rather than the 'expert state' deciding for us.

It is this insistence on social and attitudinal diversity which gives Liberalism its anti-majoritarian streak. It is not that the majority are always wrong (although liberals sometimes fall into the trap of presuming they are), it is that they might be wrong and that there is no impartial referee to make the call. That includes God: religious codes must never be imposed on a whole citizenry, even if virtually the whole nation consists of true believers. To avoid offending too many Christians, Mill frequently used Islam to illustrate his arguments, citing the theoretical example of a predominantly Islamic nation banning pork as an indefensible infringement of liberty. Even if eating pork is 'disgusting' to the majority, it does not harm them and, Mill insisted, 'with the personal tastes and self-regarding concerns of individuals the public has no business to interfere'. Mill's liberalism on this point reads more provocatively today than it did in 1859.

It is this insistence on social and attitudinal diversity which gives Liberalism its anti-majoritarian streak.

Liberals worry as much about social forces as government ones, and in particular the dangers of received wisdom, or what Mill dubbed the 'despotism of custom'. The goal of liberal philosophy, Mill insisted is 'to supply, not a set of model institutions, but principles from which the institutions suitable to any given circumstances might be deduced'. Liberals are often accused of ignoring the place of collective institutions and civic society in the maintenance of a civilised order, of advocating an atomistic individualism. But this is to confuse liberalism with libertarianism. Nineteenth-century liberals had a borderline obsession with the role of institutions – especially families, schools and churches – in shaping individual character and creating opportunities for genuine autonomy. There was no reason to stop at social institutions: Mill believed employee-owned firms 'would combine the freedom and independence of the individual, with the moral, intellectual and economical advantages of aggregate production'. True liberals are unqualified supporters of capitalism – so long as we can all be capitalists.

Liberals are neither left nor right-wing, which causes some difficulties in a political culture and system still organised

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LLOYD GEORGE'S FL
THE POLITICAL ACHIEVEMEN

Kenneth O. Morgan tells the story of the pre-eminent Welsh Lloyd Georgian, Sir Herbert Lewis. Member of Parliament for first Flint Boroughs and then Flintshire and finally the University of Wales from 1892 to 1922, Lewis was a junior minister under Asquith and Lloyd George for the last seventeen of those years. He was a devoted servant of Welsh intermediate and higher education, the National Museum of Wales and, especially, the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth. Never achieving high office, he nevertheless played a crucial role as one of those who kept Lloyd George politically – and perhaps personally – honest.

LINTSHIRE LOYALIST

NT OF JOHN HERBERT LEWIS

'He had no friends and did not deserve any.' Thus A. J. P. Taylor's dismissive judgement on David Lloyd George.[1] Like several of that historian's famous aphorisms, the effect is more arresting than accurate. The comment echoes a common view, memorably reinforced by J. M. Keynes in his account of the major participants at the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, that the Welsh premier was but an unprincipled maverick, 'rooted in nothing', using people ruthlessly and callously, then throwing them away in pursuit of his career and his ambitions.[2] Novelists from Arnold Bennett to Joyce Cary have nurtured this view.[3] To adopt the musical tribute to the late Princess Diana, LG appears at best as simply a candle in the wind. So far as he had close associates, they tended to be hangers-on rather than personal friends, on the pattern of the press lords, 'hard-faced' capitalists and adventurers like 'Bronco Bill' Sutherland, Basil Zaharoff or Maundy Gregory, in the darker phases of his peacetime premiership of 1918–22. That people like these did flit in and out of his career at regular intervals cannot be disputed; nor can his casualness with money, principles and loyalties. His career, too, was littered with decent-minded colleagues, Charles Masterman, Christopher Addison, Llewelyn Williams, with whom he quarrelled fatally, breaking off relations with a resounding crash. The picture is all too easily drawn of the casual Welsh freebooter, aggressive, *arriviste*, contrasted with the assured Balliol values of the Asquithians on the other side.

But there is also a massive element left out in this crude pastiche – the long sequence of honourable, high-principled, intellectually respectable figures who found in Lloyd George a life-long inspiration and icon – C. P. Scott of the *Manchester Guardian*, the historian H. A. L. Fisher, the pioneering Quaker sociologist, Seebohm Rowntree. And in Wales, there were a whole generation of decent, honest, moralistic Liberals for whom Lloyd George was always a hero throughout all vicissitudes, men like the preacher-poet Elfed, the very embodiment of the folk values of *y werin*. In the political realm, Sir Herbert Lewis, member for first Flint Boroughs and then Flintshire and finally the University of Wales from 1892 to 1922, junior minister under Asquith and Lloyd George for the last seventeen of those years, devoted servant of Welsh intermediate and higher education, the National Museum and especially the National Library at Aberystwyth, was foremost amongst these. His unbroken attachment to the younger Caernarfonshire Liberal whom he served with total loyalty makes him pre-eminent amongst the Welsh Lloyd Georgians. With all deference to the late Eirene White, Lewis's creative relationship with his leader makes him probably the most influential Flintshire politician in modern times.[4]

John Herbert Lewis (1858–1933)

Herbert Lewis's background was significantly different from that of David Lloyd George. Born in December 1858 at Mostyn Quay, the Flintshire man was brought up not in a shoemaker's cottage but in an affluent commercial family with strong connections with shipping, including the new steamships. From childhood, his life was punctuated by frequent expensive travels to the sunny climes of the Mediterranean or the Middle East during the

winter months. Dr Erasmus correctly remarks that 'there can have been few Members of Parliament that have travelled more widely.'[5] In 1884–85 he spent a year on a world tour, travelling across the United States, and moving on to Japan, China and India. He also had a far more extensive and privileged education than Lloyd George – Denbigh Grammar School, a period in the University of Montreal in his teenage years, and finally Exeter College, Oxford, where he studied law, though without great distinction. He began training as a solicitor in 1881, first in Chester, then moving on to a more glamorous life in London.

Unlike Lloyd George, his public and private life spoke of sober respectability, as did the dapper suits, wing collars, shiny pointed shoes and trim beard which newspaper cartoons of him featured.[6] He was an earnest Calvinist Methodist, teetotaller and public moralist. His married life was beyond the most puritanical reproach. His first wife, Adelaide ('Ada') Hughes, the daughter of a prominent Wrexham Liberal publisher, was upright and honourable – and also a vigorous Liberal feminist and advocate of women's suffrage, more forcibly so than Lewis himself. When she died, much to Lewis's distress, just before the 1895 general election, he then married in 1897 Ruth, the daughter of the temperance leader W. S. Caine. Compared with Lloyd George, his private life was a model of sobriety and restraint. Nor was he flamboyant as an orator. On the contrary, he himself lamented his lack of rhetorical flair in election meetings,[7] especially in comparison with the meteor from Llanystumdwy already beginning to dominate the Welsh scene. His quiet personality, too, might not have been expected to endear him to Lloyd George on their various jaunts overseas. No one could accuse him of a sense of humour. In addition, Lewis's diaries reveal him as a persistent hypochondriac, constantly staying indoors to recover from 'chills' and other maladies, great or (usually) small. As late as 1932, Lloyd George spoke to Sylvester and other associates of how Lewis was a lifelong valetudinarian. Years earlier, when speaking at Liverpool, Lloyd George had been told of how the Flintshire man was in bed in Plas Penucha dying of tuberculosis: 'there he was, coddled and muffled up by his wife'.[8] But the wife it was who died, not Herbert. Lewis later survived a serious fall in a quarry in 1925 which broke his spine, but he remained mentally active, even though bedridden. He wrote a letter of farewell to Lloyd George, the latter told Frances Stevenson, but then wrote for the papers and 'received medals of recognition for his work for Wales'.[9] Sylvester observed, 'LG always said that Herbert would live to see all his contemporaries die, and write a letter of condolence to their relatives.'[10]

Lewis's unbroken attachment to the younger Caernarfonshire Liberal whom he served with total loyalty makes him pre-eminent amongst the Welsh Lloyd Georgians.

Even so, over thirty years and more, they were good friends and good travelling companions. Lloyd George lived for a time in 1895 in Lewis's flat in Palace Mansions in Addison Road in London. When he needed comfort and companionship in Cannes after the tragic death of his young daughter, Mair, it was his faithful Herbert who travelled there, leaving his own family behind in Flintshire.

The transformation of Welsh social and political life in the years following the Reform Act of 1884 and the advent of democratic politics in Wales during Gladstone's heyday, soon drew him and Lloyd George together in the pursuit of the nonconformist and Liberal objectives of the day.[11] Soon he became Treasurer of the North Wales Liberal Federation. It is significant, too, that an early private tutor of his was the Rev. E. Pan Jones of Cysegr Chapel, Rhewl, radical-socialist Independent minister, proto-nationalist and land nationaliser, and the influence stuck. This radical outlook also made him close to that other youthful Welsh leader, Tom Ellis, a man whose Fabian creed of social and national improvement might have made him a more naturally appropriate colleague of Lewis's. Ellis gave Lewis powerful advice on the drafting of his forthcoming election address in October 1891: 'Nationality and Labour are our two main principles, are they not? I think we ought to make clear that, when Disestablishment is settled, Wales will throw itself heart and soul in the Labour movement', not in fact advice to which Lewis's later career showed much response.[12]

For all of them, the advent of local government reform and the political revolution of the county council elections of 1889 was an immense breakthrough. Ellis, an enthusiast for the cantons of Switzerland and the Tyrol, was the advocate of civic populism in Parliament, and from platform and pulpit.[13] Lloyd George was too, in a more openly class-conscious fashion, and served on the first Caernarfonshire County Council as 'the boy alderman'. But Lewis was more directly involved than any of them. Elected unopposed as Liberal Councillor in the Llanasa district, he became Chairman of the first Flintshire County Council, at a meeting in Mold in January 1889 at the age of barely thirty, testimony to his already powerful local standing. He went on to become Chairman of the County Intermediate Education Committee and rapidly built up the new system of 'county schools' in his native county. Intermediate schools at Mold, Rhyl, Holywell, St. Asaph and Hawarden resulted. He also worked hard to promote technical education in the county. His achievement here showed both the careful attention to detail on committees that distinguished

his later career as a government minister and also a notable dynamism and capacity for leadership that made Flintshire foremost in getting its new network of secondary education established. He remained Flintshire County Council's Chairman until 1893 by which time he was a Member of Parliament.

It was through his pioneering efforts in local government that he became close to national politicians. He was in close contact with Tom Ellis throughout the parliamentary passage of the Intermediate Education Act in 1889, already being considered as a mature and serious politician whose judgement was valued.[14] He also championed the wider 'nationalist' cause of using the County Councils as the basis of a putative Welsh National Council which would propel Welsh Liberalism into a more nationally conscious direction and promote the idea of some kind of devolution or home rule. In this connection, he urged Ellis in 1891, with characteristic insight, 'not to offend the South Wales people. They are touchy in the extreme ….'[15] It was this nationalist initiative that particularly chimed in with the *Cymru Fydd* sentiment of the early nineties, of which the most vocal champion was David Lloyd George, elected in a dramatic by-election for Caernarfon Boroughs. By 1892 it was clear that Lewis was amongst the closest allies of the radical group of young Welsh Liberals who emerged as the new political elite of the late years of the century – Lloyd George and Ellis, of course, D. A. Thomas, Sam Evans, Llewelyn Williams, Ellis Griffith, William Jones, the most inspired generation of Welsh political leaders until the rise of Bevan, Griffiths, and the products of the Central Labour College after 1918. Herbert Lewis, always correct, modest, uncharismatic, was their enthusiastic and courageous lieutenant. Indeed, of all the younger Welsh Liberal MPs, he was perhaps the most consistent nationalist and devolutionist of them all.

His links with Lloyd George assumed a wholly new dimension when he was elected to Parliament for the marginal constituency of Flint Boroughs. It consisted of eight small towns with a combined population of 23,251, of which Flint, Mold, Holywell and St. Asaph were the most significant, but which also included Lewis's own Caerwys. The constituency's electorate in 1892 was a mere 3,710, a thousand fewer even than Caernarfon Boroughs. Anglicised and with some landlord and Church influence, balanced to a degree by nonconformist strength in rural areas and some miners and quarrymen at Holywell and Mold, it was not a wholly secure seat for Lewis and his eventual move to the county seat from 1906 was a distinct improvement. At the same time, his remarkably rebellious career in Parliament over disestablishment and other Welsh causes in the early nineties, during the South African War and later the Welsh 'revolt' on education in 1902–05, is testimony to an uncomplicated attachment to principle whatever the possible electoral impact for himself. Like other rural Liberal solicitors, he had long visualised a parliamentary career. He had worked hard for Lord Richard Grosvenor in the 1885 election, and was only narrowly beaten for the Flintshire Liberal nomination in 1886 by the Englishman Samuel Smith, with whom he always had an awkward relationship.[16] When the Flint District Liberal nomination came up in 1891 Lewis was strongly placed to win it, and in the 1892 general election he defeated the squirearchical Unionist, P. P. Pennant, by 359 votes.

At an early stage, the new Flint Boroughs member was part of the awkward squad. He was distinctly cool in his comments on Tom Ellis's agreeing to become a junior whip in Gladstone's final government in 1892, 'grasping the Saxon gold' in the view of more extreme patriots.[17] Lewis was among those who put pressure on the Welsh Parliamentary Chairman, Stuart Rendel, with whom he had a good relationship, for a Royal Commission to be appointed to investigate the Welsh land question. This was a fairly standard view amongst the Welsh Liberals at this time, and Gladstone was compelled to acquiesce.[18] Far more challenging was the episode when Lewis (Joint Secretary of the Welsh Parliamentary Party by now) joined Lloyd George, D. A. Thomas and Frank Edwards in a rebellion against the new Liberal Prime Minister in April 1894. They threatened to withhold their support from the Rosebery government (whose small and diminishing majority was wholly dependent on the Irish) on the issue of Welsh disestablishment, and urged their Liberal colleagues to do the same. He told Tom Ellis, 'It is with the greatest regret that I have taken a step which means independence of the Liberal Party. My recent talks with Ministers and members have convinced me that Wales is simply being led on from step to step without any definite goal in actual view, that we have nothing to gain by subservience to the Liberal Party, and that we shall never get the English to do us justice until we show our independence of them.' He asked Ellis rhetorically, 'Will you come out and lead us?' – a pretty forlorn hope when writing to one who was now the government's Chief Whip. In this episode, Lloyd George appears to have regarded Lewis as a particularly valued ally. Whereas D. A. Thomas was a maverick coal tycoon and Frank Edwards a relative lightweight (who was to lose his seat in the 1895 general election), 'Herbert's presence amongst us will in itself be a source of great strength', he wrote to his brother William.[19]

At an early stage, the new Flint Boroughs member was part of the awkward squad.

Lewis was also foremost amongst those who backed

Lloyd George's new attempt to turn the 'revolt' on Welsh disestablishment into a wider campaign for Welsh home rule. Lewis was not a natural zealot for *Cymru Fydd*. For one thing, he was not anywhere as gifted in Welsh as were men like Lloyd George or Llewelyn Williams. T. Marchant Williams (with much exaggeration, admittedly) was to ridicule Lewis's attempts to give a Welsh speech during the Montgomeryshire by-election of April 1894. He speculated that Lewis's audience in Llanbrynmair might have imagined they were listening to ancient Hebrew or modern Greek.[20] Lewis did improve his command of Welsh considerably as his career progressed, though it is notable that his lengthy diary, which he kept from 1888 until his death in 1933, was almost always written up in English. Even so, Lewis appears to have had no problem with Lloyd George's undoubtedly divisive tactics in trying to turn the Liberal Federations of North and South Wales into a framework for his quasi-separatist *Cymru Fydd* League. Lewis's influence was important in winning over the North Wales Liberal Federation. Meanwhile Lloyd George reassured him over opinion within the South Wales Liberal Federation. 'I do not see any reason for discouragement in the fact that South Wales has not yet "risen" to the *Cymru Fydd* movement. It is only a question of getting a thoroughly good organiser.'[21]

The sudden death of his beloved wife Ada on 7 June 1895, which left Lewis grief-stricken, removed him from the political forefront for a short time. It is significant that Lloyd George was with him in the Gwalia Hotel in Llandrindod Wells when he heard the news, and was the first to comfort him. Indeed, it is testimony to his close relationship with Lewis at this time that he spent much time and trouble interrogating the hapless doctor whom he correctly suspected of giving a wrong diagnosis of Mrs. Lewis's medical condition, and arranging for a *post mortem*. He described the scene poignantly to his wife: 'His grief was appalling. The poor boy was trying to pack. He was distracted. I couldn't leave him in that state, so I took charge of him. By degrees I quieted him down.' It was he who took Herbert to grieve alone in the large empty house in Caerwys.[22] The whole episode casts light on a tender, gentle side of Lloyd George which his critics often miss.

Despite this bereavement there is no doubt that Lewis was totally supportive when, a few days later, Lloyd George tried to tack on a Welsh National Council to administer the secularised Church endowments, within the framework of clause nine of the Welsh Disestablishment Bill. Many severely criticised Lloyd George for his role at this time. On 20 June, the tottering government's majority fell to only seven on the Welsh bill. The next day, the Rosebery government was defeated by seven votes in the Commons on the trivial 'cordite vote'. It resigned almost in a sense of relief, amidst much criticism of Ellis's competence as party whip, while Liberals like J. Bryn Roberts and, more notably, Asquith, the former Home Secretary, condemned Lloyd George for disloyal tactics that weakened Rosebery's government at a critical time.[23]

Lewis argued that Lloyd George was absolutely right in trying to push Welsh Liberalism in a more openly nationalist direction.

Herbert Lewis never did. On the contrary, he argued that Lloyd George was absolutely right in trying to push Welsh Liberalism in a more openly nationalist direction. After he narrowly retained his Flint District seat in the general election, he watched with consistent approval Lloyd George's autumn campaign in the south Wales valleys to win support for *Cymru Fydd*. Lewis himself gave him frequent oratorical and tactical assistance.[24] He also showed a good deal of tactical shrewdness, using personal contacts and links with journalists with a skill not far behind that of Lloyd George himself. When, in the famous meeting of the South Wales Liberal Federation at Newport on 16 January 1896, Lloyd George was shouted down by the 'Newport Englishmen' and *Cymru Fydd* was rejected, Lewis took this as merely one battle in an unending campaign. 'This will be the end of the negotiations with them [the SWLF] and the WNF [Welsh National Federation] will go ahead'.[25] Throughout 1896 and 1897 Lewis acted as though *Cymru Fydd* was very far from defeated. He drafted a scheme for a Welsh national organisation, based on the premise that they should not be provoking the South Wales Liberals and encouraging national sentiment in Glamorgan and Monmouthshire. This proposal for a Welsh National Liberal Federation, however, aroused all the old animosities of the *Cymru Fydd* episode and it finally collapsed in February 1898 in the face of further attacks from the Cardiff Liberal Association.[26]

Lewis had been its main proponent. He showed, indeed, rather more persistence in promoting the idea of a Welsh National Federation at this period than did Lloyd George himself. In his diary in February 1899, he noted his surprise that Lloyd George was reluctant to give his backing to a Welsh amendment to the Address: 'it was curious that I should have had to argue the subject in such a quarter'.[27] Two months later, he turned down an offer from the new Liberal Leader, Campbell-Bannerman, that he should take up a junior whipship. In Lewis's view this would compromise his role as an independent voice for Welsh Liberalism.[28] The fires of rebellion still surged within him. Lewis flatly refused to fall into the same trap as his recently

deceased colleague Tom Ellis had done when he took office under Gladstone in August 1892.

In the years of opposition after the 1895 general election, Lewis was Lloyd George's man, though not exclusively so. He remained friendly with Ellis to the extent that they travelled in South Africa in the autumn of 1895; they met Cecil Rhodes, a momentous encounter for both, though Lewis, a 'little Englander' in his view of the world, appears to have been more guarded than Ellis in his enthusiasm for so aggressive a voice for empire.[29] At the end of 1898 he again went on holiday with Ellis, this time to Egypt and Palestine; this was a more sombre trip in view of Ellis's delicate health, and indeed he was to die shortly after his return to Britain, at the age of only forty.[30] But on the great contemporary issues, Lewis was always in Lloyd George's camp and manifestly regarded his younger colleague as having unique gifts of leadership. He went on holiday with him also, to Patagonia in the autumn of 1896. Their correspondence and diaries do not shed much light on the details of their visit though Lloyd George does comment on Lewis's enthusiasm for the deck game of shovelboard.[31] At any rate, Lewis does not show any great qualms for Lloyd George's involvement in the bizarre Patagonia gold scheme, with which he himself had an indirect financial connection.[32]

On a more serious personal issue, Lewis gave Lloyd George the strongest backing during the Edwards paternity and divorce case when Lloyd George was accused in late 1896 of adultery and fathering an illegitimate child. Lewis's response was tough and to the point. He told Lloyd George: 'the line you are taking is right and necessary. I am confident you will come out of the business stronger than ever.'[33] Lewis's position was far more straightforward than, say, the Liberal member for Anglesey, the barrister Ellis Griffith, who actually represented Dr Edwards, to Lloyd George's intense fury. Politically, Lewis was with Lloyd George at every turn. Following a jaunt to Boulogne together, they were suspended together in a parliamentary protest against the 1896 Education Bill. The Bishop, the Brewer and the Squire were constant targets of Lewis's measured oratory.

His association with Lloyd George's brand of radicalism reached a dramatic new level when the South African War broke out in September 1899. Like Lloyd George (who was in Canada when the war broke out), Lewis was an immediate and vehement opponent of the war. No one was a more consistent 'pro-Boer'. Not for a moment does he seem to have flinched from vehement attacks on the government, on Chamberlain and on imperialism. On 20 April 1900 he deplored how leading Liberals in Holywell were 'all more or less jingo. Militarism has got hold of my people in the most extraordinary way. The light of Gladstone, Bright and Cobden, is quenched in darkness.'[34] The precariousness of his election majority had no effect in moderating Lewis's passionate anti-war crusade. Like Lloyd George he faced danger and violence from jingo ruffians at election meetings. He spoke with Lloyd George and Bryn Roberts at a great anti-war rally in Caernarfon, which in fact proved to be distinctly more orderly than one of Lloyd George's at Bangor.[35] Lewis was one of four 'pro-Boer' Welsh members (Lloyd George, Humphreys Owen and Bryn Roberts being the others), in the vote on Sir Wilfrid Lawson's anti-war motion in the Commons on 25 July 1900 when the Liberal Party divided three ways.[36] Lewis's sense of moral outrage was such that he even considered resigning his seat rather than trim to the jingo views of some in his local constituency association.[37] It was perhaps the noblest and most selfless phase of his career, as much so as that of Lloyd George, which has been so fully recorded in relation to Birmingham Town Hall and elsewhere.

There is no doubt that his approach was based solely on principle, an old Liberal's adherence to the historic imperatives of peace, retrenchment and reform.

Virtue was rewarded when Lewis got home, with an increased majority of 347 (11 per cent) in the 'khaki election' for Flint Boroughs that October. But he pursued his crusade against the war to the bitter end, with all the more passion when Emily Hobhouse's account of the deaths of thousands of Boer mothers and little children in Kitchener's concentration camps in the Rand was published.[38] Since the effect of the war was to strengthen radicalism in the party under Campbell-Bannerman's leadership and to give the pro-Boer minority a new stature, the outcome was politically advantageous to Lewis. But there is no doubt that his approach was based solely on principle, an old Liberal's adherence to the historic imperatives of peace, retrenchment and reform.

Equally principled, though perhaps intellectually more tortuous for a member of the legal profession, was Lewis's prominent role as Lloyd George's lieutenant in the 'Welsh revolt' against Balfour's Education Act of 1902 which nonconformists bitterly condemned for favouring and subsidising the schools of the Established Church. Lewis, unlike Lloyd George, had professional expertise in the organisation of education and much technical experience in the development of intermediate schools. But he had no qualms in endorsing Lloyd George's strategy that the Welsh county councils should collectively act to thwart the operation of the Act in Wales. Indeed he often gave his friend useful tips on the legal loopholes that could be identified to their political advantage. For Lloyd George's oratory and tactics, his admiration knew no

bounds. When they both took part in meetings at Cardiff in May 1902, Lewis observed: 'I have heard Lloyd George make many brilliant speeches but the four speeches he delivered at Cardiff were a perfect *tour de force*. He did not repeat himself by a single sentence and every part of the speech was on the same high level.'[39] He was equally enthusiastic over Lloyd George's using the Educational Revolt to promote Welsh national objectives as over disestablishment in 1895. When the Welsh members, influenced by cautious figures like Bryn Roberts and Humphreys-Owen, were divided over tactics on 12 November 1902, Lloyd George 'swept everything before him in the most peremptory fashion and carried them in favour of the English plan'. Lloyd George's and Lewis's ultimate aim at this point appears to have been to create a Central Board for Wales for elementary schools, in addition to that already set up for secondary schools in 1896, on 'a red letter day for Welsh nationality'. 'LG showed tremendous determination and driving force in carrying the thing through.'[40]

During the tortuous negotiations of the next three years, revolt against the government and default over operating the Act, combined with attempts at negotiations variously with Sir William Anson and Robert Morant at the Education Board and even with A. G. Edwards, the serpentine Bishop of St. Asaph, Lewis was constantly at Lloyd George's side. He was a shoulder to lean on when his hero was nearly roughed up by hostile crowds – admiringly, he noted how Lloyd George kept a mob at bay on St. Albans station platform by the expedient of very deliberately lighting his pipe.[41] Nothing, it seemed, should come between a man and his right to smoke. When Lloyd George impatiently inquired of Lewis whether he needed a court suit when meeting the King at a social engagement at Lord Tweedmouth's, Lewis lent him his own, since they were roughly the same size.[42] They were also frequent partners on the golf course, notably at Lewes in matches arranged by Timothy Lewis, Liberal Welsh MP and the husband of one of Lloyd George's mistresses.

The years of Liberal hegemony begun by the election landslide of January 1906 brought a golden period for Lewis no less than Lloyd George. He observed his friend's rapid ascent to power with unbridled admiration and affection. He endorsed his attempts to sort out the Welsh clauses of Birrell's abortive Education Bill of 1906, even though this resulted in a phantom Welsh Minister of State who was soon wiped out from the Bill. Lloyd George's triumphs at the Board of Trade appeared endless. Over the 1906 Merchant Shipping Act, 'LG has succeeded where Chamberlain failed. To have brought about an *entente* between capital and labour and to have promoted a measure which is to the interest of shipowners and sailors alike has meant a display extending over several months of tact, astuteness and a power of managing men which has put LG in the front rank of constructive statesmanship.'[43] The President's rattling through most of the 1907 Patents Bill in three hours in committee only brought the comment: 'that wonderful man, by tact, suavity, concession, adroit manoeuvring and skilful handling very nearly got the Bill through …'[44] In February 1908, Lloyd George, emerging from the trauma of the death of his beloved youngest daughter, Mair, triumphed in the very different sphere of labour relations. He achieved his 'third great triumph' in conciliation by settling the engineers' strike, appealing to the humaner instincts of the engineering employers' leader, Sir Andrew Noble of the munitions manufacturers, Armstrongs.[45] This followed close on Lloyd George's remarkable success in settling a threatened national railway strike the previous October.

The years of Liberal hegemony begun by the election landslide of January 1906 brought a golden period for Lewis no less than Lloyd George.

Lloyd George's further advance to become Chancellor of the Exchequer in April 1908 after Asquith became Prime Minister propelled Lewis's idol to new heights of constructive statesmanship. The 'People's Budget' speech on 30 April 1909 was badly delivered, Lloyd George rattling through his lengthy text and almost losing his voice: Lewis was at hand to provide a restorative glass of egg and milk. But it was 'the most daring budget we have ever seen … one of the most remarkable triumphs of LG's career', especially in the way he managed to arouse enthusiasm on behalf of the taxes to be levied to finance social reform.[46] Like Gordon Brown in 2002, Lloyd George had made 'tax and spend' policies popular. Throughout the prolonged crises of the Budget, the conflict with the Lords and the final passage of the 1911 Parliament Act, Lewis was an unflinching and vocal supporter at every turn. The National Insurance Act of 1911 was a further triumph – 'probably the greatest social scheme ever put forward in this or any other country'. Lloyd George had raised the idea in colourful fashion when discussing policy with Lewis at Criccieth in April 1908, immediately after he became Chancellor.[47] Lewis also sympathised with Lloyd George's troubles at the hands of the suffragettes, and was severely critical of the militant tactics being adopted by them at Lloyd George's meetings. The latter confided in Lewis his fear of being murdered.[48] Lewis, like Lloyd George, was a women's suffragist, especially when his first wife was alive, but a distinctly gradualist one. On balance, his enthusiasm for women's suffrage seemed to wane over the years; the disruption of Lloyd George's day at the Wrexham Eisteddfod

in September 1912 provoked the comment 'the usual insane suffragette demonstration'.[49] But here again Lewis was totally convinced that Lloyd George was on the right lines and would triumph in the end.

Apart from this hero-worship, his own career was also progressing, even if only as a minister of the second rank. In December 1905 he did take a whipship, as Junior Lord of the Treasury, and retained that post for four years. Lewis worked well with J. A. Pease, the Liberal Chief Whip, in trying to impose discipline on 'a great mob of new members, most of them absolutely ignorant of the ways of Parliament', and with much effect. Lord Althorp told him that he was '*the* popular whip … it is because you are a Celt', whatever that meant.[50] In 1909 Lewis moved to the Local Government Board under the unpredictable leadership of John Burns, whose egotism alternatively amused and dismayed him. It is clear that Lewis, a most capable administrator, undertook a good deal of the more difficult and detailed business in handling committees and deputations in place of his wayward President. Lewis stayed here until after the outbreak of war in 1914, on the whole a congenial role for one long versed in the minutiae of local government, and one that considerably broadened his political horizon. Thus when war broke out, he was immersed in the complexities of a committee on poor relief in London.

It is clear that Lewis, a most capable administrator, undertook a good deal of the more difficult and detailed business in handling committees and deputations in place of his wayward President.

Many of his endeavours as a minister, inevitably, were concerned with Welsh issues, with many positive results. Lewis was heavily involved with patronage matters: for instance he persuaded Lloyd George to support the Oxford history don Owen M. Edwards for the post of Chief Inspector of Schools, when the Chancellor himself had his doubts. Lewis was inevitably prepared to accept Lloyd George's assurance over the prospects for a Welsh Disestablishment bill in 1907 when many Welsh Liberals and nonconformist leaders were critical of Campbell-Bannerman. A strongly pro-disestablishment speech by Lloyd George in a convention at Cardiff 'restored equilibrium' in Lewis's words. There was further doubt when the Welsh Church Bill of 1909 fell by the wayside. Lewis could in the end point to the introduction of a conclusive Disestablishment Bill in 1912, on which he spoke several times, and to its potential enactment under the terms of the Parliament Act in 1914. Lewis was very apprehensive at the apparent lack of enthusiasm amongst English Liberals for the Welsh Bill. 'Many Liberal members are apathetic and even hostile to the passage of the Bill. They say it will do them a great deal of harm in their constituencies.' However, Lloyd George's 'magnificent' speech on 25 April (he accused the Cecil family of seizing Church endowments and pillaging monastic estates in the time of Henry VIII, leaving them with 'hands dripping with the fat of sacrilege') 'gave the Bill a lift which it greatly needed'.[51]

More constructively, perhaps, he lobbied Lloyd George with much effect on behalf of his cherished cause of the National Library, along with the Museum and the funding of the University Colleges. This was a lifelong crusade of his: since his first entry into Parliament he had pursued the question of museum and library grants being applied to Wales. As champion of the new copyright National Library in Aberystwyth, Lewis was extraordinarily effective. He used his friendship with Lloyd George to excellent purpose in February–March 1909, at a time when the Chancellor was heavily engaged in dealing with the financial troubles of the naval estimates and preparing the People's Budget. Lewis noted privately that, apart from Lloyd George, there was no one to speak for Wales throughout the entire ranks of government, but he used his powers of man-to-man diplomacy extremely well. In early March 1909 after private meetings with Lloyd George, Lewis was able to announce grants of £4,500 to the Library, £2,000 to the Museum, and £16,000 of grants to the Welsh Colleges. 'LG has behaved with great courage and determination.'[52] A year later, there was even better news, with the Chancellor agreeing to £4,000 a year to the Library and a further grant of £500 per annum for two years towards cataloguing the manuscript collections: 'A courageous action on LG's part', given the depleted state of the nation's finances.[53] Lewis was able to persuade such local prima donnas as Dr John Williams, the Library's president, and John Ballinger, its imperious librarian, that there was a secure financial basis for this national treasure-house at last.

Lewis was therefore a pivotal and characteristic figure at this high noon of Welsh Edwardian Liberalism. He was involved in most of the political, social and cultural achievements of the period. He was also a voice for that style of progressive, reformist liberalism which captured the public mind before the First World War, a constructive phase in our politics to which Tony Blair amongst others has looked back nostalgically. Lewis was a perfect symbol of how the Old Liberalism gradually yielded to the New. The older issues of disestablishment, Church schools, temperance and land reform remained unfinished business. But increasingly social welfare was dominating the public agenda. Lewis viewed all Lloyd George's new enthusiasms with equanimity. At the same time, it is clear that for him the reforms served in some measure as a bulwark against socialism. The national strikes of 1911–14 disturbed him as they did other

traditional liberals, with their violence and apparent threat to the constitution and economic fabric. He worried at the impact of the 1912 miners' strike, not least on the Flintshire miners in the small pits around Buckley in his own constituency. He thought an ILP socialist like Fred Jowett was callously unaware of the attachment of Welsh miners to 'home and people and language' and the importance to them of the rents they paid on their cottages.[54] Tom Ellis's old advice to him back in 1891 to focus in the longer term on labour issues did not appear to bear much fruit in Lewis's case. Other Flintshire Liberals, like Fred Llewellyn Jones, the solicitor and coroner of Isfryn, Mold, were to gravitate in time towards the Labour Party. For Lewis that could never be an option.[55]

But a combination of measured social reform (Lewis became friendly with Lloyd George's reforming doctor associate, Dr Christopher Addison) and beguiling Lloyd Georgian labour conciliation would steady the ship and keep the Tories at bay. To read Lewis's diaries and letters down to August 1914 is in no sense to gain an indication of what Dangerfield so misleadingly described as the 'strange death' of Liberal England – or Wales. Lewis enjoyed power. He felt that the Liberals had control of it, deserved it, and had the greatest Welshman in history in place to ensure that they retained it. The Tories, wrong-footed on National Insurance, yoked with difficult allies like the Diehard peers, the Welsh bishops and the Ulster Covenanters, unsure in their philosophy about either the state or social cohesion,[56] were not in Lewis's view close to returning to power at all, and certainly did not deserve to.

His confidence was fortified by his strength in his new county constituency. He had been elected for Flintshire in January: his dour predecessor, Samuel Smith, had announced his reluctant resignation in 1904 as a consequence of some tortuous local manoeuvres.[57] Apart from significant pockets of nonconformists, there was a good industrial vote for the Liberals in Connah's Quay and Shotton, and Lib-Lab miners around Buckley. Hence both the 1910 elections were won with some comfort even though 'territorial persecution was rife in some parts of the county, particularly in Maelor and the Bodfari district', and the Trade 'being very keen and active'.[58] Lewis, now into his middle fifties, was still full of zest for the fight, despite littering his diary with accounts of endless colds and 'chills', and days spent almost incomprehensibly in bed. In June 1914, when Lloyd George was shortly to tell the London Mansion House audience that 'the sky was relatively blue' in the international field, Lewis himself had a cheerful tour of Germany, going on from Hamburg and Bremen as far as Berlin.[59] His diary notes show no sign of detecting an imminent international catastrophe. For Herbert Lewis of Plas Penucha, it seemed, smiling and serene blue skies also lay ahead.

Then came the war. Of course, it brought a seismic transformation in the role of Lloyd George, coalition with the Tory enemy and an eventual almost six years in 10 Downing Street, followed by his abrupt ejection from office forever. Herbert Lewis followed him faithfully at every turn. Like his colleague, he accepted the necessity and indeed morality of the war. It was being fought, he believed, on behalf of liberal principles of self-determination and natural justice. He was fortified in this view by having to handle the reception of immigrant Belgian refugees who migrated to Britain in the autumn of 1914, which he did with characteristic efficiency. Lloyd George's growing role in war strategy as well as war finance in early 1915 evoked only further admiration.

Lewis certainly showed plenty of intellectual energy in this important new post, especially in piloting the 1918 Education Act through the Commons with much aplomb.

His friend 'has taken a greater part in the world's affairs than any Welshman that ever lived', Lewis reflected.[60]

He felt apprehension at Asquith's Liberal government giving way to a coalition in May 1915, and reluctantly accepted the new post of Under-Secretary at the Board of Education on 28 May. He would have preferred a complete break from office, he confided to his diary, giving vent to his usual concern at his delicate health. But, in fact, he continued as an active, even robust minister, and was to serve in his new department for almost seven and a half years. He struck up a good relationship with his initial President of the Education Board, Labour's Arthur Henderson. This period saw Lewis launch with a grant of £25,000 the supremely important initiative of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, which he saw as bringing the universities and the business world closer together. He worked even better with Henderson's successor from December 1916, H. A. L. Fisher, the distinguished Liberal historian and future Warden of New College, Oxford.[61] Lewis certainly showed plenty of intellectual energy in this important new post, especially in piloting the 1918 Education Act through the Commons with much aplomb. Like Mark Twain's death, Lewis's decline was distinctly exaggerated. After the 'coupon election' of December 1918, he continued at Education for almost four more years, his energies apparently undiminished.

Lewis followed closely the twists and turns of Lloyd George's political career during the war. As his oldest living friend, he saw the Prime Minister quite frequently: his diary records a series of lunches, breakfasts or political conversations with Lloyd George through the war years, often at Downing Street. Lloyd George saw in

Lewis a reliable, totally discreet observer of the political world in general. Lewis's expertise on the shipping industry was especially useful to him during the war years. He also introduced the Premier to the progressive young naval officer and critic of the Admiralty, Commander J. M. Kenworthy.[62] Nearer home, Lloyd George used Lewis skilfully in March 1915 in persuading Welsh Liberals that the government intended to persevere with the disestablishment of the Welsh Church, until it came into operational effect after the war, despite the government's temporary tactical confusions. Prophetically, Lloyd George was recorded as saying that 'he believes that the great question of reconstruction which will arise after the war will peremptorily push aside sectarian controversy'. Lewis concluded: 'After all, but for him there would have been no Parliament Act and no Disestablishment Act'.[63]

Throughout the tortuous political manoeuvres of 1916, Lewis (like Ellis Griffith but unlike Llewelyn Williams) backed Lloyd George solidly over military conscription (despite his own Gladstonian, anti-military background). He was amongst the hundred-odd who signed up secretly when Addison, David Davies and others canvassed Liberal MPs that spring about the prospects of a Lloyd George premiership in succession to Asquith. He was a wholly committed supporter of the new Prime Minister from December 1916 and stayed on at Education; if he was disappointed at failing to gain further promotion, Lewis does not show it. He backs Lloyd George at every turn, including the crisis of the Maurice Debate in May 1918 when the Prime Minister was accused of falsely representing the strength of the military reserves at the western front. Lloyd George's speech of self-defence, said Lewis, was 'a triumphant vindication' while he dismissed Maurice scornfully as a disappointed general not worth an undue amount of bother.[64] The ferocity of Lloyd George's rhetoric (e.g. 'cocoa slop') does not seem to have disturbed him.

For his part, H. A. L. Fisher clearly regarded Lewis, rather than the local worthies on the Central Welsh Board, as his most reliable sounding-board on Welsh education.

In 1918 he loyally accepted Coalition Liberal nomination for the new University of Wales seat: he himself had been active in alliance with Lord Kenyon in securing a parliamentary seat for the Welsh university in the Representation of the People Act, after an initial defeat on amendment.[65] With his election address rightly emphasising his long service to Welsh education, he trounced a woman Labour candidate, winning 80.8 per cent of the vote. After the election, indeed, for a time his career rose to new heights of activity. After receiving many accolades (including from Fisher himself) for his role in carrying through the new Education Act, he was also variously preoccupied with teachers' superannuation, a Libraries Act, educational grants for ex-servicemen and the Royal Commission on the University of Wales. In 1921, he told E. W. Evans, editor of the *Cymro*, that his experience at the Education Board showed how far more could be achieved for Wales within a British government rather than in independent sorties on the political fringe. Fisher's educational policies had brought tangible and measurable benefits to Wales: the 'Fisher formula' would give Wales an additional £100,000, while the Education Act of 1918 would give new educational opportunities to 20,000 boys and girls.[66] By comparison, the Secretary of State for Wales proposed in some Liberal circles by men like the shipowner MP Sir Robert J. Thomas, was a trivial matter. Manifestly, the youthful nationalist rebel of 1894 had long since vanished.

For his part, H. A. L. Fisher clearly regarded Lewis, rather than the local worthies on the Central Welsh Board, as his most reliable sounding-board on Welsh education. It was a constructive time of change. Education, after all, was a foremost element in the government's proclaimed intention of a brave new world of social reform after the election. Things became far more difficult from 1920 with the rigours of economy and 'anti-waste' being applied to the government's educational programmes. Lewis joined Fisher in strong defence of the day continuation schools. They threatened a joint resignation against Cabinet proposals which 'would automatically have the effect of scrapping the Education Act'. He wrote to thank the Prime Minister in backing them in Cabinet in the face of economy proposals from the Chancellor, Austen Chamberlain.[67] They got their way but had an even tougher fight in resisting the Geddes Axe which loomed over education in 1921. In fact, the ministers had somewhat more success in fending off educational cuts than is frequently represented, notably over the school entry age, the size of classes, and maintaining the Burnham awards on schoolteachers' salaries. Lewis felt able to claim afterwards that the bulk of Fisher's achievement for public education remained undisturbed.[68]

Politically, Lewis appeared to have no problem with the Coalition government. He saw in the Coalition a government of national unity, 'the embodiment of the spirit of accommodation'. 'Party', declared Lewis, 'would rather have no bread than half a loaf'.[69] Ever loyal to his master, he was one of the Liberal ministers who attended the meeting of the National Liberal Federation at Leamington Spa in May 1920, a famous brawl when government ministers were heckled by Asquithian partisans and walked out in collective defiance.[70] Lewis was also prepared to take part in the turbulent Cardiganshire by-election in

February 1921 when two Liberals, one Lloyd Georgian, one Asquithian, contested the seat in a passionate atmosphere. He told his wife Ruth, 'This election is dividing up families in the most peculiar way.' The outcome was a narrow, but decisive defeat for the Asquithian Liberal candidate, Lewis's old ally of *Cymru Fydd* days, W. Llewelyn Williams, now a bitter opponent of Lloyd George, who had broken with his old friend over conscription and later lreland.[71] No doubt some of his bitterness spilled over in the direction of Herbert Lewis as well.

However there were limits to the political compromises that even Lewis might make. At the curious meeting of Coalition Liberal ministers on 16 March 1920, when Lloyd George and Churchill tried to persuade them to endorse a 'fusion' with the Coalition Unionists, Lewis was one of many who dissented – perhaps the only time in his career when he and Lloyd George were at odds. 'In Wales it would be practically impossible to get anything in the shape of fusion between the local Associations.'[72] Even in the very changed politics of post-war, with the old aspiration of Church disestablishment now accomplished amidst a sense of anti-climax, Lewis remained the traditional Liberal of Gladstonian days. He would not give up the old faith, the old principles, certainly not the old party name. In the end, he and Lloyd George's followers were forced into a political cul-de-sac. The Liberal supporters of Lloyd George had nowhere else to turn when the rank-and-file Tories broke with them in October 1922 over Lloyd George's handling of the Chanak crisis which threatened war with Turkey. The Unionist revolt at the Carlton Club on 19 October 1922 abruptly turfed Lloyd George out of office and out of power. His political career, in the event, was far from over.

Lewis remained the traditional Liberal of Gladstonian days. He would not give up the old faith, the old principles, certainly not the old party name.

But that of Herbert Lewis, who had announced his resignation from Parliament long before and planned an extensive series of overseas tours to tropical climes to celebrate freedom at last, undoubtedly was. At least he ended up with a knighthood.

Herbert Lewis's last phase was conducted largely away from the limelight and on the margins of politics. His major public concerns now were his continuing campaign to get proper funding for the National Library of Wales, and his work for Bangor and the University of Wales.[73] He continued to campaign for improved grants for the National Library, he bought major collections of manuscripts from his own funds to present to its archives, and he was to serve as its President. His imposing bust casts its gaze on visitors to the library today. His tragic accident when he fell down a quarry at J. H. Davies's home in north Cardiganshire in 1925 and broke his spine otherwise effectively ended his career. Lloyd George ignored him from now on. Lewis had nothing more to offer. As has been noted, Lloyd George regarded him somewhat quizzically as a long-term survivor who was somehow miraculously still alive despite decades of alleged ill-health. Prior to his accident, Lewis toured India. He received Welsh and other honours by the score. He had become, as he approached his seventies, the classic embodiment of late Victorian and Edwardian 'official liberalism' and a conformist nonconformity, a public-service professional, a symbolic remnant of a disappearing past in a new society dominated by the polarity of capital and labour.

Many politicians kept in close touch with him, especially Fisher who developed a warm admiration for his sterling qualities, and used Lewis as a sounding-board for his concerns for the various crises of Liberalism in the twenties.[74] But Lloyd George, his intimate friend for nearly forty years, the focus of so much of his energies and his admiration, simply dropped him. In the great campaign against unemployment and industrial stagnation, the crusades for the Green, Yellow and Orange Books in 1925–29, even as a name to be used in election propaganda, Herbert Lewis need never have been. He died in November 1933, almost a forgotten man.

But his achievement transcends the ages. Indeed, so many of the badges of modern Welsh nationality – Museum and Library and University; county councils, county schools and administrative devolution along with Welsh legislation from Intermediate Education in 1889 to Church Disestablishment in 1919 – are an essential part of his legacy. The Liberalism of pre-1914 remains the source of so much of the institutional and cultural distinctiveness of modern Wales, and Herbert Lewis was not the least of its architects. Indeed, his supreme objective, that devolution for which he campaigned in vain in the 1890s, has now come into vigorous fruition, a hundred years late. In accounts of the career of Lloyd George, the devoted friendship of Herbert Lewis is hugely underestimated. He sustained his tempestuous colleague in numerous crises – the 1894 disestablishment rebellion, the *Cymru Fydd* crusade, the South African War, the Education Revolt – when they were young colleagues and rough political equals. But as a source of disinterested advice and reassuring judgement, Lewis was always there whenever Lloyd George felt he needed him – and he frequently did. No doubt he had to turn a frequent blind eye as he pursued higher political causes. Neither Lloyd George's peccadilloes with money or women get a mention in his diaries. He backed his friend to the hilt when he was accused of corruption during the Marconi case

in 1912, while his observations on Dame Margaret (whom he greatly admired) never suggest that the Lloyd George family home was anything other than a nest of domestic bliss. But in the broader context, Herbert Lewis was one of those who kept Lloyd George politically and perhaps personally honest – not at all a straightforward task. He helped to ensure that, throughout all the vicissitudes of party and coalition, of industrial turmoil and economic decline, in war and in post-war reconstruction, his charismatic Welsh colleague remained at bottom the same populist democrat and committed progressive that he had always been. Men such as Lewis, like C. P. Scott, ensured that Lloyd George stayed a man of the centre-left, part of that fount of reformist energy which men like Beveridge, Keynes and Michael Young later replenished. If Lloyd George never lapsed into the fate of Joseph Chamberlain, still less of Ramsay MacDonald, if he retained his radical impulses even during the later years of Hitler-worship and the final descent into an earldom, it was decent, honest free spirits like Plas Penucha's guardian of the faith, who kept him so.

Kenneth O. Morgan (Lord Morgan of Aberdyfi in the County of Gwynedd) has been one of Britain's leading modern historians for over thirty years, and is known especially for his writing on Welsh history, Lloyd George and the Labour Party. His books include biographies of David Lloyd George (1974), Keir Hardie (1975), Christopher Addison (1980), James Callaghan (1997) and Michael Foot (2007).

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1 A. J. P. Taylor, *English History 1914–45* (Oxford: OUP, 1965), p. 73. In a foreword to a book of the present writer's, Taylor also advanced the view that Lloyd George 'was the greatest ruler of England [*sic*] since Oliver Cromwell': Kenneth O. Morgan, *Lloyd George* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), p. 8.

2 J. M. Keynes, *Essays in Biography* (London: Mercury, 1961 ed.), p. 36.

3 Arnold Bennett's *Lord Rainqo* (1926) depicts Lloyd George as the Scotsman Andy Clyth, while Joyce Cary's *Prisoner of Grace* (1952) depicts him as the Englishman (? Devonian), Chester Nimmo.

4 The most helpful study of Lewis is the Welsh-language collective book edited by his daughter, Kitty Idwal Jones, *Syr Herbert Lewis 1858–1933* (Cardiff, 1961). Two of the authors wrote centenary tributes in *Flintshire Historical Society Publications*, Vol. 18 (1960) – Sir Ben Bowen Thomas, pp. 131–41, and W. Hugh Jones, pp. 142–55, the latter dealing with Lewis's work in local government. A useful thesis is Timothy P. Erasmus, *Herbert Lewis and Welsh Radicalism: A Study of the Political Career of John Herbert Lewis (1858–1933) With Special Reference to the Period 1892–1906* (Bangor: University of Wales, unpublished PhD, 1988). The author summarised his conclusions in 'In His Earnest Way: A Brief Outline of the Life and Political Career of Herbert Lewis (1858–1933)', a lecture to the Flintshire Historical Society, 31 October 1992. I should like to pay my personal tribute to the late Mrs Kitty Idwal Jones who gave me generous hospitality and guidance when I first worked on the Lewis papers in Plas Penucha in 1960.

5 Erasmus, 'In his Earnest Way' , p. 4.

6 For example, a cartoon by Will Morgan in T. Marchant Williams, *The Welsh Members of Parliament* (Cardiff, 1894), p. 20.

7 Lewis's Diary, 22 January 1906 (National Library of Wales, Lewis Papers B20).

8 Colin Cross (ed.) *A. J. Sylvester, Life with Lloyd George* (London: Macmillan, 1975), p. 63.

9 A. J. P. Taylor (ed.), *Lloyd George. A Diary by Frances Stevenson* (London: Hutchinson, 1971), p. 245.

Herbert Lewis was one of those who kept Lloyd George politically and perhaps personally honest – not at all a straightforward task.

10 A. J. Sylvester, p. 63.

11 For these matters, see Kenneth O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics 1868–1922* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1963 (new paperback ed., 1992)), pp. 76 ff.

12 Ellis to Lewis, 31 October 1891 (NLW, D.R. Daniel papers, A19k).

13 See especially his *Addresses and Speeches* (Wrexham, 1912); Neville Masterman, *The Forerunner* (Llandybie: C. Davies, 1972); and Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Tom Ellis versus Lloyd George: the Fractured Consciousness of Fin-de-siècle Wales', in *Modern Wales: Politics. Places and People* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1995), pp. 362 ff.

14 Cf. Ellis to Lewis, 24 July 1889 (NLW, Daniel Papers, A19k).

15 Lewis to Ellis, 15 August 1891 (NLW, Ellis Papers). See also J. Graham Jones, 'Alfred Thomas's National Institutions (Wales) Bills of 1891–2', *Welsh History Review*, Vol. 15. No. 2 (December 1990). pp. 230–31 .

16 Cf. Samuel Smith to Lewis, 12 September 1904 (NLW, Lewis Papers, A1/173).

17 J. Arthur Price to J. E. Lloyd, 14 October 1892 (University of Wales, Bangor Library, Lloyd Papers, MSS. 314, no. 449); Lewis to Ellis, 19 May 1892 (NLW, Ellis Papers).

18 Ellis to Herbert Lewis, 7 and 18 November 1892 (NLW, Ellis Papers, 2896, 2899); Lewis to Ellis, 17 and 22 November 1892 (NLW, ibid., 1403, 1404); Rendel to Lewis, 14 and 15 November 1892 (NLW, Lewis Papers). More generally, see Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, pp. 123–26.

19 Lewis to Ellis, ? May 1894 (NLW, Ellis papers); David Lloyd George to William George, ? April 1894 (NLW, William George Papers, 252).

20 Marchant Williams, *The Welsh Members of Parliament*, p. 22.

21 Lloyd George to Herbert Lewis, 22 June 1894 (Lewis Papers). The Lewis Papers are a rich mine of information on the *Cymru Fydd* movement, 1894–96.

22 W. R. P. George, *Lloyd George: Backbencher* (Gower Press: Llandysul, 1983), pp. 168–70; David Lloyd George to his wife, 7 June 1895, in Kenneth O. Morgan (ed.), *Lloyd George Family Letters. c.1885–1936* (Oxford and Cardiff: OUP and

University of Wales, 1973), p. 85.

23 J. Bryn Roberts to H. H. Fowler, 5 October 1895 (NLW, Bryn Roberts Papers, 236); Asquith to Ellis, 30 November 1895 (NLW, Ellis Papers); Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, pp. 156–58.

24 Lewis's Diary, 1895 (NLW, Lewis Papers, B7); D. Lloyd George to Lewis, 5, 11 and 31 December 1895, 4 and 16 January 1896 (ibid., D/30/36–43).

25 Lewis's Diary, 16 January 1896 (ibid., B8).

26 Memorandum, Lewis to Lloyd George, 1897 (NLW, William George Papers, 4271).

27 Lewis's Diary, 6 February 1899 (NLW, Lewis Papers, B12).

28 Lewis's Diary, 27 April 1899 (ibid.).

29 Lewis's Diary, 1895 (ibid., B7); cf. T. I. Ellis, *Cofiant Thomas Edward Ellis*. Cyf. II (Liverpool: Evans, 1948), pp. 122–23, for Ellis's earlier enthusiasm for Rhodes.

30 Lewis's Diary (Lewis Papers, B11).

31 Lewis's Diary, 1896 (ibid., B8) refers to his enthusiasm for this (to me) incomprehensible game.

32 Ibid.

33 Herbert Lewis to Lloyd George, 2 November 1896 (NLW, William George Papers, 4219).

34 Lewis's Diary, 20 April 1900 (NLW, Lewis Papers, B13).

35 Lewis's Diary, 24 April 1900 (ibid.).

36 *The Times*, 31 July 1900.

37 Lewis to P. Harding Roberts, 23 July 1900 (NLW, Lewis Papers).

38 Lewis's Diary, 1901 (ibid., B14).

39 Lewis's Diary, 21 May 1902 (ibid., B 15).

40 Lewis's Diary, 12 November 1902 (ibid.).

41 Lewis's Diary, 6 February 1904 (ibid., B18).

42 Lewis's Diary, 6 March 1904 (ibid.).

43 Lewis's Diary, 16 November 1906 (ibid., B20).

44 Lewis's Diary, 9 August 1907 (ibid., B21).

45 Lewis's Diary, 25 February 1908 (ibid., B22).

46 Lewis's Diary, 29 April 1909 (ibid., B23).

47 Lewis's Diary, 4 May 1911 (ibid., B25); Bentley B. Gilbert, *David Lloyd George*, Vol. I (London: Batsford, 1987), p. 339.

48 Lewis's Diary, 24 November l911 and 5 September 1912 (ibid., B25, B26).

49 Lewis's Diary, 5 September 1912 (ibid., B26).

50 Lewis's Diary, 22 March 1906 and 24 April 1907 (ibid., B20. B21); Cameron Hazlehurst and Christine Woodland (eds.), *A Liberal Chronicle: Journals and Papers of J. A. Pease. 1908 to 1910* (London: The Historian's Press, 1994, p. l4.

51 Lewis's Diary, 25 April and 22 May 1912 (NLW, Lewis Papers, B26); Lewis to his wife, 24 April 1912 (Lewis Papers). For Lord Hugh Cecil and Lloyd George's speeches, see *H. of C. Parl. Deb.*, 5th ser., XXXVIII, 1294ff.

52 Lewis's Diary, 26 February and 11 March 1909 (NLW, Lewis Papers, B23).

53 Lewis's Diary, 23 February 1910 (ibid., B26).

54 Lewis's Diary, 1 March 1912 (ibid., B26).

55 Fred Llewellyn Jones, later Sir Frederick Llewellyn-Jones (1866–1941), one of the last of the Liberal grandees of the Ellis-Lloyd George era, joined the Labour Party in March 1918. However, he later rejoined the Liberals and became Liberal (later National Liberal) MP for Flintshire, 1929–35.

56 See on this general theme, Ewen Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism* (London: Routledge, 1995).

57 See John Owen to Lewis, 23 June 1903, R. Llew Jones to Lewis, 22 August 1903, P. Harding Roberts to Lewis, 31 August 1903 (NLW, Lewis Papers, A/143, 150, 151) for aspects of these manoeuvres.

58 Lewis's Diary, 24 January 1910 (ibid., B24).

59 Lewis's Diary, 3–6 June 1914 (ibid., B28).

60 Lewis's Diary, 8 February 1915 (ibid., B29).

61 See H. A. L. Fisher, *An Unfinished Autobiography* (London: OUP, 1940) and the chapter by B. B. Thomas in K. Idwal Jones (gol.), *Syr Herbert Lewis*, pp. 84–95.

62 D. Lloyd George, *War Memoirs I* (London: Odham's Press, 1938), p. 698.

63 Lewis's Diary, 24 March and 15 March 1915 (NLW, Lewis Papers, B29).

64 Lewis's Diary, 9 May 1918 (ibid., B32).

65 Lewis to Beriah Gwynfe Evans, 30 January 1918 (NLW, Lewis Papers).

66 Lewis to E. W. Evans, 7 January 1921 (ibid.).

67 Herbert Lewis to Lloyd George, 13 and 20 December and 'Nadolig' 1920 (House of Lords Records Office, Lloyd-George of Dwyfor Papers, F/32/22–24).

68 Kenneth O. Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity: the Lloyd George Coalition Government, 1918–1922* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979) pp. 288–94. For Fisher's comparatively successful resistance to the economies proposed by the Geddes committee and the Chancellor, Robert Horne, see 'Report, Proceedings and Memoranda of the Cabinet Committee on National Expenditure', meetings between 10 January and 17 February 1922 (Public Record Office, CAB 27/165), and Austen Chamberlain to Fisher, 13 January 1922 (Bodleian Library, Oxford, Fisher Papers, box 1). To a degree, Fisher was using statistical and other material supplied to him by Herbert Lewis.

69 Lewis, 'Notes on the Coalition Government, 1920' (NLW, Lewis Papers).

70 Morgan, Consensus and Disunity, p. 202.

71 Lewis to his wife, 17 February 1921 (Lewis Papers) and Lewis's Diary, 18 February 1921 (ibid., B35). Also see Morgan, 'Cardiganshire Politics: the Liberal Ascendancy, 1885–1923', in *Modern Wales*, pp. 242–47.

72 Lewis's Diary, 16 March 1920 (Lewis Papers, B34).

73 For important material on Lewis's work for the University College at Bangor, of which he became Vice-President in 1906, see J. Gwynn Williams, *The University College of North Wales: Foundations 1884–1927* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1985), pp. 125–27, and B. B. Thomas, op. cit., pp. 131–41.

74 There are several reflective letters from Fisher to Lewis in the later 1920s in the Lewis Papers in NLW, Class A.

LETTERS

Lloyd George's school

There has been a lot of interest recently in David Lloyd George. The last Liberal Prime Minister was a finalist in the History Group's 'Great Liberal' competition (see pp. 4–15), leadership candidate Chris Huhne chose him as his hero (see pp. 32–33), and a statue of LG was unveiled in Parliament Square in October.

It now seems that Plaid Cymru-led Gwynedd Council want to close his boyhood school in the village of Llanystumdwy.

A number of Lib Dem MPs, including all four of the party's Welsh MPs, signed an early day motion in October protesting against the closure threat.

You can follow the story of the campaign and help save this historic school by signing the 'Save Llanystumdwy' online petition by logging on to the protest group's website at www.arbedllanystumdwy.com.

There are also stories about the campaign on the website of the Lloyd George Society (www.lloydgeorgesociety.org.uk).

Graham Lippiatt

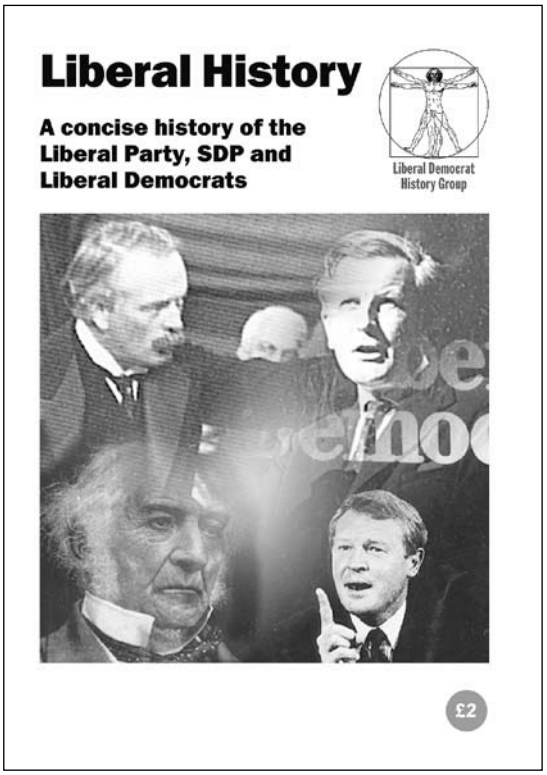
Prime Ministers' wives

In the review of *Prime Ministers' Wives – and One Husband* (*Journal of Liberal History* 56, autumn 2007), I am not sure if the references to 'Sarah Campbell-Bannerman and Annie Bonar Law' are by Mark Hichens (author) or Dr. J. Graham Jones (reviewer).

However, Lady Campbell-Bannerman always used her second name, Charlotte, not Sarah (she was baptised Sarah Charlotte). Mrs Bonar Law died in 1909, thirteen years before her husband became Prime Minister.

Dr. Alexander (Sandy) S. Waugh

Three hundred years of Liberal history



The History Group's pamphlet is a concise guide to Liberal history: 300 years in 24 pages. Copies can be obtained, price £2 (£1.50 to *Journal* subscribers):

- Send a cheque (to 'Liberal Democrat History Group') to LDHG, 38 Salford Road, London SW2 4BQ. Add 50p for postage (UK).
- The History Group's exhibition stand at the Liberal Democrat spring conference in Liverpool in March.

Liberal Democrat History Group meetings programme 2008

Monday 4 February (National Liberal Club, London): **Liberals and local government in London**
For details, see back page.

Friday 7 March (Crowne Plaza Hotel, Liverpool): **Salad days: merger twenty years on**
For details, see back page.

Tuesday 15 April (National Liberal Club, London): **Kettner Lunch meeting on David Lloyd George**
With Owen Lloyd George, the 3rd Earl Lloyd George of Dwyfor and grandson of the Liberal Prime Minister. The Kettner Lunch costs £15 for two courses and coffee. Places can be reserved by phoning Peter Whyte on 01344 423184.

Saturday 14 June (London School of Economics): **Torrington '58: Liberal survival and revival?**
A day conference to mark the 50th anniversary of Liberal victory in the Torrington by election. The conference will investigate the role and the development of the Liberal Party 1945–1979. As well as opening and closing keynote speakers, sessions will cover:

- The Liberal record in local government
- Campaigns
- Leadership and leaders
- Relationships with other parties

Further details will be included in the next *Journal*.

July (London): **summer meeting**
Details yet to be finalised.

September (Liberal Democrat conference, Bournemouth): **fringe meeting**
Details yet to be finalised.

OLD HEROES FO

As we have done in each of the last two Liberal Democrat leadership elections, in 1999 and 2006, in November the Liberal Democrat History Group asked both candidates for the Liberal Democrat leadership to write a short article on their favourite historical figure or figures – the ones they felt had influenced their own political beliefs most, and why they had proved important and relevant. Their replies were posted on our website during the leadership election, and are reproduced below. Their heroes? Vaclav Havel, David Lloyd George and Harry Willcock.

What Havel and Willcock share is a willingness to take a personal stand on issues of freedom and liberty.

Nick Clegg MP – *Harry Willcock; Vaclav Havel*

In recent weeks I've made it clear that I'd be prepared to go to court rather than be forced to give personal information about myself to a compulsory Identity Cards database. So it's probably no surprise that the first of my liberal heroes is a North London dry cleaner, Harry Willcock.

When stopped by police in 1950 and asked for his ID card he refused, with the now famous words: 'I am a Liberal. I am against that sort of thing.'

Harry was an active Liberal, having been a councillor and parliamentary candidate. Thanks to his stand, which was supported by Liberal MPs and Lords at the time, the ID cards programme was first challenged in the courts and then finally scrapped. He showed that one man willing to take a stand can change the system.

The liberal argument put forward by Harry and others in opposition was a fundamental one; it was an argument about liberty and the relationship between the individual and the state. For them, the imposition of ID cards was intolerable because of the power it gave to the state, a power which was inevitably abused.

I was moved recently to see the plaque in the National Liberal Club in Harry's honour. He died while participating in a debate at the Club, and it is said that 'freedom' was the last word to pass his lips.

The arguments of Willcock and the liberals of his day remain relevant. The Liberal Democrats continue to stand against an over-bearing state and are willing to take a stand for what we believe.

My second hero is Vaclav Havel – a man who married high art and high politics. His leadership of the Charter 77 manifesto group and then the Velvet Revolution was an inspiration to people of my generation who witnessed and admired his courage, and that of other freedom fighters behind the Iron Curtain such as Lech Walesa. He showed that men of principle and character truly can change the world.

Havel spent many years in prison and even when released was kept under surveillance and constantly harassed. Yet his determination to change the government of his country for the better did not falter. He put at the cornerstone of his activities a belief in the importance of non-violent resistance. Few politicians can ever hope to move people in the number of ways that Havel did with his words and deeds.

He is also a particular hero of mine because many years ago I met him in his presidential

R A NEW LEADER

palace in Prague. At the time I was working on the Czech Republic's application to join the European Union and he gave a small group of us a considerable amount of time. He is a small, quiet man, with a compelling intensity about him.

What Havel and Willcock share is a willingness to take a personal stand on issues of freedom and liberty. It is, quite simply, the essence of liberalism – and that is why they are my political heroes.

Chris Huhne MP – *David Lloyd George*

My hero is David Lloyd George. An outsider, with none of the benefits of inherited wealth or education, he became one of the most dynamic and brilliant politicians ever to lead the Liberal Party.

He was a radical to his bones. His early prominence came partly through his campaign against the Boer War. He helped to build an anti-war coalition including not merely the advanced elements of the party, outraged by imperial aggression, but also some of the most conservative and rural elements, who identified with the independent qualities of the Boers.

In government, Lloyd George had a passionate belief in his own ability to cajole and persuade, amply demonstrated during labour disputes as President of the Board of Trade. He was a great speaker, but also a great listener. The two are connected: great speakers have to be ever-sensitive to the moods and motivations of their audiences. As Chancellor of the Exchequer, he was the kingpin of the government's attempt to force through social welfare and overcome the opposition of the House of Lords.

The old age pension is his most durable domestic achievement, and a testament to his New Liberal thinking. The roots of this tradition are the wellspring of Liberal Democrat thinking today, whether coming through the New Liberal – or 'social liberal' – tradition or the social democratic tradition that rejoined us in 1981.

I also find Lloyd George's style as a politician appealing. He was an optimist who believed in the power of ideas to persuade and change the world, and he was always prepared to throw himself into the political battle even when the odds looked stacked against him. He was an anti-metropolitan politician: a believer that the best and purest instincts were to be found in the misty valleys of his beloved Wales, from which he drew emotional strength. Combined with this optimism was a great sense of mischief, captured for me in the marvellous Low cartoon, a copy of which I have on my study wall. Lloyd George is sitting, elfin-like, on the green benches, hugging himself with mirth; never pompous, always able to see the folly and the ridiculousness of power and position.

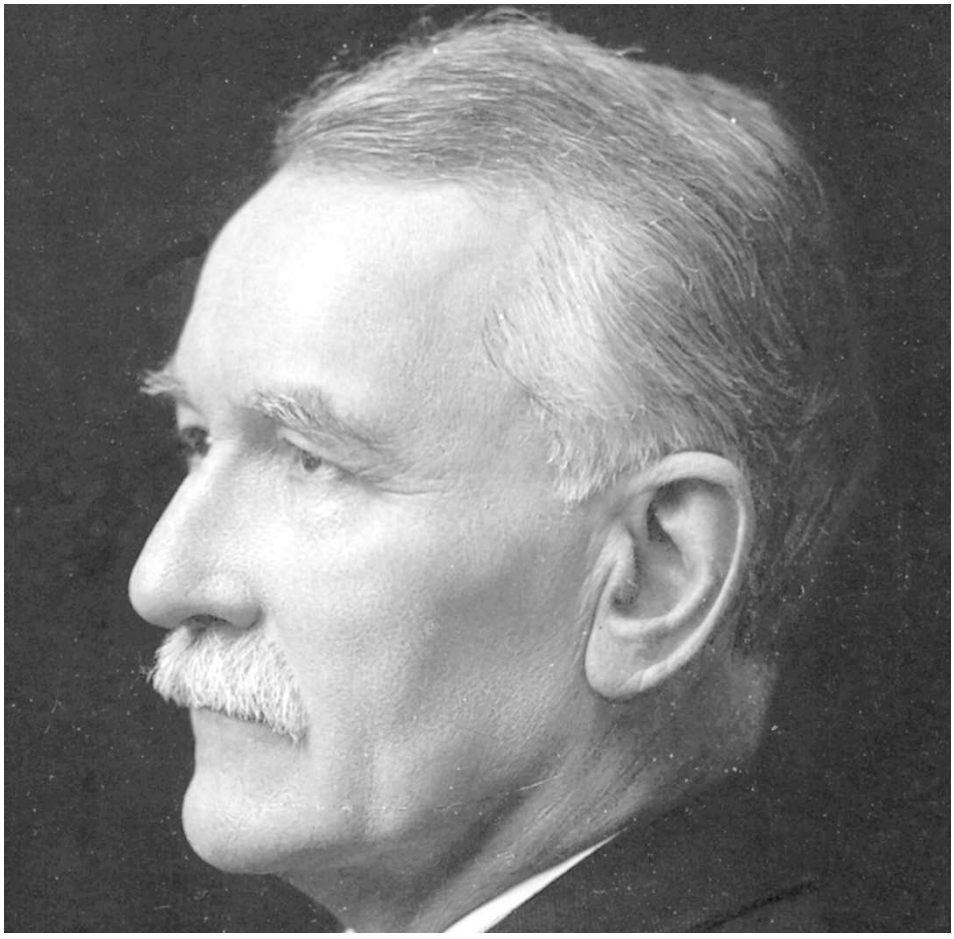
Lloyd George was an optimist who believed in the power of ideas to persuade and change the world.

In the 1930s, he was the only mainstream politician who understood John Maynard Keynes's analysis of the causes of mass unemployment and the only statesman with the vision to banish it. It is the country's loss that he was never given the chance to do so.

Lloyd George remains a figure of controversy, but he had a real and lasting impact, both on the country and on the party. He has the strongest claim to be the father of the British welfare state and he was a great war leader at a time of desperate national need. He brought Liberalism into the twentieth century, adjusting successfully to the new politics of a mass industrial democracy and ensuring that it stood for radical social and economic reform. He has been dead for sixty years – but his record should inspire us all.

A FINE AND DISIN
THE LIFE AND ACTIVITIES

During the early twentieth century, the liberal conscience of many radicals spurred them to speak openly on issues of importance, particularly with relation to British foreign policy. This group of dissenters, or 'troublemakers', as A. J. P. Taylor dubbed them, consists mainly of figures who have remained obscure.[1] This is certainly the case for Aneurin Williams, a back-bench Liberal MP, who was engaged by an extraordinary number of causes, all of which benefited enormously from his personal involvement.[2] **Barry Dackombe** analyses his life and activities.



His death in January 1924 came just fourteen months after losing his parliamentary seat and following a prolonged period of debilitating ill-health. However, it did not go unnoticed; among the numerous tributes paid to him was the following from A. G. Gardiner, the former *Daily News* editor:

> The death of Mr Aneurin Williams removes from the public life of this country a fine and disinterested spirit, and leaves many good causes bereft of a devoted servant. He ground many axes in his time, but never his own.[3]

Referring to the axes metaphor, the international lawyer Sir

TERESTED SPIRIT
S OF ANEURIN WILLIAMS

John Fischer Williams observed that, 'the axes were ground very fine and the grindstone was no common material'.[4] Among the causes Williams championed were proportional representation, the garden city movement, co-operation and co-partnership, international peace and the League of Nations, together with the rights of the oppressed. Always taking a leading and sometimes a pioneering position within these movements, he strove with unstinting devotion to promote the twin ideals of justice and co-operation.

Aneurin Williams was born at Dowlais, Glamorganshire, on 11 October 1859, the second son of Edward Williams (1826–86), who was at this time the Assistant General Manager of the Dowlais Iron Company, and later General Manager of Bolckow and Vaughan's expanding ironworks at Middlesbrough. Such was Edward's success that he has been described as 'one of the giants of the iron age', and by 1879 he was able to purchase the Linthorpe Ironworks situated close to the River Tees.[5] Importantly, this would provide Aneurin with valuable administrative experience and sufficient means to pursue his chosen path.

Despite leaving his native Wales at the age of only seven, Aneurin maintained a strong affinity with and interest in the principality, especially as his father was particularly keen to support local efforts to maintain Welsh identity, culture and language. The family's links with Welsh culture were particularly strong, as Aneurin's great-grandfather was the infamous Edward Williams (1747–1826) who, under his bardic name Iolo Morganwg, acquired considerable fame and notoriety as a radical, poet, scholar, collector and creator – or literary forger – of ancient Welsh poetry and manuscripts.[6] Aneurin was justly proud of his Welsh ancestry and ensured that Iolo's extensive collection of manuscripts and letters was deposited with the National Library of Wales, a process continued by his children in the 1950s and 1960s.

The family was securely positioned at the heart of Teeside's vibrant Welsh community, which contributed to the unique atmosphere of Middlesbrough, a town with an unparalleled growth rate and a strong nonconformist Liberal tradition. This in part helped shape Aneurin's political ideas and philosophy, as did his father's political interests: Edward was a strong advocate of universal adult suffrage, disestablishment of the Church of England in Wales, equal rights for Ireland and temperance legislation. Edward was first elected to Middlesbrough Town Council in 1868 and in 1873 became Mayor, one of a long line of nineteenth-century iron founders to hold such a position. This early introduction to local politics served as a catalyst for Aneurin and his two brothers: Illtyd, three years his senior, served on Middlesbrough Town Council between 1886 and 1892, while Penry, seven years his junior, became Liberal MP for Middlesbrough.[7] He also had two elder sisters: Mary, who married local doctor John Hedley, and Jane, who married John Belk, part-time Clerk to the Town Council.

Aneurin Williams (1859–1924)

Aneurin and his brothers were educated under the care of the Rev. John Samuel Dawes, who ran a private school in Surbiton.[8] However, while Illtyd and Aneurin proceeded to St John's College, Cambridge, Penry failed to follow them. The exact reason for this is difficult to ascertain, but the sudden deterioration of their father's health just at the time Penry would have been expected to go up to Cambridge may well have been a contributory factor.

While at Cambridge, Aneurin read for the classical tripos and was a regular speaker at the Union. On graduating he entered the Inner Temple, and was called to the Bar in 1884. However, during his legal training he became so moved by the influential penny pamphlet, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London: An Enquiry into the Condition of the Abject Poor*,

that he determined to work in London's East End to undertake what he termed 'social studies'. In June 1884, he approached Canon Samuel Barnett, founder and first Warden of Toynbee Hall, in London's Whitechapel, to ascertain the possibility of becoming a resident. The university settlement movement, of which Toynbee Hall was the best-known institution, proved a strong attraction for many young graduates from Oxford and Cambridge. Though not all were Liberals, many, like Aneurin, were able to utilise their experience to talk with authority on urban social problems. Indeed for many future Liberal MPs, the experience was of such importance that the settlements were regarded as an important training ground for both politicians and civil servants.

Suitably encouraged by his discussions with Barnett, Aneurin began to make plans to join the first Toynbee settlers. However, by September 1884, because of ill-health, which was to plague him intermittently for the rest of his life, he was persuaded to take a recuperative trip to North America. After his break, he returned to Cambridge to study political economy under Professor Alfred Marshall. Only in the autumn of 1885 was Aneurin finally able to take up his residence at Toynbee Hall, also giving a series of lectures on political economy. These lectures would bring him to the attention of Sidney Webb, who sought Aneurin's help in giving lectures to 'extension' classes within working men's clubs, and attempted to persuade him to become a member of the Fabian Society.[9] Despite Aneurin's reservations, he was on good terms with several leading Fabians, including John A. Hobson, Graham Wallas and George Bernard Shaw.

Unfortunately Aneurin's period of social work was brought to an abrupt end in the spring of 1886, with the serious deterioration of his father's health, and subsequent death in June. Consequently, Aneurin returned to Middlesbrough to help his brothers in managing the family ironworks. His brother Illtyd had, since his graduation from Cambridge, become heavily involved in the daily management of the ironworks, assisting his father who had increasingly been precluded from active work due to ill-health. Illtyd would subsequently become chairman of the ironworks and later he also became a director of the much larger Bolckow, Vaughan & Co. Ltd.

Among the causes Williams championed were proportional representation, the garden city movement, co-operation and co-partnership, international peace and the League of Nations, together with the rights of the oppressed.

Despite being removed from his new vocation in London's East End, Aneurin was determined to maintain his interest in public work. As a result he became heavily involved in Local University extension classes, assisting Middlesbrough's poor, and of course Liberal politics, particularly Home Rule for Ireland and the disestablishment of the Church of England in Wales. His first-known publication was issued during the passage of the Irish Home Rule Bill in 1886; here he sketched out plans for each of the four 'nations' to have their own House of Commons to debate and approve bills, which would then pass to a combined Parliament of all four Houses for a final reading and approval or sending back, thereby replacing the House of Lords as the second chamber.[10] With the introduction of the second Home Rule Bill in 1893, he set out his concerns about how the differences between the Protestant north-east of Ireland and the predominantly Catholic remainder of the country could be reconciled.[11] This interest in Ireland would continue throughout his life; he made numerous visits there in order to view at first hand the effects of rule by Westminster.

In 1888 Aneurin married Helen Elizabeth Pattinson, the daughter of John Pattinson, an eminent and well-respected analytical chemist of Newcastle-on-Tyne, and niece of Sir Joseph Swan.[12] The Middlesbrough climate was not conducive to Helen, particularly following the birth of their first child; as a result of her increasingly delicate health, Aneurin was forced to look for a healthier climate in which to live. After a period living in the Dorking area they finally settled in 1892 on Hindhead, near Haslemere in Surrey, an area popular with late-Victorian and Edwardian writers and scholars. Its reputation as having a healthy atmosphere also attracted Arthur Conan Doyle, whose first wife suffered from tuberculosis. Other neighbours of note included Gilbert Murray, the Hon. Rollo Russell, George Bernard Shaw and the publisher Algernon Methuen. As a consequence of this relocation, Aneurin could no longer play an active part in the day-to-day management of the family ironworks. Instead, on the recommendation of Professor Alfred Marshall, he turned his attention to the work of the Labour Association, whose object was to promote the idea and encourage the development of co-partnerships between employers and employees.[13] This enabled him to develop lasting relationships with many European co-operators, through his involvement with the International Co-operative Alliance, as a founder member and chairman from 1908 until 1920.

The labour co-partnership movement enabled him to come into contact with various Members of Parliament interested in promoting worker involvement, such as John Morley, Fred Maddison and Keir Hardie. It was through such individuals and the politicised Haslemere community that he gained first-hand knowledge of the 'pro-Boer' groups at the end of the nineteenth century. Following the 'khaki' general election of October 1900 he resolved to become more actively involved, and was soon serving on the

executives of both the League of Liberals against Aggression and Militarism and the South Africa Conciliation Committee (SACC). The publication of Conan Doyle's *The War in South Africa: its Causes and Consequences* in January 1902 caused great consternation to Aneurin and his colleagues. As a result he was commissioned by the SACC to write a detailed reply to this popular pamphlet, since for most people the statements made by Doyle were incontrovertible and it was even recommended reading for some government ministers. The end of the war precluded the publication of his anti-Doyle work, research for which had been aided by leading members of the pro-Boer community, including Emily Hobhouse and John A. Hobson.

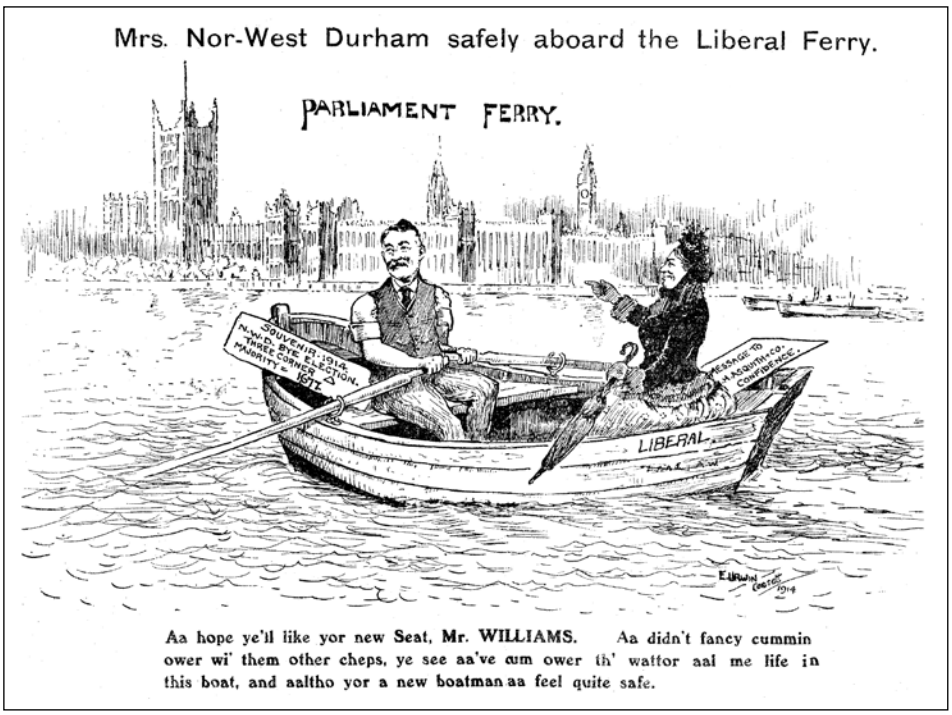
Importantly, the Anglo-Boer War provided a stimulus for Aneurin's political ambitions, which culminated in his standing for election in 1906. He was not alone among his former pro-Boer contemporaries in attempting to enter Parliament in this election; others included G. P. Gooch, Percy Alden and J. Annan Bryce.[14] Soon after the formation of the Liberal government in December 1905, Aneurin learned that he was to be put forward for the Medway seat in Kent. As the first challenger to the incumbent Conservative since 1892, he was naturally uncertain of his chances. His election address stressed the need for free trade and social reform, while opining that any progress and freedom at home could only come as a result of peace abroad.[15] However, despite the national swing to the Liberals, Aneurin failed to secure his much-desired victory by a margin of just 106 votes.[16]

During the election campaign, Aneurin announced that he was in favour of land reform in both town and country. This was not surprising, as he had since the turn of the century been a member of the executive of the Land Nationalisation Society. The society's aims were to get land properly valued and taxed, and where possible to encourage public ownership of land. Utilising Aneurin's legal knowledge and experience the society was able to get the 'Tax and Buy' Bill drafted and presented to Parliament by Gordon Harvey in 1904.

Together with some of his Land Nationalisation Society colleagues, Aneurin was a founding member and director of First Garden City Limited, the company that turned Ebenezer Howard's pioneering vision of a garden city into the reality of Letchworth. Aneurin served as its chairman between 1906 and 1915, during Letchworth's founding years, a post he held concurrently with his chairmanship of the Land Nationalisation Society, and in consequence acquired a reputation as an expert on housing reform.

Aneurin had greater electoral success in January 1910, when he was elected, together with Charles E. Mallet, for the two-member constituency of Plymouth. However, both lost their seats in the December election and Aneurin was left to concentrate upon a therapeutic trip to South Africa.[17] This visit to the recently-established Union of South Africa gave him the opportunity to recover from a serious case of neuritis in his arm and also enabled him to see at first hand some of the nation and

Group of Liberal supporters with Aneurin Williams, on visit to London, c.1914



Cartoon in *Consett Guardian* (6 February 1914) following Aneurin Williams's by-election victory in January 1914.

'Aa hope ye'll like yor new Seat, Mr. WILLIAMS. Aa didn't fancy cummin ower wi' them other cheps, ye see aa've cum ower th' wattor aal me life in this boat, and aaltho yor a new boatman aa feel quite safe.'

people on whose behalf he had campaigned a decade earlier.

On his return he devoted his attention to the numerous causes to which he had become committed, including proportional representation. Through his work with the SACC, he had come into regular contact with Leonard Courtney and together in 1905 they had set out to revive the executive of the Proportional Representation Society.[18] Following Courtney's death in 1918, Aneurin became its chairman until 1921, and then its treasurer for the final two years of his life. As a result, his energies were soon directed to finding ways of introducing proportional representation to British elections. During his first term in Parliament he introduced the Municipal Elections (Proportional Representation) Bill, which passed through the House of Lords but failed due to insufficient time. In 1916, however, he was invited to join the Speaker's Conference on Electoral Reform and utilised his position to argue for both proportional representation and women's suffrage. While he was unsuccessful with the former, the resultant Representation of the People Bill (1918) did enable women over the age of thirty to vote in parliamentary elections, provided they were householders or wives of householders. Interestingly, Aneurin's personal support for women's suffrage was not sufficient to receive the backing of Mrs Fawcett of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies during the 1914 by-election campaign for the North West Division of Durham.[19] Instead, she gave her support to G. H. Stuart, the Labour candidate. While Aneurin's pro-suffrage views were in accordance with those of a large majority of Liberals, a minority of Cabinet ministers, including Asquith, were totally opposed to women being given the vote, whereas the Labour Party advocated universal suffrage, regardless of gender.

The North West Durham by-election, which took place on 30 January 1914, saw Aneurin challenged by both a Unionist and, for the first time, a Labour candidate. The entry of the Labour candidate in an area dominated by miners and iron workers, dramatically reduced the Liberal majority and although Aneurin was elected, marks a key stage in the transition of this seat to Labour.[20] Aneurin's strong advocacy of peace and arbitration, and concern over military spending, as exemplified by the *Dreadnought* building programme, were widely debated during his candidacy. This did not make him a pacifist, except in the eyes of his detractors; rather he was what Martin Ceadel has termed a *pacificist*.[21] Pacificism is defined as the belief that war can ultimately be prevented and abolished through reforms which establish justice in both international and domestic politics. War can only be justified in order to safeguard political reforms and achievements.

During the First World War Aneurin's credentials as an internationalist were firmly established. Since the beginning of the century he had worked closely with Noel Buxton and James Bryce to champion the rights of subject peoples of the Ottoman Empire.[22] Their involvement was channelled through the Balkan Committee and the British Armenia Committee, extra-parliamentary groups supporting the principle of self-determination for the Macedonians and Armenians respectively. Indeed he also supported the notion that the Irish question should be settled along these lines.

Following the outbreak of war, and Turkey's entrance on the side of the Triple Alliance, news soon reached Aneurin of the Armenian massacres, the beginnings of what has since been termed the first genocide of the twentieth century. While the emotive term genocide was not employed by Aneurin and his associates, they nonetheless regularly described the treatment of the Armenians as being co-ordinated with the intention of 'exterminating' and 'extirpating' the Armenian race.[23] While the actual number of deaths has been disputed, it is estimated that between one and a half million and two million Armenians lost their lives.[24] In addition to raising public awareness, Aneurin was instrumental in the

establishment of the Armenian Refugees (Lord Mayor's) Fund to provide much-needed aid.

The first two months of the war saw Aneurin developing ideas for a League or 'Society of Nations', which would mutually protect members through what was later to be known as 'collective security'. From his standpoint, the use of sanctions or mutual protection against aggressive nations was the only possible way to achieve a lasting peace.[25] As previous disarmament policies and arbitration treaties had failed, the League members should be required to enforce the just rights of each member against aggressors by the use of coercion, either economic or military. While the eventual League of Nations failed on several counts to live up to Aneurin's expectations, it was, he believed, the first step towards something greater.

Aneurin's ideas were initially published in *The Contemporary Review,* under the editorship of his old pro-Boer and Balkans colleague G. P. Gooch. Following its publication, Aneurin actively sought out individuals sympathetic to his beliefs and this nucleus became the League of Nations Society. They sought gradually to raise public awareness of the need for a League of Nations, by publishing discussion documents and organising public meetings. Aneurin, together with fellow Liberal MP Sir Willoughby Dickinson, steered the Society through its early years until David Davies MP and his associates attempted to take control at its annual general meeting in June 1918.[26] As a result, Virginia Woolf observed that 'the jingoes were defeated by the cranks'.[27] Davies then set up the alternative League of Free Nations Association; however, Sir Edward Grey, who had been invited to be President, insisted the two societies begin negotiations for their eventual unification. This duly occurred in October 1918, establishing the League of Nations Union, which would become one of the most successful peace organisations during the inter-war period. At the insistence of Davies, who financed the Union during its first months, Aneurin's role was severely curtailed, and his significance has as a result been eroded to such an extent that 'by the time all the Archbishops and party leaders had come in, Aneurin Williams had lapsed into comparative obscurity'.[28]

He believed in social reform and the liberty of the individual and, despite its disunity, he saw the Liberal Party as being the best means of achieving this. Throughout, Aneurin remained a radical Liberal and never considered himself a true Asquithian, nor did he truly embrace Lloyd George.

While Lloyd George declared his support for the League of Nations concept, it never really played a part in the 1918 general election campaign. Following the Armistice, he announced that in the forthcoming general election be would be standing as the leader of the coalition, rather than simply as a Liberal. Further, on 29 November, while speaking at Newcastle-on-Tyne, he declared that only Liberals who had shown they could be depended upon to support the coalition, and had not taken 'advantage of temporary difficulties in order to overthrow the Government' would receive his endorsement.[29] In his sights, it was claimed, were those who had voted against him in the Maurice debate in May 1918, in which Asquith had proposed a motion to investigate claims that the government had misled Parliament over the strength of British forces on the western front. While Aneurin's brother and most of his friends and colleagues had voted for the motion, he was amongst the eighty-five to abstain or find themselves absent from the House.

The agreement with the Conservatives was already public knowledge, and so it came as a complete surprise when Lloyd George's agent, speaking to the Newcastle press a few days earlier, identified Aneurin as a coalition candidate. Aneurin confided to his wife that he didn't think Lloyd George's 'blessing' would do him any good.[30] As it turned out, however, the endorsement was very short-lived and Aneurin went to the poll against both Coalition and Labour candidates. Despite strong opposition he was returned as the MP for the re-designated Consett constituency, by a margin of just under 300 votes.[31] On returning to Westminster he sat as part of the rump of Liberals to be returned without the coupon. He was joined by his brother Penry who, despite being issued with the coupon, had repudiated it.

Since the formation of the coalition government, in May 1915, Aneurin had decided to sit on the opposition benches, and as a result was deemed by some to be an 'extreme radical'. Although he was sympathetic to the aims of the Union of Democratic Control, he decided against following his friends and colleagues into the movement and their subsequent path towards Labour.[32] Whether he ever seriously contemplated a move to Labour is difficult to tell, but it is evident that he saw that many independent Liberals would naturally gravitate towards the Labour Party. He believed in social reform and the liberty of the individual and, despite its disunity, he saw the Liberal Party as being the best means of achieving this. Throughout, Aneurin remained a radical Liberal and never considered himself a true Asquithian, nor did he truly embrace Lloyd George with whom there appears to have been a certain animosity. The presence of Lloyd George, with Frances Stevenson, at nearby Churt, did little to further endear him to Aneurin in his latter years.

Ill-health continued to trouble him, and in 1922 he was persuaded to take a recuperative trip to Australia. During the voyage he received the devastating news of his wife's death, and this was rapidly followed by news of the forthcoming general election following the Carlton Club

Ursula Williams (standing on right of picture), daughter of Aneurin Williams, with women campaign workers during the 1923 election

'coup'. In Aneurin's absence, his children campaigned hard but could do little to halt the 'wave of socialism which swept over the county of Durham'.[33] Defeat was not totally unexpected as the Labour base had been building since their first foray during the 1914 by-election, and following the 1918 election, Aneurin had accurately foreseen the migration of moderates to the Conservative Party and the radicals to Labour.[34]

By the time of the December 1923 general election, Aneurin's health was such that he was unable to accept the appeals of his Durham constituents to stand again. Instead, the local Liberal Party adopted his daughter, (Helen) Ursula, as their candidate. Despite being only twenty-seven years of age and too young legally to vote, she had considerable experience assisting her father during the 1918 election and with her brother, Iolo, on their father's behalf during the November 1922 election. In a hard-fought contest she made an impressive sight campaigning in the male-dominated mining community of north-west Durham; however, the forty-eight per cent of the vote she secured was insufficient to oust the sitting Labour MP.[35] The Conservatives failed to put up a candidate in this election, and they would only contest one of the remaining four elections before the outbreak of the Second World War.

Aneurin's last public act was to engage in a debate in *The Times* and the *Westminster Gazette* regarding the outcome of the 1923 election and the need it demonstrated for proportional representation – particularly as without it he foresaw the Liberal Party being squeezed out.[36]

He died on 20 January 1924 and was buried at Grayshott Church, Hampshire. At his funeral there were representatives and messages of condolence from a wide spectrum of society and the numerous causes he advocated. As a fitting tribute, on 10 February that year, a joint memorial service was held for Aneurin Williams and former American President Woodrow Wilson, at the Armenian Church of St Sarkis, in London's Kensington. His role in raising awareness of the plight of the Armenians was highlighted in the Welsh campaign for official recognition of the genocide, which culminated in the dedication of the Welsh national memorial to the Armenian Genocide in Cardiff on 3 November 2007.

As a parliamentarian, Aneurin Williams left no lasting legacy, although he was appointed Chair of the Public Accounts Committee in 1921. His contribution outside Parliament was far greater, working tirelessly on behalf of the causes he passionately believed in, invariably to the detriment of his own health. He expected no personal reward or aggrandisement from his actions, and to those who knew him he was 'conspicuous for ability and self-effacement'.

Barry Dackombe is a PhD research student at the Open University,

whose thesis examines the expression of Liberal internationalism between the Boer War and the First World War through the involvement of Aneurin Williams and his associates with a series of single-issue pressure groups. This biography has been made possible through access to Aneurin Williams' personal papers, which are still in the care of his family and are currently being catalogued by the author.

1 A. J. P. Taylor, *The Troublemakers: Dissent over Foreign Policy, 1792–1939* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1957).

2 Aneurin was MP for Plymouth, January to December 1910; North West Durham, 1914–18; Consett, 1918–22. He does appear in the *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, ed. Joyce Bellamy and John Saville (London: Macmillan, 1974), Vol. I, pp. 346–47.

3 *The Nation*, 26 January 1924.

4 J. F. W. [John Fisher Williams] 'Aneurin Williams: A Personal Tribute', *Representation: The Journal of the Proportional Representation Society*, no. 42, February 1924, p. 4.

5 *South Wales Daily News*, 14 May 1910; see also David J. Jeremy and Christine Shaw (eds), *Dictionary of Business Biography: A Biographical Dictionary of Business Leaders Active in Britain in the Period 1860–1980*, 5 vols. (London: Butterworth, 1986), Vol. 5: S–Z, pp. 817–22.

6 For further details on Iolo, see G. J. Williams, *Iolo Morganwg* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1956); more recent work includes Geraint H. Jenkins, *Facts, Fantasy and Fiction: The Historical Vision of Iolo Morganwg* (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 1997); and Geraint H. Jenkins, *A Rattleskull Genius:The Many Faces of Iolo Morganwg* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005).

7 Penry was MP for Middlesbrough, from January 1910 to December 1918, and Middlesbrough East, December 1918 to November 1922, and December 1923 to October 1924.

8 Rev. Dawes held a Doctorate of Divinity from Trinity College, Dublin and a PhD from the University of Jena, Germany. His children included Elizabeth, who was the first woman to receive a DLitt, and was one of the new additions to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

9 Aneurin Williams Papers (Private Collection), Letter from Sidney Webb, 5 Jan 1887.

10 The pamphlet was originally to be printed under the pseudonym of 'Federal'; however, the final version instead identifies him as 'A.W.'; *Home Rule by Development: An Alternative Plan Home* (Middlesbrough: The Printing and Publishing Co., 1886).

11 Aneurin Williams, *Home Rule: An Appeal for Conciliation and a National Settlement* (London: William Ridgway, 1893).

12 Sir Joseph Swan was the British inventor of the electric light bulb and later went into partnership with Thomas Edison to manufacture light bulbs in Great Britain.

13 This was later renamed the Labour Co-Partnership Association so as better to reflect its objects.

14 Gooch was MP for Bath, from 1906 to January 1910; Alden was MP for Tottenham, 1906–18 (Liberal), and for Tottenham North, 1923–24 (Labour); Bryce was MP for Inverness Burghs, 1906–18.

15 University of Bristol Special Collections, DM668 National Liberal Club, 1906 General Election Addresses, Vol. 2, p. 292.

16 Warde polled 6,167 to Williams' 6,061 votes.

17 In January 1910 the results were: C. E. Mallet, L, 8,091; A Williams, L, 7,961; W. W. Astor, C, 7,650; Rt. Hon. Sir H. M. Durand, C, 7,556; the December results were, W. W. Astor, C, 8,113; A. S. Benn, C, 7,942; C. E. Mallet, L, 7,379; A. Williams, L, 7,260.

18 See Jenifer Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System, 1820–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), ch. vii.

19 Mrs Fawcett to Aneurin Williams, January 1914, Dame Millicent Fawcett Papers, Manchester Archives and Local Studies, M50/2/9/7.

20 The election results were: A. Williams, L, 7,241; J. O. Hardicker, C, 5,564; G. H. Stuart, Lab, 5,026.

21 See Martin Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain, 1914–1945: The Defining of a Faith* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); Martin Ceadel, *Thinking About Peace and War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Martin Ceadel, *Semi-detached Idealists: The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1854–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

22 Noel Buxton was MP for North Norfolk, Jan. 1910–1918 (L) and 1922–1930 (Lab). He was elevated to the House of Lords in 1930; James Bryce was MP for Tower Hamlets, 1880–1885 and South Aberdeen, 1885–1907. He was British Ambassador to the United States 1907–13 and was created Viscount Bryce in 1914.

23 See, for example, *New York Times*, 18 August 1915, letter from Aneurin Williams, and 10 October 1915, letter from Lord Bryce; see also House of Commons, *Hansard* (5th Series) Vol. LXXV, 16 November 1915, col. 1770–1776, Aneurin Williams.

24 See Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 34–37.

25 See Aneurin Williams, *Proposals for a League of Peace and Mutual Protection among Nations* (Letchworth: Garden City Press, 1915).

26 Sir Willoughby Dickinson (later Lord Dickinson of Painswick) was Liberal MP for St Pancras North , 1906–18 and David Davies (later Lord Davies of Llandinum) was Liberal MP for Montgomeryshire, 1906–29.

27 Anne O. Bell (ed.), *The Diaries of Virginia Woolf* (London: Penguin, 1979), Vol. i, pp. 157–58.

28 Sir John Squire, *The Honeysuckle and the Bee* (London: William Heinemann, 1937), p. 64.

29 Trevor Wilson, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party 1914–1935* (London: Collins, 1966); *The Times*, 30 November 1918, p. 9.

30 Aneurin Williams Papers, Letter to H. E. Williams, 24 November 1918.

31 The election results were: A. Williams, L, 7,576; R. Gee, Coalition National Democratic Party, 7, 283; G. H. Stuart-Bunning, Lab, 7,268.

32 In the *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, ed. Bellamy and Saville, he is erroneously cited as being a Member from February 1915. While Charles Trevelyan attempted to get him to join the UDC's General Council, he declined, preferring to concentrate his efforts on the League of Nations concept (Aneurin Williams Papers, Williams to Charles Trevelyan, 8 January 1915).

33 Wilson, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party 1914–1935*, p. 238; the election results were Rev. H. Dunnico, Lab, 14,469; A. Williams, L, 9,870; S. E. D. Wilson, C, 6,745.

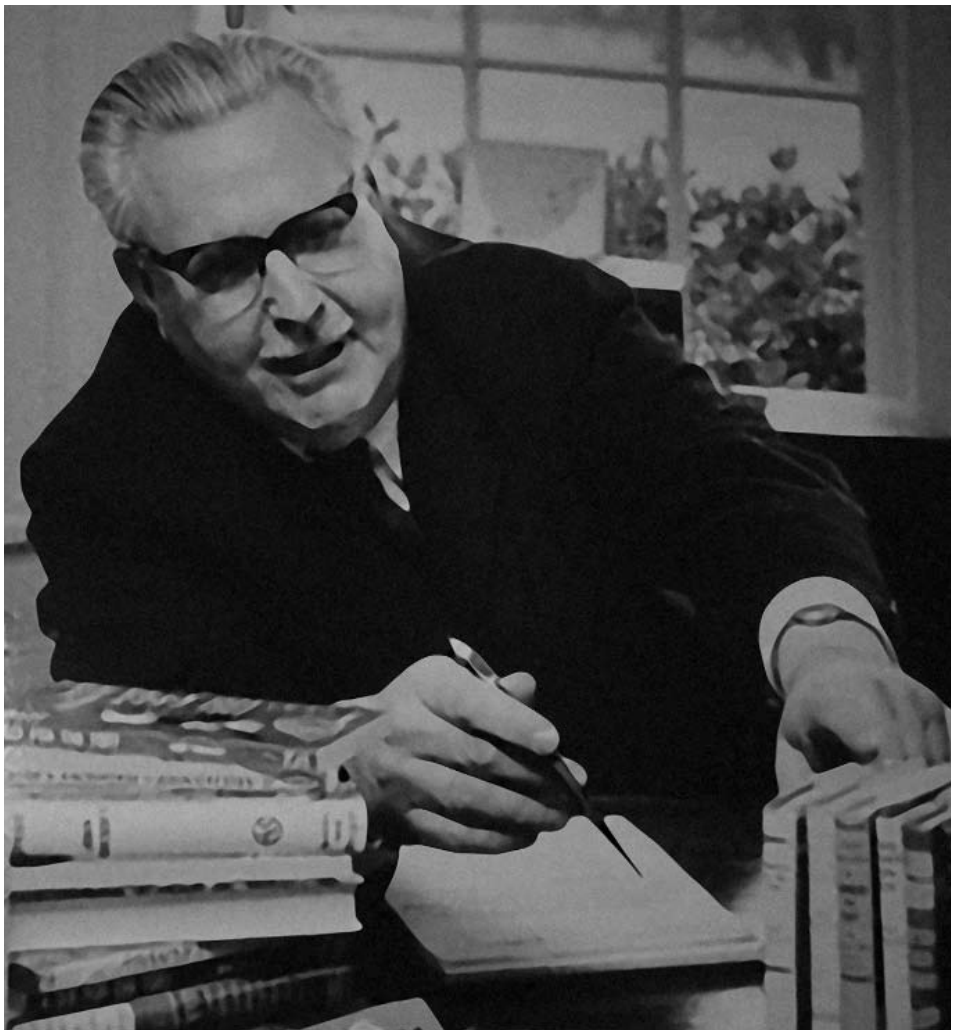
34 Aneurin Williams, 'The General Election and the Future of the Liberal Party', *Contemporary Review*, Vol. CXV (February 1919), p. 143.

35 The election results were Rev. H. Dunnico, Lab, 15,862; Miss H. U. Williams, L, 14,619.

36 Noel and Harold Buxton, *Travel and Politics in Armenia* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1914), p. 126.

MAN OF MYSTERY

The single-minded determination that John Creasey showed in pursuing a writing career despite receiving 743 rejection slips prior to his first sale suggests that he should have been ideally suited to be a Liberal parliamentary candidate in the difficult decade of the 1950s. However he stood only once for the Liberal Party, and his energies ultimately went in other directions. **Ian Millsted** reviews the life and political activities of John Creasey, author of almost 600 books, thrillers, crime movels … and mysteries. To what extent did his Liberal views influence his writings?



John Creasey was born in Southfield, Surrey, on 17 September 1908, the seventh of nine children. He suffered polio aged two, and as a consequence could not walk until the age of six. His interests in writing and politics were both manifest from relatively early ages. As a student at Peterborough Road School in Fulham at the age of ten, he wrote a piece about an imaginary conversation between Marshal Foch and the Kaiser which elicited the suggestion from his headmaster that he might earn a living for himself as a writer. Of his interest in politics, Creasey later wrote, 'I have been a political animal all my life. At twelve I was organising and speaking at street corners for the Liberal Party.'[1]

Y: JOHN CREASEY

Creasey left school at fourteen and started work as a clerk. This was the first of many jobs he passed through, often getting into trouble or being fired for writing when he should have been working. His family were not always supportive or sympathetic but he did manage to sell his first short story at the age of seventeen and eventually had his first novel accepted at twenty-three. Thereafter, and especially with the start of his series about 'The Toff', the floodgates opened. He wrote at least 560 books in his lifetime and still stands as one of the most prolific authors ever. 'I'm a phenomenon,' he said. 'I can't explain myself.'[2] His output is even more remarkable given that even after becoming a full-time writer in 1935 he only wrote in the mornings, leaving the afternoons free for business meetings, watching cricket and activities for his voluntary organisations.

Creasey wrote to make a living, but he paid attention to his craft. When his early writing was criticised by Dorothy L. Sayers for carelessness he hired an assistant to check the details. His first novels were stand-alone mysteries which were plot-driven and had a fast pace. Plot and pace remained consistent features of his writing. He soon started developing the various series for which he is best known. 'Department Z' was the first series, from 1933 onwards, and ran to twenty-nine titles. The first of forty-nine 'Baron' books was released in 1937 and the next year the first of fifty-eight 'Toff' books (though the character had been known from magazines since 1933). Creasey also wrote westerns, romances and others, often under one of his many pseudonyms. He used his first wife's name, Margaret Cooke, for some of the romance titles. He also tried to include social issues in some of his stories (most obviously in the 'Toff' books) and the title *Vote for Murder* from 1948 reflects his ongoing interest in politics.

The childhood polio meant that Creasey was rejected for service in World War Two. He was, though, active in many public spheres. He became a public supporter of National Savings for which he was awarded the MBE in 1946. He supported Oxfam, campaigned for road safety and was a supporter of United Europe.

Creasey was more ready than most for the resumption of normal politics in 1945. By now resident in Bournemouth, he had become Chairman of that town's Liberal Association; though unfortunately it may not have extended much beyond Creasey. The Liberal candidate for the 1945 general election was Basil Wigoder, newly returned from war service. The campaign was based mainly on public speeches and letters to the influential local newspaper rather than canvassing, but Wigoder polled over fourteen thousand votes to come second.[3] This was a good result compared to the national picture, and was probably due to a combination of residual pre-war support, Creasey's skill at publicity and an unsuitable Labour candidate. The outcome encouraged more support from the party at large when a by-election arose in the seat in November 1945. Wigoder was again the candidate, but this time the Labour Party put up a stronger showing and the Liberals were pushed into third place, with 9,548 votes.[4] Wigoder departed to pursue his legal career.

John Creasey (1908–73)

John Creasey was selected as candidate in late 1946 (and selected again for Bournemouth West following boundary changes that split the constituency). It was in this period, up to the 1950 election, that he was most active both locally and nationally. He was elected to the National Liberal Council, and when the Liberal Assembly opened in Bournemouth in 1947 he was on the platform.[5]

Creasey was a frequent correspondent to local newspapers, which enabled him to maintain a high profile against the two bigger parties. They also give an insight into his policy views at this time. He criticised the closed shop, and opposed monopolies.[6] He was broadly in favour of private enterprise as well as profit-sharing co-ownerships.[7] He opposed the first-past-the-post electoral system.[8] He was in favour of the Health Act, though he felt it needed some correction.[9] He was anti-communist and

pro-Europe.[10] He was against the continuation of conscription.[11]

Outside the newspaper columns, a Liberal Party 'Brains' Trust', with Creasey as question-master, sold out for an audience of two thousand.[12] Despite this the local party did not fight council elections at this time.

The Conservatives selected Viscount Cranborne to defend Bournemouth West in the 1950 election. Creasey addressed forty meetings during the campaign but despite this, and his high profile, the result was still third place. The 9,216 votes and 17.3 per cent share of the poll were good compared to the party's national showing, but down from the result Basil Wigoder had achieved in the 1945 by-election.

Given the Labour government's narrow victory in 1950, another election in the near future was not unpredictable. However, Creasey seems to have been pursuing other interests at this point and scaled down his party activities. Neither he, nor anyone else, stood for the Liberals in the seat in the 1951 election; in fact he was away on a world tour with his second wife, Evelyn, and their two sons. He was, however, re-elected president of the local Liberal Association.

The 1950s were a busy enough time for John Creasey without adding extensive political activity. He was still producing a dozen or so books each year. He co-founded the Crime Writers' Association in 1953. With his family he travelled to America (resulting in a travel book and added business and publishing links). His well received novel *Gideon's Day* (written under the pseudonym J. J. Marric in 1955) was made into a film by legendary director John Ford. He established the *John Creasey Mystery Magazine* in 1956 and became publisher of Jay Books in 1957. He also moved from Bournemouth to Wiltshire.

It was not only lack of time that led Creasey to move away from Liberal politics. He resigned from the party in 1956. 'I left the party over Suez, not simply because I disagreed with its condemnation of Anthony Eden, but because Suez seemed the final proof that it was morally indefensible for decisions affecting the lives of every one of us to be made by one party.' This was written some time later[13] but maybe Creasey was already thinking along different political lines by this time. However it is an odd criticism to make of the Liberal Party at the time, when it was affecting the lives of people less than it ever had before or since. The party had been reduced to five MPs, and even they held differing views on the Suez affair. It seems more likely that Creasey was generally disillusioned with the party at this time and that Suez was the event required to finalise a decision to leave. He did, however, maintain his membership of the National Liberal Club.

Gideon describes himself as 'politically a middle-of-the-road man who did not always agree with middle-of-the-road politicians' and this is probably how Creasey saw himself.

Nor did the Suez affair mark Creasey's last links with the Liberal Party. In 1962 he announced that he would be appearing on a Liberal platform with Jo Grimond.[14] Possibly his enthusiasm had been rekindled by the Orpington by-election result in March of that year. He also said, referring to the possibility of becoming a Liberal candidate again, 'I think it unlikely if I were approached at the right time that I would refuse'.[15] However, he was due to leave the country on a fourteen-month world tour at this point, which took him away from domestic politics in the physical sense, and possibly away from Liberal politics in the ideological sense. Whether he would have become an active Liberal again had he remained in Britain in 1962–63 is unknown. It does seem likely that many local associations would have been interested in a candidate who would have been able to finance his own campaign although, as shown below, Creasey and the Liberals were to move further apart from each other in policy terms over the following few years.

Some insight into Creasey's thinking can perhaps be gleaned from one of his more political books written at this time. *Gideon's Vote* was published in 1964 (by Hodder & Stoughton Ltd.) but would have been written at least a year before – Creasey's discipline meant he was always well ahead of the publishing deadlines and, indeed, new Creasey novels were being published several years after his death as a result. Gideon describes himself as 'politically a middle-of-the-road man who did not always agree with middle-of-the-road politicians' and this is probably how Creasey saw himself. The main plot of the novel is the threat to the democratic process from extremists on the left and right of the political spectrum. A sub-plot involves Gideon's son running as a Liberal in his school election and coming a good second.

The world tour was partly a working holiday, as before. Creasey wrote, and sold, stories and articles as he travelled. He completed one novel on the sea voyage from Britain to southern Africa. In South Africa, despite declaring that 'multi-racialism is the eventual answer',[16] he also said of the anti-apartheid campaigners: 'I listened to Scott, Paton, Huddleston and so many others and thought – They've some axe to grind … but it looks to me like a form of intellectual idealism divorced from realism'.[17] This was not a view likely to be shared by an increasing number in the Liberal Party back in Britain.

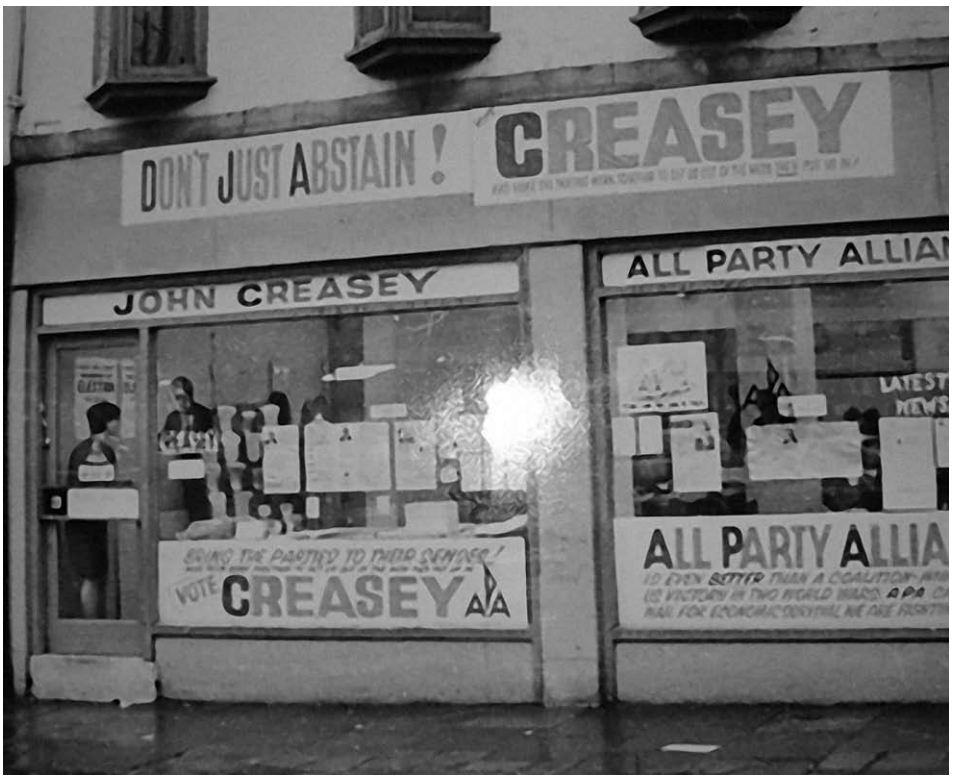
By visiting such thriving places as Hong Kong, Australia, Japan and the US, Creasey grew to perceive a malaise infecting Britain. This view may have been reinforced or, possibly, inspired by many of the ex-pats he met on his travels. Appropriately enough, two high-profile television series of his characters 'Gideon' and 'The Baron' were made at this time and were sold

internationally. Creasey showed some disappointment that the BBC showed little interest in adapting his stories though he was surely better served by the entrepreneurial ability of Lew Grade whose company produced both these series.

Creasey took no public part in the general elections of 1964 or 1966 but he did begin developing the ideas that he pursued, in political terms, for the remainder of his life. He established the All-Party Alliance in January 1966. Although he fought elections under this label, it was more a pressure group than a political party. Its principal aim was to see elected a government of the best people from all parties in order to sort out the problems of the day. Creasey explained his beliefs further in the books *Good, God and Man* (1967) and *Evolution to Democracy* (1969). He wanted fixed-term elections, a cabinet made up in proportion to votes for respective parties, and no party whips. He suggested an industrial democracy divided between the four groups, state, private enterprise, workers and unions, and management.

These ideas were put to the test when a long anticipated by-election was held in Nuneaton following the resignation of Frank Cousins to return to trade union activity. Creasey had indicated as early as August 1966[18] that he might stand, and the poll was finally held in March 1967. In November 1966 he was asked if he was still a Liberal at heart. He replied, 'No, I am opposed to some of their policies … I remain a small-l liberal'.[19] In the run-up to the campaign Creasey commented on the unwelcome decline of Britain's economy as well as its national and international prestige.[20] He wanted to see the balance of payments in credit.[21] He also paid attention to local issues, calling for a local colliery to be kept open.[22]

Another former Liberal, Air Vice-Marshal Donald Bennett,[23] also stood at the by-election, fighting as an Independent on an anti-Common Market platform. The presence of five names on the ballot paper was unusual at a time when even three-cornered elections were not yet the norm. In the event the Labour Party retained the seat. Creasey came fourth with 2,755 votes and 6.4 per cent. This was a remarkably strong result for an independent candidate for the time. Bennett was fifth.



One of Creasey's campaign HQs for the All-Party Alliance

Soon afterwards Creasey stood again in the Brierley Hill by-election. Coming only six weeks after Nuneaton there was little time to campaign and his result was 1,305 votes (2.2 per cent) and another fourth place. The Conservatives held the seat with an increased majority.[24]

Even the support of Lancashire and England cricketer Brian Statham did not draw many more votes in the Manchester Gorton by-election in November 1967. In his election leaflet Creasey called for a national referendum on capital punishment, immigration and the Common Market. This would have been in line with his belief in matters being taken out of the hands of party machines, but also suggests that he was trying to gain populist votes. The mention of capital punishment would have been particularly significant in a north-west constituency where the details of the Moors murders were still fresh in people's memories. He secured 1,123 votes (2.7 per cent) and again came fourth. Labour just held the seat against a challenge from the young Winston Churchill (the grandson of Sir Winston).

Creasey's final campaign was also his most successful under this label. The Oldham West by-election was set for June 1968. Creasey was joined on the campaign trail by actor Robert Beatty. This time he polled 3,389 votes (13.2 per cent) and third place, beating the Liberal candidate. As was noted with regard to his Bournemouth campaign, Creasey used local newspapers to raise his profile in elections, employing a combination of direct correspondence and newsworthy events, such as the celebrity support mentioned above, to maintain a high profile. Nuneaton and Oldham had local, daily evening newspapers corresponding to the constituencies which may have maximised

the impact of this technique. This was not the case in Brierley Hill or Manchester Gorton.

The Conservatives won Oldham West, gaining the seat from Labour. Creasey, no doubt encouraged by such a good result for a non-aligned candidate, announced that he would concentrate on Oldham West at the next general election.[25] In the event that never happened, and he announced in 1970 that he would not fight the election. The same year saw him divorced and subsequently marry his third wife, Jeanne Williams.

Even at this point Creasey did not seem entirely done with the Liberal Party. In July 1969 he congratulated Wallace Lawler on his victory in Birmingham Ladywood. He attended the Liberal Assembly in September 1969 in an attempt to try to persuade the party to embrace the ideas of the All-Party Alliance.[26]

The All-Party Alliance made an appearance in his fiction as well. The 1971 novel, *Vote for the Toff* (Hodder & Stoughton Ltd), probably came as a surprise to those people who read his book without being familiar with his politics. There is a mystery element to the story but this runs secondary to the main plot, wherein the Hon. Richard Rollison, otherwise known as 'The Toff', decides to run as an Independent candidate in a by-election on a political unity ticket. The point is made by many of the sympathetic characters in the book that the two-party system is the cause of many of Britain's problems. Creasey even writes himself into the story under the name Jack Withers who, as head of the All-Party Alliance, comes to help Rollison in the election. Although 'The Toff' series was the one where Creasey had most often tried to address social issues the passages detailing his political thinking may well have been skipped by the readers expecting a straight mystery. Both Creasey's normal working practice and internal textual evidence suggest this was written prior to the 1970 general election but after his own by-election campaigns.

The point is made by many of the sympathetic characters in the book that the two-party system is the cause of many of Britain's problems.

The All-Party Alliance continued as an organisation and as late as April 1973 Creasey was praising Dick Taverne for his stand against the party machines.[27] Ultimately the organisation changed its name,[28] merged[29] and then folded, to the general disinterest of most. After completing one of his most ambitious novels, *The Masters of Bow Street*, in 1972 Creasey suffered a heart attack. During his convalescence he married his fourth wife, also his nurse, Diana Farrell. He died on 9 June 1973.

As well as the aforementioned MBE, Creasey was the winner of the Edgar Allan Poe Award in 1962. He was President of the Crime Writers' Association in 1966–67 and was awarded Grand Master of the Mystery Writers of America.

John Creasey was very much his own man and this served him spectacularly well in his writing career. If it is a partial mystery that a man of his undoubted energies did not do more in the field of politics to which he was also drawn, that may be fitting. Some of his views, even prior to the All-Party Alliance, may seem maverick when viewed from today but not necessarily more so than those of some others who were Liberal candidates, and even MPs, in the 1950s and '60s. Had he lived another ten years would his antagonism to strikes have led him to support Margaret Thatcher, or would he have been drawn to the mould-breakers of the SDP and the Alliance? In either case he would have written even more of the books which remain popular and collectable today.

Ian Millsted is a teacher of Philosophy and Ethics. He lives in Bristol. *The author's thanks are due to Trowbridge Records Office, Richard Creasey, Michael Steed, Robert Ingham and Lawrence Fullick.*

1 *All-Party Alliance*, May 1968.
2 *Personality* (South Africa) 28 June 1962.
3 The result was Sir C. E. L. Lyle (Con) 34,544 (55.5%); B. T. Wigoder (Lib) 14,232 (22.8%); R. S. W. Pollard (Lab) 13,522 (21.7%). As canvassing was little-used, Wigoder went to the cinema on polling day as there was nothing else to do.
4 Rt. Hon. B. Bracken (Con) 22,980 (46.8%); E. A. A. Shackleton (Lab) 16,526 votes (33.7%); B. T. Wigoder (Lib) 9,548 (19.5%).
5 *Bournemouth Daily Echo* 23 April 1947.
6 *Bournemouth Daily Echo* 12 December 1946.
7 *Bournemouth Times* 9 May 1947.
8 *Bournemouth Daily Echo* 16 December 1947.
9 *Bournemouth Daily Echo* 1 April 1948.
10 *Bournemouth Daily Echo* 3 November 1948.
11 *Bournemouth Times* 17 Febuary 1950.
12 *Western Gazette* 2 May 1947.
13 *All-Party Alliance News* May 1968.
14 *Southern Evening Echo* 11 May 1962.
15 Ibid.
16 *Johannesburg Star* 15 October 196.
17 *Durban Tribune* 27 October 1963.
18 *Sunday Times* 14 August 1966.
19 *Birmingham Sunday Mercury* 13 November 1966.
20 *Liberal News* Commentary 23 September 1966.
21 *The New Daily* 26 August 1966.
22 *Country Evening Telegraph* 16 January 1967.
23 Briefly MP for Middlesbrough in 1945 and Liberal candidate at the Croydon North by-election in 1948.
24 Michael Steed was the Liberal candidate, polling 4,536 votes. Michael also supplied the observation regarding the importance of daily evening newspapers in Nuneaton and Oldham.
25 *London Evening Standard* 14 June 1968.
26 *All-Party Alliance News* September 1969.
27 *Evolution to Democracy* 5, April 1973.
28 To 'Evolution to Democracy'.
29 With 'The Organisation'.

REVIEWS

Politics and ponies

Garry Tregidga (ed.): *Killerton, Camborne and Westminster: The Political Correspondence of Sir Francis and Lady Acland, 1910–29* (Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 2006)
Reviewed by **Richard Toye**

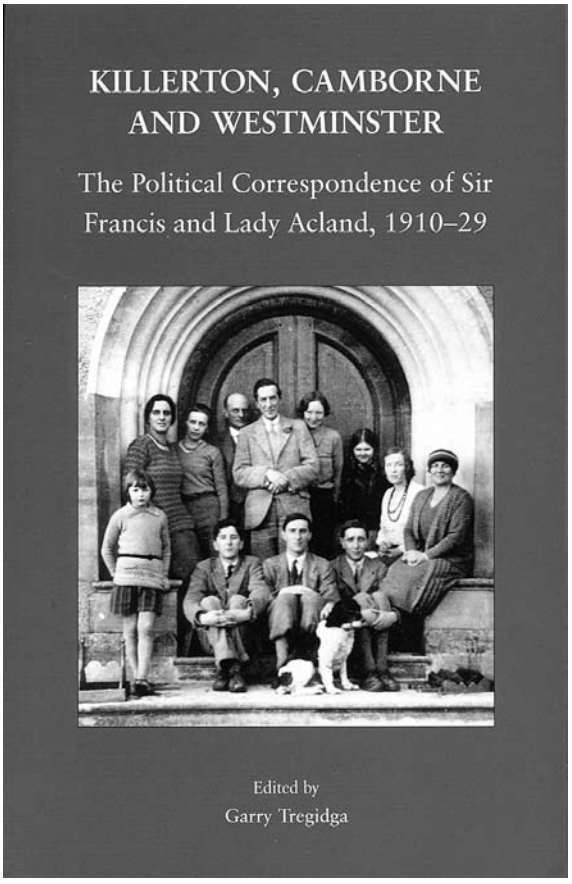
Sir Francis Acland (1874–1939) was a significant figure in Cornish politics and, to a lesser degree, in the Liberal Party nationally. He came from an established political dynasty, but, as Garry Tregidga rightly observes in his preface to this useful collection of documents, he has been neglected relative to other members of his family. For example, his father, Sir Arthur Acland, and his son, Sir Richard Acland, have received entries in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, but he himself has not. This neglect may be unjust but it is not, I think, wholly unaccountable.

Sir Francis was a capable political figure, with strongly held principles. First elected in 1906, he did not always win the seats he fought, but he invariably found his way back to the Commons in due course somehow, and was still an MP at the time of his death. This record of success was not at all bad when seen in the context of the near-total collapse of the Liberal Party from 1918 onwards. According to his *Times* obituary, he did miss the House of Commons during his enforced exile from it in the 1920s and early 1930s. However, he had a slightly semi-detached attitude to politics, about which he sometimes talked, rather half-heartedly, of giving up.

Acland sat first for Richmond in Yorkshire, from 1906 until the first general election of 1910, in which he lost his seat. In the second election of that year he got in at Camborne in Cornwall, a seat that he held until 1922. (His survival in 1918, when so many of his fellow Asquithian Liberals were swept away, was largely down to luck: his would-be Conservative challenger did not get back from India in time to be nominated.) In the 1922 election he fought the nearby Tiverton seat instead, and narrowly lost, before winning it in a by-election the following year, and losing it again in 1924. The last seat he held was North Cornwall, which he won in a by-election in 1932.

Up until 1916 he held a number of different junior posts, at the War Office, the Foreign Office, the Treasury, and the Board of Agriculture. The fall of H. H. Asquith as Prime Minister marked the end of Acland's ministerial career, although he was by no means an irreconcilable opponent of Lloyd George. If the split in the Liberal Party had not occurred he might one day have held a Cabinet job, but it is difficult to view this termination in a particularly tragic light, not least because he himself appears to have lacked ambition. After Asquith lost his seat in the 1918 election, the leadership of the independent Liberals went (on a temporary basis) to Sir Donald Maclean. Acland wrote: 'I lost my chance of doing it by being slack about all H[ouse]. of C[ommons]. things for the last two years. […] I don't regret much having put myself out of the running.'

Acland's obituarist wrote that he 'was a bright and entertaining platform speaker (on occasion, perhaps, too entertaining, as he was somewhat unguarded in his *obiter dicta*)'; and also that he had 'the gift, certainly valuable in a party man, of stinging his opponents into lapses of temper and good taste'. Such liveliness and passion as is to be found in these letters, though, is largely down to Acland's first wife, Eleanor (who died in 1933). In the 1920s, she wrote about the travails of the Liberal Party with a real sense that something important was at stake. Her complaints about the 'local mugwumps' and the 'Liberal party big-wigs' may not have done full justice to the motives of those who were less radical than she was, but she undoubtedly had a sense of personal involvement in politics. Acland himself, by contrast, seems to have been



motivated mainly by a sense of duty. As Tregidga notes, in relation to one of his 1917 letters to Eleanor, this could sometimes stray into pomposity. The letter – written at a time when Acland was thinking of giving up Parliament – runs: 'I possess, as you do, somehow such a very large amount of general competence that I don't think I should for long be without pretty useful and honourable work.' His industriousness and lucidity may have been admirable, but he is not a figure for whom it is easy to feel warmth.

The personal aspect of the Aclands' life is not well represented in this volume. For example, in 1924 their daughter Ellen was killed in an accident at the age of ten. This must have been a shattering blow to both of them, and Eleanor wrote a book of commemoration. Yet they did not write about their pain in their letters to each other; or at least no such letters are published here, perhaps not having been preserved. The editor was obviously powerless to do anything about this deficiency. A more legitimate cause for complaint is that there are no documents here relating to either the first four or the last ten years of Acland's parliamentary career. A quick search of the National Register of Archives suggests that potentially relevant material does exist, at least for the 1930s, for example in the papers of Basil Liddell Hart.

If the book is not quite as comprehensive as it might be, it is nonetheless interesting and valuable. Tregidga's wide-ranging introduction is a model of clarity, showing the relationship between Cornish issues and the national picture in a highly effective way. One aspect of Acland's life that it does not mention is that in 1921 he became the first Vice-President of the Exmoor Pony Society. (His forebears had done much to save the ponies from extinction.) In some ways Exmoor ponies are like the post-1918 Liberal Party – hardy, lovable, difficult to manage, and really quite small. It would be nice to extend the analogy and to say that Francis Acland played a seminal role in the preservation of both, but although in both cases he did his bit, this would not really be true. Although apparently dutiful where the Society was concerned, he seems to have been even less interested in ponies than he was in politics.

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In some ways Exmoor ponies are like the post-1918 Liberal Party – hardy, lovable, difficult to manage, and really quite small.

Municipal Liberalism 1886–1895

James R. Moore: *The Transformation of Urban Liberalism* (Ashgate, 2006)

Reviewed by **Iain Sharpe**

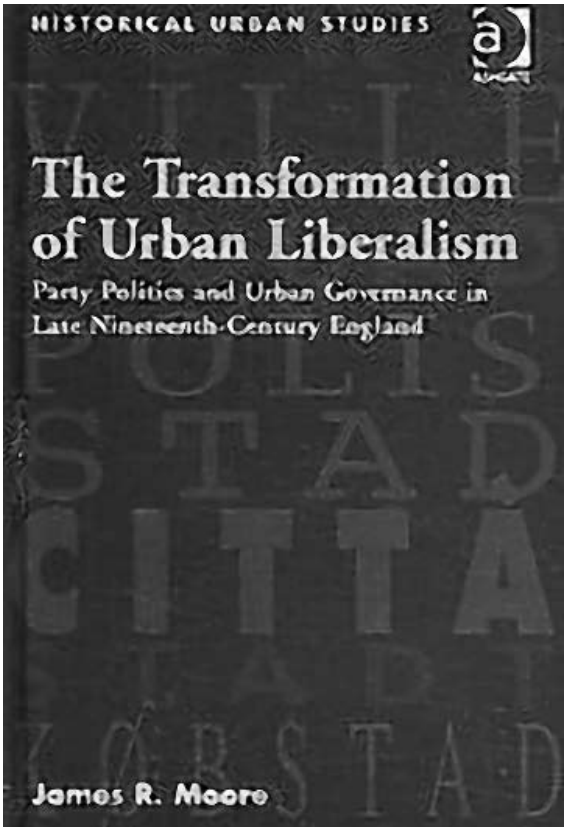
The study of late-Victorian Liberalism has been dominated by parliamentary politics and intellectual movements, largely to the exclusion of local and municipal perspectives – perhaps no wonder given the richness and variety of Liberal thought, the dominant presence of William Gladstone at the head of the party, and the battles among the party leaders after his departure from the political scene. James Moore's book is therefore a valuable corrective, detailing the development of Liberal politics at municipal level during the period 1886–95 and showing how local Liberal politicians developed an increasing commitment to schemes of social improvement – promoting everything from improved sewerage systems to public libraries.

The author focuses on Liberal Party organisation in Manchester and Leicester, the former of totemic significance for nineteenth-century Liberalism, the latter having some claim to be the capital of Midlands Liberalism after the defection of Joseph Chamberlain's Birmingham following the 1886 Home Rule split. He shows how the Third Reform Act of 1885 acted as a trigger for a challenge by radicals to the control by local oligarchies of local Liberal organisations. This was particularly so in the selection of parliamentary candidates, where both Leicester and Manchester saw bitter contests for the Liberal nomination between patrician figures favoured by the local establishment and more populist candidates with a strong following among party activists. Although the latter were not always immediately successful, the battles over selection brought about, over time, a greater democratisation of party management.

A similar process took place in municipal politics. In both Manchester and Leicester, local government politics had become, by the 1880s, something of a cosy club, divorced from popular politics. In the former, appointments to the aldermanic bench created a bias within the council chamber in favour of moderates rather than radicals, while in Leicester, overwhelming Liberal domination of the Town Hall meant that local elections were not vigorously contested, with the

local Liberal Association having little involvement in the organisation of council election campaigns. During the late 1880s and early 1890s, this was to change.

An important catalyst for the radicalisation of municipal politics lay in the ultimately successful battles in both centres to expand town and city boundaries. Here, Dr Moore challenges the conventional view that the suburbs were havens of 'Villa Toryism' – Conservative bastions within more radical urban areas. In particular, he points out that the lack of amenities within newly built estates meant that suburban residents were often keen for more active local government. The expansion of both Leicester's and Manchester's boundaries led to a strengthening not of Conservatism but radicalism, with Liberal councillors, often with more progressive views than many of their party colleagues, representing suburban wards. Suburban residents were often enthusiastic supporters of 'gas-and-water socialism'.



Dr Moore demonstrates how little significance the Home Rule crisis of 1886 and the Liberal Unionist schism had for Liberalism at municipal level. In Leicester, for example, there was greater concern among local Liberals with the campaign against the compulsory vaccination programme that was being enforced by the local board of guardians than with the debates in Parliament on the Home Rule Bill. For some time after the Home Rule split, Liberal Unionist councillors found themselves in a rather ambiguous position – still willing to co-operate at municipal level with erstwhile colleagues on local issues and reluctant to enter into full alliance with the Conservatives. As a result, in neither Leicester nor Manchester did Liberal Unionism emerge as a significant force.

Likewise, the advance of Labour during these years was slow and inconsistent. Although Labour candidate were occasionally successful in individual council wards, ILP candidates in the working-class constituency of Manchester North-East and in Leicester finished bottom of the poll in 1895. In terms of municipal representation, Liberal organisations seemed more willing to embrace measures that would bring material benefits for the working class than to adopt working-class candidates. This was a problem across the country at parliamentary level, as cash-strapped Liberal associations sought candidates who could pay their own expenses, and it is interesting that Dr Moore's research suggests a similar problem in achieving working-class representation at municipal level.

The period 1886–95 has been considered by some historians as one of stagnation for the Liberal Party – possibly the beginning of the death throes of Liberal England. Dr Moore's book demonstrates that it remained a vibrant and increasingly radical force in at least two of England's important urban centres. In that sense this is a well-researched and closely argued book that adds significantly to our understanding of late-Victorian Liberalism. Where I have doubts, however, is with the conclusions the author draws about the impact of this radicalism on the Liberal Party's national fortunes. He sees it as contributing to a revival of Liberalism after the trauma of 1886 and paving the way for the so-called New Liberalism of the Edwardian era. But in fact left-of-centre parties are often less electorally successful when under the strong influence of radical activists. And of course this was a period of electoral failure for the Liberal Party. The 1892 general election produced an unconvincing victory for the Liberals and the party lost the two subsequent elections by landslide majorities. Even in Manchester, despite the vibrant radicalism that Dr Moore identifies, by the end of the period covered by this study, the Liberals held just one of the city's six parliamentary seats.

Gladstone's adoption of the 1891 'Newcastle Programme' was done under a degree of duress and was felt by many of his colleagues, including his son Herbert, to have been a mistake. On the contrary, one of the significant factors in the party's revival after 1902 was its deliberate eschewal of a radical programme that gave hostages to fortune and alienated moderate voters. The party establishment consciously distanced itself from past commitments on Home Rule and temperance. Instead, it tried to project a moderate image in order to win back voters who had been lost to the Unionist parties. Instead of specific legislative commitments, the party leadership stressed the importance of Liberal ministers

exercising their own judgement rather than being beholden to a radical programme. Even if the author is right that 'moderate' Liberalism was in decline at local level by 1895, surely it was precisely a reassertion of moderate Liberal values that guided the party back to power in 1906.

Iain Sharpe is researching a PhD at London University on the Edwardian Liberal Party.

Wales of the future

Dewi Rowland Hughes, *Cymru Fydd* (University of Wales Press, 2006)

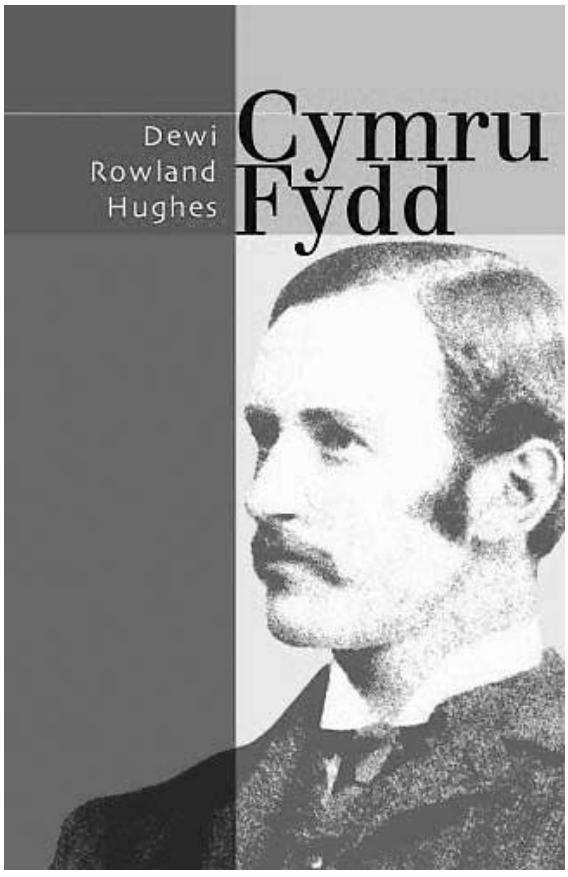
Reviewed by **Dr J. Graham Jones**

This slim but significant volume, published in the Welsh language, is to be warmly welcomed. *Cymru Fydd* was a patriotic movement, literally 'Wales of the future', known in English as 'Young Wales', formed at London in 1886, primarily by emigré Welshmen, on the model of Young Ireland, its programme appearing 'a manifesto against old age'. It conceived its nationalist mission in terms of a native cultural and linguistic tradition, and was based largely on the Welsh intelligentsia. Its most prominent members included mediaeval historian John Edward Lloyd, Oxford don and litterateur Owen M. Edwards, journalist Thomas Edward Ellis (who became Liberal MP for his native Merionethshire in 1886), and barrister W. Llewelyn Williams (in 1906 to be elected the Liberal MP for the Carmarthen Boroughs), the last named asserting that the *Cymru Fydd* movement was concerned with 'true politics'.

The second branch of the society was formed, significantly, at Liverpool, but the movement was notably slow to put down roots in Wales; the branch established at Barry in 1891 was the first bridgehead in south Wales. Thereafter branches were set up in many parts of Wales, often closely linked with the traditional organisation and personnel of nonconformist Liberalism. The movement had published its own journal, *Cymru Fydd*, since January 1888, and it won the backing of the Welsh popular press, particularly of the veteran Thomas Gee in *Y Faner*, and of the youthful David Lloyd George, elected MP for the Caernarfon Boroughs in April 1890. Initially a cultural and educative movement, *Cymru Fydd* became, under the influence of T. E. Ellis and Lloyd George, a political campaign, Ellis underlining 'the necessity of declaring for self-government'. Home Rule thus became central to the *Cymru Fydd* programme, while Michael D. Jones and others even intended it to oust the Liberal Party and become an independent Welsh national party. A new nationalist journal, *Young Wales*, was launched in January 1895.

Yet *Cymru Fydd*, although highly significant, has tended to be somewhat neglected by historians. The last time a monograph was devoted to the movement was more than sixty years ago when William George, brother of Lloyd George, edited the volume *Cymru Fydd* (1945). Much valuable work on the movement has been undertaken since then by scholars, notably Kenneth Morgan and Emyr Price, in their work on the young Lloyd George and the Liberal Party in Wales in the late nineteenth century. The important contributions of other historians to our understanding of a complex movement still regrettably lie buried in unpublished doctoral and masters' dissertations.

Some of the themes discussed in Mr Hughes's impressive volume are fairly well known. These include the discussion of Alfred Thomas's ambitious 'omnibus' measure, the National Institutions (Wales) Bills of 1891–92, T. E. Ellis's highly contentious decision to accept the position of junior whip in Gladstone's fourth administration in July 1892, and the steps which led to the famous meeting at Newport in January 1896, an event which heralded the ignominious collapse of the entire *Cymru Fydd* movement. Even so, the author has marshalled a great deal of new evidence to embellish his well-written narrative. Other themes covered in this volume



are highly original: details of the organisation of the *Cymru Fydd* society and the nature of its individual branches, the significance of the first Welsh county councils, elected in January 1889 (and the councillors and aldermen elected, most of whom are shown to be middle-class nonconformists), the component elements within the highly disparate Welsh Parliamentary Party after 1886, and the structure and nature of Welsh Liberalism during these crucial years. The text is embellished by a number of helpful charts and tables.

In the wake of this compelling analysis, much fascinating information emerges on a number of Welsh politicians, notably Thomas Edward Ellis (Merionethshire) of course, but also Stuart Rendel (Montgomeryshire), J. Herbert Lewis (Flint Boroughs), D. A. Thomas (Merthyr Tydfil), Alfred Thomas (later to become Baron Pontypridd) (East Glamorgan) and, not least, the youthful David Lloyd George (Caernarfon Boroughs). We also catch fascinating glimpses of the attitude towards Wales of successive Liberal Prime Ministers W. E. Gladstone and Lord Rosebery.

Not that this volume represents the last word on *Cymru Fydd*. Further work needs to be undertaken on the nonconformist ethos which underlay the movement and its unique distinctive culture, on the closely intertwined land and tithe questions, and on the legacy of the movement after 1896 when attempts were made to revive it. There were *Cymru Fydd* branches in existence in some English cities right up until the Second World War. By far the weakest section of Mr Hughes's volume is the all-too-brief chapter 10 (pp. 188–93) which devotes just four short pages to a discussion of the significance of the movement and its legacy. Yet that legacy was highly significant, even in the transition from nonconformist, Liberal Wales in the late nineteenth century to secular, Labour Wales in the twentieth.

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The volume is attractively produced, with a picture of a youthful Tom Ellis on the dust-jacket, but it contains only one photograph inside – a frontispiece of those present at a history seminar convened by the Oxford Union in 1884, among them again a young Tom Ellis. More illustrations and cartoons would have added to the appeal of an attractive tome. Some of the many sources cited in the footnotes do not appear in the bibliography of sources used. One final grouse – the price. At £35, the volume, which runs to just over 200 pages, is on the expensive side.

One can but hope that the author will now feel able to make his highly important research work available to an English audience. It would be sure of a warm reception.

Dr J. Graham Jones is Senior Archivist and Head of the Welsh Political Archive at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

Learning the lessons of history: John Stuart Mill and politics today **(continued from page 17)**

along these outdated lines. On tax, Mill made a sharp distinction between earned wealth, acquired through individual effort and initiative, and unearned riches, acquired through inheritance. He advocated a single rate of income tax – an idea in vogue among some right-wingers today – but also argued for supertax on inheritance to prevent the passing down between generations of 'enormous fortunes which no one needs for any personal purpose but ostentation or improper power'.

In a mental universe of left and right, there is a danger that liberalism is seen occupying a neutral, soggy centre – the Switzerland of political argument. True liberals are neither tame nor safe: Mill was thrown in jail aged 17 for distributing literature on contraception; threatened with death over his prosecution of Governor Eyre, who slaughtered hundreds of Jamaicans; and introduced the first bill to give women the vote, for which he was vilified in the press. 'Why is Mr Mill like a tongue?' joked *Punch*. 'Because he is the Ladies' Member.'

Liberalism suffered during the 20th century. During the titanic struggle between capitalism and state socialism, it seemed to have little to say. Now liberal democracy has 'won', the thoughtful efforts of the liberals of the 19th century are ripe for re-harvesting. The need to provide a more secure political and intellectual footing for our liberties is urgent. Familiarity with freedom has bred if not contempt, then perhaps complacency. Liberal society is a historic achievement, but it does not stand up on its own: each and every one of us has to make it anew. 'The worth of a State, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it,' warned Mill. 'With small men no great thing can really be accomplished.'

Richard Reeves is the author of John Stuart Mill: Victorian Firebrand, *published in November 2007.* *See page 2 for reader offer.*

This article originally appeared in The Guardian *of 17 November 2007, and is reprinted here with the kind permission of* The Guardian.

Contributions to the 'Learning the Lessons of History' series are invited. They should be thought-provoking and polemical, between 1500 and 2500 words in length.

A Liberal Democrat History Group evening meeting

LIBERALS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN LONDON

Winning local elections has been a keystone in Liberal (Democrat) success in the years since the adoption of the community politics strategy at the Eastbourne Assembly in 1970. There have been many spectacular advances across London, from the heartland of the south-western boroughs to Southwark, Islington and, more recently, breakthroughs on Camden and Brent to share power. But there are still black holes – ten London boroughs with no Lib Dem representation; and places like Harrow and Tower Hamlets where the party controlled the council, only to see a near wipe-out follow.

In a meeting supported by the Lib Dem group on London Councils, the History Group will look at the performance of Liberals in local government in London since the 1970s.

Speakers: **Cllr Sir David Williams**, former leader of Richmond Council; and Lib Dem member of the Greater London Assembly, **Mike Tuffrey AM**. Chair: **Cllr Stephen Knight**.

7.00pm, Monday 4 February 2008 (after the History Group AGM at 6.30pm)
Lady Violet Room, National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, London SW1

A Liberal Democrat History Group fringe meeting

SALAD DAYS: MERGER TWENTY YEARS ON

Twenty years ago a new political party was born from the merger of the Liberal and Social Democratic parties – the Social & Liberal Democrats (or 'Salads', as the party was disparagingly nicknamed by its opponents). This meeting will explore the political background to the merger and the byzantine process of negotiation through which it which it came about. Did it really deserve the description of 'merger most foul'?

Speakers: **Lord Clement-Jones**, member of the Liberal merger negotiating team; **Lord Goodhart**, member of the SDP merger negotiating team; and **Professor David Dutton**, Liverpool University.

8.00pm, Friday 7 March 2008
Princes 2 Suite, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Liverpool