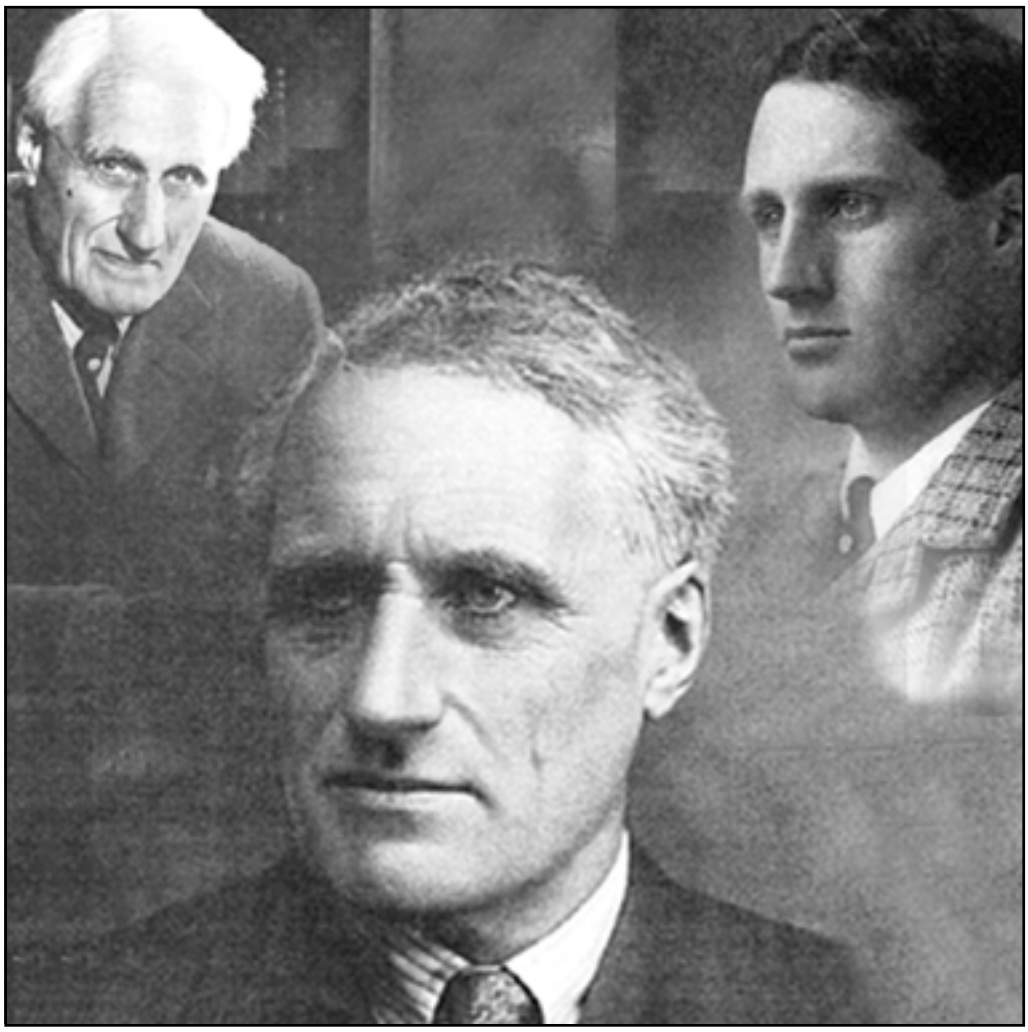
Journal of
Liberal Democrat HISTORY
Issue 31 / Summer 2001 / £3.00



Man of principle

Liberal Democrat History Group

Issue 31: Summer 2001

Liberal Democrat History Group

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Journal of Liberal Democrat History

The *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* is published quarterly by the Liberal Democrat History Group.

ISSN 1463-6557

Editor: **Duncan Brack**
Assistant Editor: **Alison Smith**
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Contributions to the *Journal* – letters, articles, and book reviews – are invited. The *Journal* is a refereed publication; all articles submitted will be reviewed. Contributions should be sent to:

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Cheques (payable to 'Liberal Democrat History Group') should be sent to:
Patrick Mitchell
6 Palfrey Place, London SW8 1PA;
email: subs@liberalhistory.org.uk

Cover design concept: **Lynne Featherstone**

Published by the Liberal Democrat History Group, c/o Flat 9, 6 Hopton Road, London SW16 2EQ

Printed by Kall-Kwik,
426 Chiswick High Road, London W4 5TF
June 2001

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Man of principle

C. P. Trevelyan is probably the only British politician of the twentieth century to have resigned from governments of two different political parties, each time on a matter of principle. This fact gives a clue to his nature, which was idealistic, unbending and outspoken often to the point of tactlessness. These characteristics inevitably limited his achievements in ministerial office, but he is notable as one of the Liberal politicians who, departing his erstwhile party as it began to fall apart in the 1920s, helped to give the rising Labour Party an ideological backbone it would otherwise have lacked.

Charles Philips Trevelyan was born in London on 28 October 1870, the descendant of an old West Country family. His grandfather, Charles Edward Trevelyan, had risen through the ranks of the Indian and home civil service to become a baronet, Assistant Secretary to the Treasury and Governor of Madras; he also inherited the Wallington estate in Northumberland from the main branch of the family. In 1835 Sir Charles married Hanna, sister of the historian Thomas Babington Macaulay, and had three children, of whom George Otto was the only son. In 1865, having already established himself in the world of literature, George entered the House of Commons as Liberal MP for, successively, Tynemouth, the Scottish Border Burghs and Glasgow Bridgeton. He served as Chief Secretary for Ireland from 1882–84 (after Lord Frederick Cavendish was assassinated in the Phoenix Park murders), as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster from 1884–85, and as Secretary for Scotland from 1885–86 and 1892–95. He might have risen even higher, but fell out with Gladstone over Irish home rule, fighting (and losing) his seat in 1886 as a Liberal Unionist – although he returned to the party, and the Commons, in 1887.

In 1869 Sir George married Caroline, daughter of Robert Needham Philips, Liberal MP for Bury. They had three children, Charles Philips being followed by Robert Calverley (born 1872) and George Macaulay (born 1876). Each of Charles' brothers was to enjoy a distinguished career, Robert as a poet and scholar, and George as a historian. Unsurprisingly for such a brilliant family, Charles carried, and felt he carried, a particular burden of expectation as the eldest son. He did not enjoy his father's and brothers' academic excellence, either at Harrow, where the headmaster of his preparatory school had informed his parents, to the dismay of his father, that 'you may depend on our not expecting too much of him',[1] or at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he read history. His own feelings of inadequacy, coupled with a lack of conversational ability and gaucheness stemming from a background in a household where, as his biographer described it, 'declamation was the more usual form of communication'[2] and politics the main topic, contributed to growing bouts of depression. In the end he was awarded a second-class degree, which he regarded as a failure; as he wrote to his mother, 'The very brightness of my prospects, as the world would say, is a curse on me! What can it lead to but the repetition of the same miserable story of inadequacy and inefficiency in the end?'[3] It was this highly developed sense of self-criticism, combined with an upper middle-class background that stressed a responsibility and duty to serve those less fortunate than himself, that nurtured Trevelyan's idealism, endless capacity for hard work, and tendency to intolerance.

Following his father and grandfather, Trevelyan had identified himself as a Liberal from his schooldays, and at Cambridge he became secretary to the University Liberal Club. He left Cambridge just in time for the 1892 election, and, his father's seat being a safe one, canvassed successfully for Charles Fenwick amongst the Northumbrian miners in Wansbeck. In October, at his parents' suggestion, Trevelyan became private secretary to Lord Houghton, the newly appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Under-employed and ill at ease among the aristocratic anti-home rulers in Dublin Castle, he took himself off whenever possible to meet the Irish people, and developed a deep-seated con-

tempt for the lack of official concern with the interests of the majority of the population.

Into parliament

On his return from Ireland in 1893, it was taken for granted by both Trevelyan and his father that he would seek to enter the Commons, and in 1894 he was selected to replace the retiring Radical Liberal MP for North Lambeth, F. M. Coldwells. He fought the 1895 election on a manifesto promising to 'serve the public' and to 'labour in the cause of progress' but succumbed to the swing to the Unionists, losing the seat to the Liberal Unionist Henry Stanley (the former explorer and finder of Livingstone). The experience, however, was a useful one, and in 1898 he was selected to fight the Elland division in the West Riding of Yorkshire, again when the sitting MP retired. Although the seat had been held for the Liberals at the four previous elections, the local organisation had nevertheless been allowed to decay; as Trevelyan remarked of Thomas Wayman, the sitting MP: 'They say he has one speech and one only, and even at election times he has been known to refuse to deliver the oration more than four times.'[4] Trevelyan put his father's money to good use, employing an experienced agent and speaking throughout the constituency. In the by-election in March 1899, when Wayman finally stood down, he boosted the Liberal majority to just under one thousand. At last even his father was satisfied with his performance.

In the years leading up to his entry to the Commons Trevelyan's political views had begun to crystallise. In North Lambeth he described himself as a Radical, but in reality he fitted the Fabian mould better, seeking progress by slow gradual steps. Like many others he was deeply influenced by John Ruskin's moral paternalism, put into effect through the ideal hero who strives to serve the poor, the weak and oppressed. His friendship with the Webbs, and subsequent involvement in the Fabian Society and the Rainbow Circle,[5] added precision and direction to Ruskin's rather vague and rhetorical romanticism. Along with other Fabian-inclined Liberals, notably Herbert Samuel, who became a firm friend, Trevelyan remained suspicious of socialism, which he saw as essentially destructive, and was convinced that the Liberal Party was the best vehicle for the realisation of working-class aspirations. He also regarded himself as an Imperialist, although the term had a different meaning then than its later connotations of an aggressive and expansionist foreign policy. Like many other Liberal Imperialists, Trevelyan rejected the Gladstonian approach of non-interference in foreign affairs along with its economic and social principles of *laissez-faire* and self-help; he believed a strong Empire was the best foundation for a stronger society and progressive social reform.

Trevelyan's interest in education also began during this formative period when in 1896 he was co-opted on to the London School Board. Although he remained a member only until 1897, he campaigned hard for the Progressives (a coalition of Liberals, Fabians and socialists who fought local elections in London for several decades) in that year's election, and gained valuable experience in public administration. He later played a major role in the debates on Balfour's Education Bill of 1902, stressing in particular the iniquities of the religious tests for teachers in national schools.

Trevelyan held Elland in the 1900 election with an increased majority. He regarded the Unionist government's actions in South Africa as justified, and had little sympathy with the Liberal 'pro-Boers'; his campaign 'smashed the government on their own khaki issue as well as driving home social reform'.[6] In the 1900–05 parliament, he initially aligned himself enthusiastically with the Liberal Imperialists, alienating Campbell-Bannerman and his supporters while displeasing Asquith, Haldane and colleagues by publicly criticising their part in the internecine squabbles into which the party fell in 1900–02.

As the battles over Balfour's education bill and Joseph Chamberlain's declaration of support for tariff reform began to fracture the Unionist government and reunite the Liberals, Trevelyan threw himself into campaigning throughout the country,

Trevelyan and family, c. 1910

coming to be more and more in demand as a speaker. He wrote to Campbell-Bannerman demanding more than simple opposition to the government: he wanted reform of education, taxation of land values, reform of Army administration, graduation of income tax and reform of the electoral system. Although the Liberal leader replied politely,[7] in private he agreed with John Spencer's estimation of Trevelyan as enthusiastic but possessing little sense of proportion. Trevelyan became a particular supporter of land value taxation, introducing bills on the subject in 1902 and 1904, and becoming a leading member of the Land Values Group of MPs. As at other times, the land taxers alienated other Liberals through their obsessive pursuit of their objective, and Trevelyan became increasingly frustrated at the Liberal leaders' propensity to declare support for the principle while declining to do anything about it in practice.

Trevelyan gained almost 70% of the vote in Elland in the 1906 landslide, writing a postcard in elation to his mother saying simply; 'There WAS a Tory party!'. But disappointment followed. Although his abilities were widely recognised, his principled refusal to promote himself combined with his previous outspokenness denied him any ministerial position. Eventually, in February he accepted the unpaid position of Third Charity Commissioner, and there he stayed, despite his

father's vigorous lobbying of senior ministers, for two-and-a-half years. Finally, in October 1908 he was appointed Under-Secretary at the Board of Education under his friend Walter Runciman, a position which he retained until he resigned in 1914. There he tried to put into practice the principles which had underlain his opposition to Balfour's education bill, arguing for secular and nondenominational teaching. Throughout its life, however, the Liberal government found it exceptionally difficult to make any progress on education; the mutually contradictory demands of Anglicans, Catholics and Nonconformists always overwhelmed the New Liberal arguments for educational reform and investment as an underpinning for social reform, and concrete achievements were very limited.

In many ways Trevelyan was not really cut out to be a politician, and his dissatisfaction with politics gradually mounted. He stuck very firmly to his principles, and had little time for those who adopted a less idealistic course. In 1906, for example, in complaining about political bias in the appointment of magistrates, he had provoked an ascerbic reply from Lord Chancellor Loreburn: 'really it is very good of you to inform me of the duties of a Liberal Minister and of your opinion of the way I discharge them…'[8] In 1912, he chose to make plain his opposition to the Government's prosecution of the agitator Tom Mann (for inciting soldiers to make common cause with striking miners) by circulating a critical memorandum to all cabinet ministers – not a move calculated to win him many friends.

He despised any personal weaknesses among his colleagues, describing the Liberal Chief Whip, the Master of Elibank, as 'a beastly gambler and intriguer'[9] over the Marconi shares scandal. Although he wholeheartedly supported the Government's assault on the Lords in 1909–11 – and held his seat comfortably, though with reduced majorities, in the two elections of 1910 – he was distressed at the failure to legislate on land value taxation and at the lack of co-operation between the Liberal and Labour parties. In 1914, on their tenth wedding anniversary (he had married Mary Katherine Bell, youngest daughter of Sir Hugh Bell, in 1904), he wrote to his wife, declaring that: 'My chief work and happiness lies at home… I now see the supreme and over-powering importance of the personal side of life. The world will in the main go the way it chooses without asking me.'[10]

Resignation

On 3 August 1914, the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, announced to the Commons that Britain would present an ultimatum to Germany demanding withdrawal from Belgium, which had been invaded the day before. It was obvious that this would lead to war with Germany, and later that day Trevelyan wrote to Asquith resigning his post in the Government. This was the culmination of his growing unhappiness with Grey's conduct of foreign policy by secret treaty. He was not a pacifist, and had supported the expansion of naval capacity which the 1909 'People's Budget' was partly designed to finance. However, like many Liberals he despised Grey's support of the Tsarist government in Russia and opposed all forms of autocratic rule – in 1906 he had written that 'I wish all the Kaisers would huddle together. We may then have the chance of seeing all their heads chopped off at one blow instead of just Nicholas the Last's.'[11] Furthermore, Trevelyan had trusted Grey when he had claimed that Britain was under no obligation to support France, and now felt betrayed; he suspected that Britain's covert alliance with France had goaded Germany into aggression. 'I never was clearer in all my life,' he wrote to his wife. 'We have gone to war from a sentimental attachment to the French and hatred of Germany.'[12]

Trevelyan's was a distinctly minority view; for the vast majority of Liberals, Britain's ultimatum to Germany was justified by its unprovoked attack upon Belgium, and only Burns and Morley joined him in resignation. Trevelyan soon became a leader of the small Liberal anti-war group, and in September, along with E. D. Morel, Arthur Ponsonby, Norman Angell and Ramsay MacDonald, helped to form the Union of Democratic Control. The principles of the UDC could be traced back to Cobden's classic Radical plea 'no foreign politics'. Its aims included no transfer of populations without a plebiscite; no treaties without Parliament's approval; no balance-of-power diplomacy, but an attempt to establish a 'European concert'; and a drastic reduction in armaments and nationalisation of the armaments industry. In practice the UDC achieved very little; its members were viciously attacked by the patriotic papers, its meetings were frequently broken up by supporters of the war, and its parliamentarians' speeches were ignored by the press. Trevelyan's attachment to it increasingly cost him his friends in the parliamentary party, in his local association (which deselected him in April 1915), and even in his own family, where his father and brother George (hitherto the closer of his two brothers) expressed antipathy to his views.

The result was to push Trevelyan, along with other Liberal opponents of the war, towards the Labour Party. This became particularly true after the resignation from the government in August 1917 of the Labour leader, Arthur Henderson, when Lloyd George refused to allow him to attend the Stockholm conference of socialists from all the belligerent powers, and the freedom this subsequently gave Labour to develop an independent war policy. The *Memorandum on War Aims* adopted by the party in December 1917 was virtually identical to UDC policies.

From Liberal to Labour

In February 1918 Trevelyan's letter 'Can Socialism and Radicalism Unite?' was published in *The Nation*. It contained the bold statement: 'Our lives have been spoilt by compromise, because we tolerated armaments firms and secret diplomacy and the rule of wealth… The root of all evil is economic privilege. The personal problem which faces many of us is that we cannot waste the rest of our lives in half-measures against it.'[13] Finally, in November 1918 he followed his younger brother Robert into the Independent Labour Party. He was

slow in coming to his decision, admitting that 'old political attachments are strong',[14] and found himself forced to stand as an independent in the general election of December, as a Labour candidate had already been selected in Elland. He was crushed, polling only 5% of the vote in a four-cornered fight.

After four years in the political wilderness, Trevelyan greatly enjoyed his new-found camaraderie in the ILP, and in September 1919 he was selected as candidate for Newcastle Central. Typically, and unlike many other Liberals in a similar position, he did not assume that in joining Labour he was bringing it superior leadership by virtue of his education and experience – although in practice the adherence of relatively senior Liberals such as Trevelyan, Ponsonby, Buxton and Wedgwood Benn certainly did boost Labour's credibility.

Trevelyan's belief, expressed in his book *From Liberalism to Labour* (1921) was simply that Liberalism had been abandoned during the war and the Liberal Party was now incapable of acting as a vehicle for reform. Building on the New Liberalism of the pre-war era, he proposed nationalisation of the land, railways and mines, a capital levy to remove the burden of war debt, free secondary education and free access to the universities. He saw the Labour Party as better able than the Liberals ever had been to 'reorganise economic society… That is why all social reformers are all bound to gravitate, as I have done, to Labour.'[15] But otherwise his political beliefs had no need to change: 'Faith in Democracy, belief in Free Trade, love of personal freedom, respect for personal liberties, are all part of the Labour creed. The Labour Party is, indeed, the safest custodian of these cherished Liberal principles.'[16] Rather more controversial was his notorious sympathy for Soviet Russia, where his uncritical enthusiasm for the epic struggle of the Russian people to throw off the yoke of Tsarism completely blinded him to any faults in the Soviet system.

Triumph…

In the election of November 1922, Trevelyan's local Labour party was well organised, and he himself helped attract former Liberals. He won Newcastle Central by almost 5,000 votes. He was elated: 'It was a glorious win smashing both Toryism and Liberalism. On the Tyne, Liberalism is dead… A new power has arisen. You should have seen the drive of the new force. Twenty-two men canvassing every night for a fortnight. I never saw anything like it in Elland.'[17] The election of December 1923 was a tougher fight, as the Liberals did not contest the seat and most of their remaining votes went to the Conservatives; still, Trevelyan held on by 1,200. He had been appointed Labour's spokesman on education in the 1922–23 Parliament, and, when Ramsay Macdonald formed Labour's first government in January 1924, Trevelyan entered the Cabinet as President of the Board of Education. 'I no longer have only six children,' he said to his wife. 'I have six million.'[18]

This was the post he had wanted above all others, and he set out to create a system which would afford every child, whatever their background, access to a decent education and a career in life. His first act was to revoke Circular 1190, which had been issued by his predecessor to restrict expenditure by local education authorities. His ten months in office also saw the relaxation of conditions for the payment of state grants, the restoration of state scholarships, an increase in the proportion of free places at secondary schools, higher maintenance allowances for secondary school pupils, a tripling of the adult education grant, and the encouragement of local education authorities to raise the school leaving age to fifteen (though very few of them did so). His enthusiasm for public expenditure – in which he was joined by Wheatley, the Health Minister, and Jowett, the Minister of Works – alarmed Philip Snowden, Chancellor of the Exchequer, who, along with Ramsay MacDonald was determined above all to demonstrate that Labour could govern responsibly, but Trevelyan, already experienced in central government, was one of Labour's undoubted successes. As the novelist H. G. Wells put it, 'I think your work for education has been of outstanding value… I am convinced that there has never been a better, more far-sighted, harder working, and more unselfishly devoted Minister of Education than yourself.'[19]

MacDonald's Government fell in October 1924, and although the following election saw the Conservatives returned to office, it also achieved MacDonald's objective of forcing the Liberals emphatically into minor third-party status. Trevelyan's majority in Newcastle Central slipped a little, but he held the seat by just under 900 votes. He enjoyed the next four-and-a-half years of opposition. His appointment to the Cabinet seemed finally to have dispelled his own feelings of inadequacy, and it had also reconciled him to his father, ending the breach that had begun ten years before over his opposition to the war. He kept his front-bench position as spokesman for education, and developed huge popularity within the Labour Party. He helped to commit the party to raising the school leaving age to fifteen, arguing that it would help to reduce unemployment by cutting the number of entrants to the labour market.

… and disaster

In the election of 1929 Trevelyan increased his majority substantially, holding Newcastle Central by over 5,000 votes. Once again he was appointed President of the Board of Education, but his second period in the post was far less successful than his first. MacDonald, once again, used his lack of a parliamentary majority to avoid committing his government to any radical or socialist policy, including raising the school leaving age, despite the fact that it had been a manifesto commitment. Trevelyan believed the main reason for MacDonald's antagonism was personal; the new Cabinet, lacking both Wheatley and Jowett, was even less progressive than its cautious predecessor, and Trevelyan was often isolated politically.

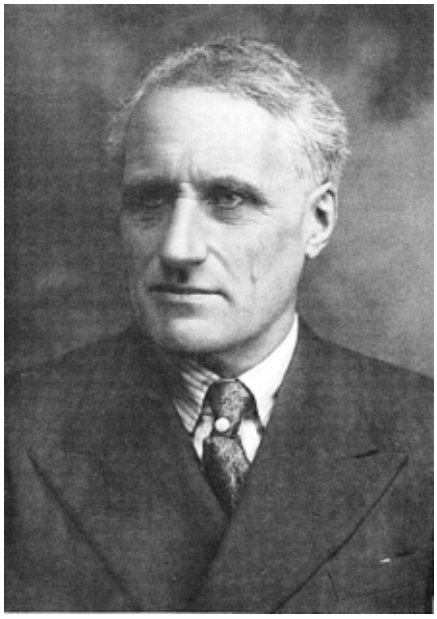
There were also legislative obstacles in the way of raising the school leaving age, and in seeking to remove these Trevelyan ran straight into the issue of denominational schools, a problem of British education politics for at least the previous sixty years, and one he had al-

ready experienced as a Liberal minister. The Act of 1902 made no financial provision for the expansion that would be needed to accommodate the extra school classes, and if it were to be amended to allow this it would immediately raise the question of whether additional support was also to be made available to the denominational, or 'non-provided', schools. Trevelyan's compromise was to propose the payment, for three years, of grants to these schools to allow them to make the necessary alterations, in exchange for the school managers handing over much of their control over the teachers to the local authorities. Despite painstaking consultations, however, the proposal generated opposition from the Catholic Church (which wished to maintain its denominational veto over teaching appointments in Catholic schools), and also from many Nonconformists (who opposed the principle of any state support for denominational schools), and he dropped it.

By the summer of 1930 Trevelyan's position was becoming untenable. He had been forced to withdraw legislation twice, ostensibly because of timetabling difficulties, but mainly – he suspected – because of MacDonald's opposition. 'He detests me,' wrote Trevelyan to his wife, 'because I am always quite definite and won't shirk things in the approved style… He will let me down if he possibly can… the real wrecker is the PM with his timidity.'[20] Finally, in October 1930 he introduced a third Education Bill. It raised the school leaving age to fifteen and included limited grants for low-income households to cover the year's lost earnings; it made no provision for church schools. The Catholic group of Labour MPs moved an amendment to provide state support for the 'non-provideds'; Trevelyan's attempt to mediate between the Catholic church and the Nonconformists failed, and the amendment was passed with Conservative support. MacDonald consistently failed to intervene. What was left of the bill was rejected by the Lords on 18 February 1931 in the light of the growing economic crisis,[21] and the next day Trevelyan resigned from a ministerial post for the second time. 'For some time I have realised that I am very much out of sympathy with the general method of Government policy,' Trevelyan wrote to the Prime Minister. 'In the present disastrous conditions of trade it seems to me that the crisis requires big Socialist measures… We ought to be demonstrating to the country the alternatives to economy and protection. Our value as a Government today should be to make people realise that Socialism is that alternative.'[22]

Typically, Trevelyan made his disagreements with MacDonald plain within the parliamentary party, and was met mainly by resentment at his public attacks on the leader, a position not helped by the growing tensions between the ILP (of which Trevelyan was still a member) and the rest of the Labour Party. All this became academic, however, as in the election that followed the formation of the National Government in August 1931, Labour's biggest electoral defeat in its history swept Trevelyan out of parliament along with the vast majority of his colleagues. Trevelyan lost Newcastle Central to a Conservative supporter of the Government by almost 8,000 votes. He had not expected such a defeat; 'I know for the first time,' wrote his wife, 'what it meant to be "stunned by a blow".'[23] His friend Josiah Wedgwood, who had held on as an independent MP, wrote also: 'Shall we never look upon your like again? These fools make me sick and I can imagine how they make you feel. If you were there with us, what fun it all would be; holding the bridge with Horatius, defying them 10 to 1. Without you there is no zest left.'[24]

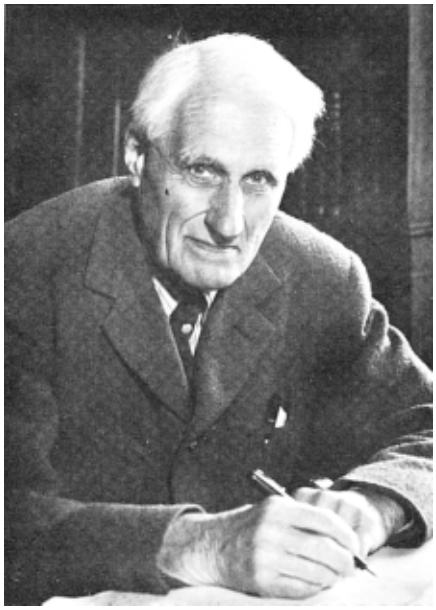
The 1931 election ended Trevelyan's involvement in parliamentary politics. He continued to attend Labour Party conferences and was a member of the National Executive until 1934. In 1932, after Labour's severance of its ties with the ILP, he joined the Socialist League, a small but vigorous intellectual elite, including G. D. H. Cole, Sir Stafford Cripps, Harold Laski and R. H. Tawney. In 1933, he introduced a successful resolution to commit the party to call a general strike in case of the threat of war – though after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, he demanded active support by Britain for the Spanish Republicans. But as the left-wing reaction against MacDonaldism petered out, Trevelyan increasingly became disillusioned. In 1934 he turned down the offer of the safe Labour seat of Morpeth. 'I won't go into politics again unless there are signs of a Rooseveltian energy in leadership and a Socialist policy in practice,' he wrote to his wife. 'No, I pine for home, not politics.'[25]



Trevelyan as President of the Board of Education, 1930

Needless to say, he led an active life at home. In 1930 he had been appointed Lord Lieutenant of Northumberland, and in this capacity reorganised the magistracy of the county, making it more representative of all sections of society. He was a prime mover in the founding of the People's Theatre in Newcastle and gave steady encouragement to the Youth Hostels Association in the north. In 1928 both his parents had died, and Trevelyan had become master of the family's estate at Wallington. He and his wife put substantial effort into restoring both estate and house, which had fallen into disrepair. The houses of their estate workers similarly benefited, and they provided all their employees with a week's paid holiday a year.

In 1929 they put the ILP policy of family allowances into practice and established a system of monthly allowances for every family on the estate for every child from birth until it left school or college, until such time as a similar system were to be set up at a national level – which did not happen un-



Trevelyan in retirement, 1950

til 1945, and then at a less generous level than the Trevelyans provided. The estate's grouse moors became some of the best in Northumberland, and while Trevelyan was himself a keen shot, in the public interest he made most of them over to the Forestry Commission. In 1941 he gave the whole estate to the National Trust, continuing to reside there as a tenant. He loved showing visitors round his house and the estate, and Wallington became a meeting point for young people interested in politics.

He died at Wallington on 24 January 1958, at the age of eighty-eight. With his wife Mary (or Molly, as she was commonly known), he had four daughters and three sons, the eldest of whom, George Lowthian (born 1906) succeeded to the baronetcy. His entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* was written by his cousin and friend, the left-wing Labour MP M. Philips Price; and there is one biography, which draws extensively on his correspondence but misses much of the political context: *C. P. Trevelyan 1870–1958: Portrait of a Radical,* by A. J. A. Morris. His papers are kept at Newcastle University Library.

'You know what you think you should do, and you do it'

Trevelyan was one of the important group of Liberals, including Haldane, Wedgwood, Buxton, Ponsonby, Addison, Jowett and Wedgwood Benn, who felt themselves driven out of the Liberal Party by its disastrous split in 1916, its subsequent division into two warring factions and its loss of radical zeal. In general they did not regard their move as involving any significant adjustment of their political beliefs; rather, they came to see the Labour Party simply as the more vibrant and reformist wing of the old pre-war Progressive Alliance. They helped mould Labour policy, adding a strong idealistic element to its existing labourist, trade union-focused beliefs, particularly over foreign policy issues, including free trade and control of armaments, civil liberties and even land value taxation. They helped give Labour the image of respectability and competence in government that Ramsay MacDonald so coveted, because of their backgrounds and their administrative competence. And without their radicalism, drive and enthusiasm, subsequent Liberal initiatives like the Liberal Summer Schools and Lloyd George's 'coloured books' were not enough to revive a declining party. They were central contributors to the realignment of the left in the 1920s.

And Trevelyan, in particular, acted as an inspiration to others. On his eightieth birthday in 1950, a friend wrote:

> In the first half of your career you made the very best of the luck of your birth, brought up in the surroundings of a distinguished family, educated in the height of fashion of the time, established as a promising politician, a junior minister for the party that had been your father's, married to a handsome and brilliant woman. That was the distinction of the first forty years; but the real courage and enterprise emerged in the second half… Your absolute conviction of the fault of the war policy in 1914 in the face of universal support… Anyone who knows you appreciates that you made your policy from your own reasoning and whatever the inconvenience and unpopularity you act unflinchingly and conscientiously to work out your own policy. You know what you think you should do, and you do it.[26]

This was Trevelyan's strength, and his weakness. It prevented him achieving what other, more flexible, politicians might have managed; but it also established him as a real inspiration for thousands of others. The experience of his journey from the Liberal Party into Labour were similar to those of many others who brought their political skills and efforts to the services of their new party; but his idealism was greater than most.

Duncan Brack is Editor of the Journal of Liberal Democrat History *and a former Director of Policy for the Liberal Democrats. This biography will appear, in a shorter form, in the* Dictionary of Labour Biography, *to be published by Politico's Publishing in September 2001.*

1 The Rev. C. G. Chittenden, of The Grange School, 31 August 1880; George Otto Trevelyan Mss (hereafter GOT) 133.
2 A. J. A. Morris, *C. P. Trevelyan 1870–1958: Portrait of a Radical* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1977), p. 10.
3 Trevelyan to his mother, 15 June 1892; GOT 45.
4 Trevelyan to his mother, 2 December 1897; GOT 50.
5 A discussion circle for 'Liberals of the Left and Socialists of the Right', the Rainbow Circle was formed in 1894 and met once a month, initially at the Rainbow Tavern in Fleet Street. Among others, it involved Graham Wallas, J. A. Hobson, and Ramsay MacDonald.
6 Trevelyan to his father, 10 October 1900; Charles Philips Trevelyan (hereafter CPT) Ex. Misc. Letters, 1890–1902.
7 Campbell-Bannerman to Trevelyan, 6 October 1903; CPT 5.
8 Loreburn to Trevelyan, 21 September 1906; CPT 6.
9 Trevelyan to his wife, 10 June 1913; CPT Ex. 105.
10 Morris, *C. P. Trevelyan 1870–1958*, p. 92.
11 Trevelyan to his wife, 23 July 1906; CPT Ex. 21.
12 Trevelyan to his wife, 4 August 1914; CPT Ex. 106
13 *The Nation* 2 February 1918, pp. 566–67.
14 Notes by Trevelyan for speech, 'Reasons for leaving Liber' (undated); CPT 79.
15 C. P. Trevelyan, Preface to H. Langshaw, *Socialism and the Historic function of Liberalism* (London, 1925), p. vii.
16 Ibid.
17 Trevelyan to his brother Robert, 20 November 1922; CPT 231.
18 Quoted in Mary, Lady Trevelyan, *The Number of My Days* (privately printed, 1963), p. 93.
19 H. G. Wells to Trevelyan, 21 October 1924; CPT 108.
20 Trevelyan to his wife, 16 November 1930; CPT Ex. 124.
21 The school leaving age was not raised to fifteen until Butler's Education Act of 1944.
22 Trevelyan to Ramsay MacDonald, 19 February 1931; CPT Ex. 125.
23 Mary, Lady Trevelyan, *The Number of My Days,* p. 130.
24 Wedgwood to Trevelyan, 29 October 1931; CPT 98.
25 Trevelyan to his wife, 30 September 1934; CPT Ex. 128.
26 Claude Bichnell to Trevelyan, 27 October 1950; CPT Misc. Letters 1950.

Tony Little provides a foretaste of the Liberal Democrat History Group's next publication, *Great Liberal Speeches*, by introducing a speech by John Bright on 20 May 1858

Plus Ça Change

The politics of faction in the 1850s

In May 1858, Cardwell tabled a motion of censure to force Lord Derby's minority Conservative administration out of office. The pretext chosen was a proclamation issued by Lord Canning, Governor General of India, in the aftermath of the Indian Mutiny and condemned by Lord Ellenborough, President of the Board of Control, in a despatch from London. The condemnation was leaked to the Liberals and the press. Was this a manoeuvre by Disraeli as an excuse to publish the condemnation officially? The government had not been fully informed of Canning's intentions and their condemnation was unjust. However, the reason for their ignorance could be laid at the feet of Palmerston's retiring ministers. When this became clear and when it was known that a defeat for the government would result in a new general election after only a year, Liberal dissensions surfaced. Facing an overwhelming mutiny from the back-benches, Disraeli humiliated the Liberal leaders by forcing them publicly to request Cardwell to withdraw his motion. Derby's government survived for another year.

John Bright was a Radical MP, best known for his association with Richard Cobden in the campaign against the Corn Laws. He spoke out against the Crimean War and helped defeat Palmerston's government in 1857 over British gunboat diplomacy in China. He lost his Manchester seat in the ensuing general election but quickly returned to the house in a by-election in Birmingham. Thereafter he became a leading campaigner for a second Reform Act. Bright remained a Birmingham MP until his death in 1888, but broke with the Liberal Party in 1886 when he opposed Home Rule.

In May 1858, Bright did not wish Palmerston to return with a government as narrowly based as it had been in 1855–57. In Bright's eyes, Palmerston's aristocratic Whigs were almost as serious an obstacle to radical progress as the Tories. He devoted the bulk of his speech to India, but also exposed to public gaze the techniques being used by the leaders of the Liberal factions to generate sufficient support to eject Derby and Disraeli. He shows that Palmerston had little to learn from New Labour in the manipulation of the press.

Palmerston was a good man-manager, both in his attention to back-benchers in the corridors of Westminster and in the glittering parties at Cambridge House hosted with his wife. Lord John Russell was Palmerston's leading opponent within the Whigs and the two had long-standing quarrels. Bright was wrong to assert that they were reconciled, or shared a 'loving cup', and Russell was only dissuaded from publicly denouncing Bright when friends pointed out the further damage it would do.

The colour of faction

'I think it is but fair, just, and generous that Members on this side of the House, at least, should take no course which wears the colour of faction, for the purpose of throwing the present Government out of office. Whenever I join in a vote to put Gentlemen Opposite out of office, it shall be for something that the country will clearly understand – something that shall offer a chance of good to some portion of the British empire – something that shall offer a chance of advancing distinctly the great principles for which we – if we are a party at all on this side of the House – profess to care.

But there is another reason. Not only is it feared that hon. Gentlemen opposite will get firm in their seats, but it is also feared that some hon. Gentlemen near me will get less firm in their alliance with the right hon. Gentlemen on this side. I have heard of mutinous meetings and discussions, and of language of the most unpardonable character uttered, as Gentlemen now say, in the heat of debate. But there was something more going on, which was traced to a meeting of independent Members recently held in Committee-room No. 11; and if a stop were not put to it, the powerful ranks on these benches might be

broken up, which, if united, it was believed, would storm the Treasury benches and replace the late Government in office.

A desperate effort should be made

I believe it was intended that a desperate effort should be made to change the state of things here before Whitsuntide. That was a resolution which had been come to long before any one knew anything about Lord Ellenborough's despatch. And the present seems to be a convenient opportunity, inasmuch as it has this in its favour, that it appears to be defending an absent servant of the Crown; that it appears to be teaching a lesson to the Government who have acted injudiciously in publishing a despatch; altogether it has that about it which makes it an excellent pretext on which hon. Gentlemen may ride into office.

Now, I do not speak to Whigs in office or to those Gentlemen who have been in office and expect to be in office again; but I should like to say what I believe to be true to those Gentlemen who call themselves independent Members, who come here with no personal object to serve, not seeking place, patronage, or favour, but with an honest desire, as far as they are able, to serve their country as Members of the House of Commons. If this Resolution be carried, it is supposed that the old Government, or something very like it, will come back again. Now, there was great discontent with that old Government before it went out; yet no pledge whatever has been given that its conduct will be better or different; no new measures have been promised, no new policy has been avowed, no new men, that I have seen, have been held forth to the public very distinctly as likely to take high office in the State.

The glittering bauble

There have been some things which I should think Members of this House must have felt pain at witnessing. There are newspapers in the interest of this ex-Treasury bench which have, in the most unblushing manner, published articles emanating from the pen of somebody who knew exactly what was wanted to be done. In the case of a gentleman, for example, who was engaged in Committee-room No. 11 – a gentleman whom I need not mention because the House knows all the circumstances of this case, but a gentleman who took a most prominent part in the proceedings in that Committee-room – and no one is probably more indignant at what has been done than himself – those newspapers have positively fixed upon and designated him for a certain office, if the present Government go out and another comes in; another gentleman who seconded a Resolution on that occasion is also held up for an office; but they do not state exactly what his precise position is to be; and the glittering bauble of some place in the incoming Government is hung up before many hon. Gentlemen who sit around me. It is not said, 'It is for you,' and 'It is for you;' but it is hung up dangling before them all, and every man is expected to covet that glittering bauble.

Beautifully engraved cards

But this is not all. These are not the only arts which are employed. Members of this House sitting below the gangway, who have been here for years – Gentlemen of the most independent character – receive flattering and beautifully engraved cards to great parties at splendid mansions; and not later than Friday last, of all times, those invitations were scattered, if not with a more liberal, no doubt with a much more discriminating hand than they ever were before. [An hon. Member: 'Absurd!'] Of course it is very absurd; there is no doubt about that, and that is precisely why I am explaining it to the House. Why, Sir, if those cards of invitation contained a note with them, giving the exact history of what was really meant, it would say to hon. Gentlemen, 'Sir, we have measured your head, and we have gauged your soul, and we know or believe' – for I believe they do not know – 'we believe that your principles which you came into Parliament to support –

John Bright MP

your character in the House – your self-respect will go for nothing if you have a miserable temptation like this held up before you.' Sir, if we could see them taking a course which is said to be taken by the celebrated horse-tamer, who appeals, as I am told, to the nobler and more intelligent instincts of the animal which he tames, then I should not com- plain. But they appeal to instincts which every honourable mind repudiates, and to aspirations which no hon. Gentleman on this side of the House can for a moment admit.

A loving cup

Well then, if they succeed, what sort of a Government shall we have? I am as anxious for a Liberal Government as any man in this House, but I cannot believe that, in the present position of things on this side of the House, a Liberal and solid Government can be formed. We are told, and the whole country has been in a state of expectation and wonder upon it, that two eminent statesmen have actually dined together; and I am very glad to hear that men engaged in the strife of politics can dine together without personal hostility. I say nothing of the viands that were eaten. I say nothing of the beverage that was in the 'loving cup' that went round. One of our oldest and greatest poets has told us that –

> 'Nepenthe is a drink of soverayne grace'

He says that it was devised by the gods to subdue contention, and subject the passions; but that it was given only to

the aged and the wise, who were prepared by it to take their places with ancient heroes in a higher sphere. But that could not have been the contents of the 'loving cup' in this instance, for these aged statesmen are still determined to cling to this world, and to mix, as heretofore, with all the vigour and the fire of youth in the turmoil and contention of public life.

The worst of all coalitions

But does the fact of this dinner point to reconciliation, and to a firm and liberal administration? I believe that any such Government would be the worst of all coalitions. I believe that it would be built upon insincerity, and I suspect it would be of no advantage to the country. Therefore I am not anxious to see such a Government attempted. I ask the House, then, are they prepared to overthrow the existing Government on the question which the right hon. Gentleman has brought before us – a question which he has put in such ambiguous terms? Are they willing in overthrowing that Government to avow the policy of this Proclamation for India? Are they willing to throw the country into all the turmoil of a general election – a general election at a moment when the people are but just slowly recovering from the effects of the most tremendous commercial panic that this country ever passed through? Are they willing to delay all legislation for India till next year, and all legislation on the subject of Parliamentary reform till the year after that? Are they willing, above all, to take the responsibility which will attach to them if they avow the policy contained in this Proclamation?'

Tony Little is Chair of the Liberal Democrat History Group, and a writer on nineteenth-century Liberalism.

Great Liberal Speeches, *which will contain over forty complete or edited speeches from Liberal politicians from Charles James Fox to Charles Kennedy – including John Bright – together with introductions, will be published by Politico's Publishing in September 2001 – see back page for further information.*

In this month…

What was happening in the Liberal world in the second three months of years gone by?

18 June 1941
Scottish Liberal Federation Executive Committee – A one-day conference would be held in September to urge the government to introduce home rule, electoral reform and land tax. A letter from the Scottish National Party urging a referendum on the question of home rule after the war was agreed with.

(Liberals were often criticised for ignoring key issues in favour of minority concerns such as electoral reform.)

27 April 1954
Extract of letter from H Graham White to Seebohm Rowntree – 'I am told that the Assembly at Buxton was a success as things go. But there was a lot of sentimental nonsense talked about co-ownership, and this mistaken idea we can irradicate (sic) quite soon I think. A new committee has been set up to deal with it and make an enquiry. It is astonishing how normal people can be swept away by emotion and lose any responsiblity on a particular subject. I am myself most anxious to see a review of the present situation in industry to bring the Liberal thought which inspired the Yellow Book up to date. I find few people realise the enormous changes which have taken place in the structure of industry in the last 15 years. What I feel is needed is something like the Acton Trust, if possible on a more popular basis.'

(The policy of industrial co-ownership was popular with rank-and-file Liberals who sometimes suspected that their enthusiasm was not shared by the Party's leadership. H. Graham White was President of the Party when this letter was written.)

14 May 1954
LPO Executive Committee – 1955 Assembly: Jo Grimond, backed by John Baker, called for an end to old-fashioned Assemblies and advocated a party rally in its place, without amendments and resolutions.

(The Liberal Assembly was a rather shambolic affair. This radical suggestion was not taken up but major reforms were made in the late '50s.)

2 April 1963
Inverness Liberal Association Executive Committee – Jeremy Thorpe told the meeting that financial support from the LPO would depend on certain targets being met. If the association had an income of £2000 in 1963/64, had 3000 members by April 1964, held an autumn publicity campaign and appointed a full-time agent and two part-time sub-agents the LPO would donate £250 with a futher £250 promised after three months. Further contributions would depend on progress thereafter.

(This is an example of the first coordinated targeting of resources into a winnable seat by the Liberal Party.)

21 May 1964
London Liberal Party Executive Committee – A motion was carried urging the LPO to concentrate on promoting propaganda not policy before the general election, especially building up the advantages of holding the balance of power.

(The 2001 election was the first for many years in which the Liberal Democrats' campaign was not dogged by questions about what the party would do in the event of a hung parliament.)

Terry McDonald recounts the experiences of one of the unsuccessful Liberal candidates of the nineteenth century.

A Political Man

The political aspirations of William Taylor Haly

That most political of nineteenth century novelists, Anthony Trollope, regarded a seat in Parliament as 'the highest object of ambition to every educated Englishman'.[1] His own attempt to enter Parliament, at Beverley in 1868, was described in his autobiography as 'the most wretched fortnight of my manhood' and confirmed his agent's prediction that 'You will spend £1,000 and lose the election'.[2] That Trollope went ahead with his campaign at Beverley is indicative of the lure of parliament for an ambitious man. Just how many men held this ambition is revealed in that 'bible' of nineteenth century elections, *McCalmont's Parliamentary Poll Book*.[3] Within its pages and index are the names of all the candidates, both successful and unsuccessful, who stood for Parliament between 1832 and 1910, and many of them were to see their ambitions frustrated on more than one occasion.

One such frustrated candidate is the subject of this article, a lawyer named William Taylor Haly whose attempts to become one of the members for the Dorset seaport borough of Poole in the late 1850s brought elements of excitement and acrimony into what had become a cosy pact between the town's two political parties or, more realistically, factions. Haly's experience is probably typical of many an unsuccessful parliamentary candidate but he does reveal the hold politics can exert over a man.

Poole was one of the boroughs whose electorate had been changed by the Reform Act of 1832. Before that date the right to vote had been limited to members of the town's Corporation, a self appointed and self perpetuating body of ninety-one resident and seventy-one non-resident 'burgesses'. The majority of these were merchants and their relations whose wealth and prosperity was based upon the lucrative Newfoundland trade (the town had long been major supplier of goods to, and importer of products from, that island). After the Act the electorate increased to 412 (reaching 547 by 1859) and was made up of shopkeepers, craftsmen, merchants and professional men. By tradition the Lords of the nearby Manor of Canford, who owned most of the land around Poole, had influenced the choice of the members and, as the Lords of the Manor were usually Liberals,[4] they naturally expected Poole to return men from that party. This was deeply resented by many people in Poole, for the majority of its leading citizens, especially the Newfoundland merchants, were staunch Tories. During the early 1850s a compromise had been reached whereby the town was represented by one member from each party and was dubbed a 'Whig-Tory Compact'. Thus there had been no contest at the general election of 1852, there being only two candidates. These were a Bristol merchant named George Woodroffe Franklyn for the town and the Tories, and Henry Danby Seymour, a relative of the Duke of Somerset, for Canford and the Liberals. This arrangement was expected to continue at the next general election in 1857, but the appearance of a third candidate, William Taylor Haly, brought a return to contested elections.

Haly had been born in Poole on 30 June 1818,[5] the first son of Richard Standish Haly, a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy, and Ann Gee Young, a member of an old Poole family. The Youngs had been among the first to enter the Newfoundland trade and were ship masters and merchants into the early nineteenth century. Richard Haly was not a Poole man but, probably through the influence of his in-laws, had become a member of the town's unreformed Corporation. Surviving poll-books record him as voting Liberal in Poole at the general election of 1826 and in the Dorset county by-election of 1831. His Liberal views clearly went further than just voting for the party's candidates. In 1821 he published a forty-three page pamphlet entitled *Impressment: an attempt to prove why it should and how it could be abolished*.[6]

During his early years William accompanied his father to the West Indies and subsequently made an extended tour of the United States.[7] Precisely when the Halys left Poole is uncertain but it would appear to have been in the early 1830s, for Rich-

ard's name appears among the Burgesses (members of the Corporation) of 1830 and (as mentioned above) in the County poll-book for 1831. He does not appear in any of the three poll books published in Poole after the election and subsequent by-election of 1835. The Admissions Register of the Middle Temple, where William was admitted in April 1846, has Richard Haly as being 'late of the Parish of Clarendon in the Island of Jamaica'. [8]

Before studying law William Haly 'devoted himself to literary pursuits' [9] and in the early 1840s was connected with *The Times* and the *Daily News.* The *Glasgow Citizen* of 10 April 1852 states that he 'commenced life as a Parliamentary reporter for the daily press'. He also published three books during this period, two of them being concerned with contemporary politics. One, in 1843, was *The Opinions of Sir Robert Peel, expressed in Parliament and in Public* which *The Times* described in its review as '…a perfect encyclopaedia of political knowledge'. [10] The second, also in 1843, was an esoteric work called *A Report on the Proceedings at the Bread Street Ward Scrutiny AD 1843, with a Digest of Decisions Exemplifying their Bearing upon the Act II Geo. I Cap. 18.* His third book was entitled *Education: Showing What is done; What is not done; What we can do; What we must do: to Educate the People*, a title reminiscent of his father's *Impressment…* of twenty-six years earlier. William's book was a ninety-five page analysis of how the state must involve itself in radically extending primary education although, rather paradoxically, he maintained that compulsory education was repugnant to English feeling. It was addressed to Sir George Grey, Bart., MP, Secretary of State for the Home Department and Haly was described on the frontispiece as being 'of the Middle Temple, Secretary to the Southwark Fund for Schools, etc'.

Haly studied law at the Middle Temple from 1846 and was called to the Bar in May 1849. His subsequent legal career was at the Parliamentary Bar and he acted on behalf of the Corporation of the City of London on several occasions. [11] He was thus already a political man and it was perhaps inevitable that he should set his sights on membership of the House of Commons.

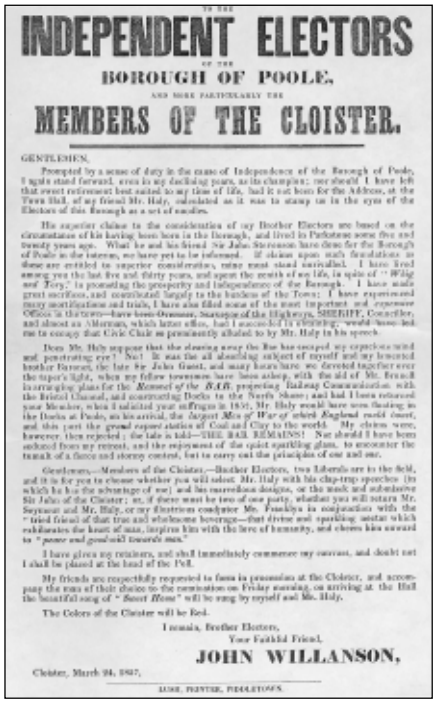
His active involvement in Parliamentary politics began during the general election of 1852 when he contested the Scottish borough of Paisley, carrying with him letters of praise and recommendation from five leading Radical-Liberal MPs, one of whom was Richard Cobden. Another, from Viscount Duncan, acknowledged Haly's support in his campaign to have the Window Tax repealed and described him as 'an indefatigable and zealous advocate of Reform and Retrenchment'. [12] His address to the electors of Paisley clearly stated his views which included a large extension to the Suffrage, Triennial Parliaments, the Ballot, Free Trade and opposition to 'every State Endowment for ecclesiastical purposes'. [13] Haly was clearly a Liberal, but so too was his opponent at this election, Archibald Hastie, who had held the seat since 1836.

Newspaper accounts of this election include comment on Haly with the *Glasgow Citizen* saying that 'as a public speaker, Mr Haly, although much superior to Mr Hastie, does not seem to rank very high.' It went on to note that 'He seems to be an intelligent man, well acquainted with business, and might probably be a useful working member; but the oratory of the House of Commons must be no great thing if his would command attention.' Other newspapers, however, such as the *Renfrewshire Independent*, describe his style as inciting great laughter and applause. Accounts of his speeches in Poole, a few years later, confirm his ability to entertain an audience.

Haly was unsuccessful in Paisley, Hastie polling 406 votes to his 374, but his active involvement in politics continued throughout the 1850s, particularly through his association with Richard Cobden. A letter from Cobden to the Leicester MP Joshua Walmesley in 1852 informed him that 'the League, having a little money left, is employing Haly to collect together some of the facts concerned with intimidation, bribery etc of the late election'. [14] He was again mentioned in a letter from Cobden for, when writing in September 1852 regarding the formation of local societies in favour of the ballot, he said 'I urged upon some men in the Reform Club, whom I met there (such as…Haly etc) to *work* in this matter.' [15] In 1856 Haly was, for a short time, editor of the *Morning Star*, a newspaper that had Cobden as its chief advisor. [16]

In 1857 William Haly came back to Poole after an absence of some twenty-five years. He had a detailed knowledge of Parliament and public life and presented himself as someone who would break the 'Whig-Tory Compact'. Naturally, the existing parties within the constituency did not welcome Haly's intervention. The Mayor initially refused to allow him the use of the Town Hall and a long, anonymous poster was published querying his political principles and concluding that he was an extreme radical. Haly described his views as being those of an 'advanced Liberal' but in both Poole and Paisley he had to defend himself against charges of radicalism. Although the poster that charged him with being a radical had no signature it had been printed by a firm whose partners were to vote for the sitting Liberal, Seymour, at this election and did so again in 1859. Six years later, at the election of 1865, they again voted for Seymour and a like-minded Liberal. This suggests that it was Poole's Liberals (and therefore the Manor of Canford) who most feared Haly's candidacy. Indeed, Haly seems to have made a point of fighting other Liberals, rather than the Tories.

His campaign began with a meeting at the Town Hall and, according to the *Poole Pilot*, he 'carried the whole town'. He concentrated on Poole's economic problems, the town's capabilities and its possibilities in the future, ignoring party politics. The following evening he invited the electors to meet him at the *London Tavern*. 'They came' said the *Poole Pilot* 'without distinction of party or sect'. [17] The next time he addressed the electorate was on nomination day, Friday 27 March. This was a rowdy affair, with a five-foot high barricade separating those who possessed the right to vote from the less privileged majority of the population. During a speech by one of the proposers of the Tory candidate, Franklyn, it was suggested that the electors also returned



TO THE

INDEPENDENT ELECTORS

OF THE

BOROUGH OF POOLE,

AND MORE PARTICULARLY THE

MEMBERS OF THE CLOISTER.

GENTLEMEN,

Prompted by a sense of duty in the cause of Independence of the Borough of Poole, I again stand forward, even in my declining years, as its champion; nor should I have left that sweet retirement best suited to my time of life, had it not been for the Address, at the Town Hall, of my friend Mr. Haly, calculated as it was to stamp me in the eyes of the Electors of this Borough as a set of noodles.

His superior claims to the consideration of my Brother Electors are based on the circumstance of his having been born in the Borough, and lived in Parliament some five and twenty years ago. What he and his friend Sir John Steuart have done for the Borough of Poole in the interim, we have yet to be informed. If claims upon such foundations as these are entitled to superior consideration, mine must stand unrivalled. I have lived among you the last five and thirty years, and spent the wealth of my life, in spite of "*Whig and Tory*," in promoting the prosperity and independence of the Borough. I have made great sacrifices, and contributed largely to the burdens of the Town; I have experienced many mortifications and trials, I have also filled some of the most important and expensive Offices in the town—have been Overseer, Surveyor of the Highways, SHERIFF, Councillor, and almost an Alderman, which highest office, had I succeeded in obtaining, would have led me to occupy that Civic Chair as prominently alluded to by Mr. Haly in his speech.

Does Mr. Haly suppose that the clouding away the Sun has escaped my capacious mind and penetrating eye? No! It was the all absorbing subject of myself and my honoured brother Servant, the late Sir John Guest, and many hours have we devoted together over the taper's light, when my fellow townsmen have been asleep, with the aid of Mr. Brunel in arranging plans for the *Removal of the BAR*, projecting Railway Communication with the Bristol Channel, and constructing Docks to the North Shore; and had I been returned your Member, when I solicited your suffrages in 1850, Mr. Haly would have seen floating in the Docks at Poole, on his arrival, the largest *Men of War* of which England could boast, and this part the grand export station of Coal and Clay to the world. My claims were, however, then rejected, the tide is told—THEE, HAS, REMAINS! Not should I have been anchored from my retreat, and the enjoyment of the quiet sparkling glass, to encounter the tumult of a fierce and stormy contest, but to carry out the principles of one and one.

Gentlemen,—Members of the Cloister,—Brother Electors, two Liberals are to the field, and it is for you to choose whether you will adopt Mr. Haly with his clap-trap speeches (in which he has the advantage of me) and his merciless designs, or the tried and unbroken Sir John of the Cloister; or, if there must be two of one party, whether you will return Mr. Seymour and Mr. Haly, or my illustrious coadjutor Mr. Franklyn in conjunction with the "tried friend of that true and wholesome beverage—fast driven and sparkling nectar which exhilarates the heart of man, inspires him with the love of humanity, and cheers him onward to "*peace and good-will towards men.*"

I have given my retainers, and shall immediately commence my canvass, and doubt not I shall be placed at the head of the Poll.

My friends are respectfully requested to form in procession at the Cloister, and accompany the vans of their choice to the nomination on Friday morning, on arriving at the Hall the beautiful song of "*Sweet Home*" will be sung by myself and Mr. Haly.

The Colors of the Cloister will be Red.

I remain, Brother Electors,

Your Faithful Friend,

JOHN WILLANSON.

Cloister, March 24, 1857.

LUKE, PRINTER, PUBLICATION.

Seymour, the sitting Liberal. This idea immediately led to cries of 'coalition!', an allegation that Seymour emphatically rejected during his own speech.

When Haly came to speak, he maintained that one member should be a Poole man, and in addition to stating his political views, promised (in a rather modern gesture) that, if elected, he would visit the borough during each recess and live in the neighbourhood for four months a year. This promise, however, was to no avail for at the following day's poll Seymour was placed first with 211 votes and Franklyn was also re-elected with 189 votes. Haly received 98. Seymour's triumph ended on a sour note for him for when he was returning from the Town Hall to his hotel after the declaration, he was set upon by a mob of youngsters. Fortunately he was rescued by several gentleman whom the *Poole Herald* described as his political opponents.

In December of that same year Haly saw a third chance to enter Parliament when Hastie, the victor at Paisley in 1852, died. Haly returned to Scotland for the by-election but it was again a wasted journey. His opponent, once again another Liberal, was H.E. Crum-Ewing and he received 767 votes to Haly's humiliating 98, coincidentally the same number that he had achieved in Poole the previous April.

In 1859 there was another general election, brought about by Lord Derby's minority Conservative Government's attempt to tackle the recurrent problem of further Parliamentary reform. In Poole the contest was to be a re-run of 1857 with Seymour, Franklyn and Haly the only candidates to face the electorate at the polls.

All three candidates published election addresses during the first week of the campaign although Seymour's was actually produced by his brother as he was away on a visit to the United States. Franklyn's pamphlet stated simply and confidently that 'my political principles are well known to you – I therefore will not trouble you with a detail of them'[18] although he did go on to re-affirm his support for Derby's Government. Haly, on the other hand, dwelt at length on Poole's ills, its possible disenfranchisement, and his own local origins. He was also the most active of the candidates, holding meetings in the suburbs of Parkstone and Hamworthy as well as in the Town Hall. His continual emphasis on local matters at his meetings led to Seymour and Franklyn having to defend their Parliamentary records on matters concerning Poole. For Franklyn this was difficult as he was an infrequent attender and never spoke during his time in the House. Seymour, though, was an active member and held a minor government post between March 1855 and March 1858 as Joint Secretary to the Board of Control. His political career was cut short in 1868 by financial problems.

The nominations were once again an unruly affair with all the speakers having to contend with the cheering and heckling of the crowd, many of whom were not entitled to vote. Once again these un-enfranchised citizens were segregated from their more privileged fellows by being restricted to the back of the hall by barricades and special constables. One topic which provoked a great deal of interest was whether Poole would retain two Members of Parliament after any future reform act.[19] When the speeches were over a show of hands was taken and the Sheriff declared this to be in favour of Franklyn and Haly. Inevitably a poll was demanded and as the candidates left the hall, Seymour was jostled and his clothes damaged until the police and the special constables rescued him. Polling took place the following day and Haly and Franklyn were present but Seymour took the advice of his friends and stayed away.

When the poll was declared the result was Franklyn 208, Seymour 193 and Haly 143. Perhaps the most important point about these figures is that 69 of Haly's votes were from 'plumpers', people who supported only him, while a further 51 votes were from people who used their other vote for Franklyn. Only 22 people voted for Seymour and Haly despite them both being Liberals. Thus the division was clearly between the 'Poole' and 'Canford' parties and Haly was not part of the latter and only had partial support from the former. Thompson has pointed out that the Canford influence over Poole was 'something much more shadowy and delicate than secure proprietary ownership'[20] and there were certainly men living within the town (as against those living in its suburbs) who gave their allegiance to the Manor rather than the Tory dominated Corporation. That many of these were from the professional classes within the town suggests an empathy with their social betters at Canford.

Haly's final attempt to enter Parliament came six years later. In July 1865 the Poole electorate prepared themselves for what, although they did not know it, was to be the last occasion they would return two members to Parliament.[21]

Steps towards selecting the candidates had begun eighteen months earlier when the Canford backed Liberals decided to abandon the 'compact' and try to win both seats. Seymour was again a candidate and the choice for the second seat was Charles Waring, 'a partner in the firm of Waring Brothers of Westminster, contractors for public works'.[22] This firm was the contractor for the Dorset Central Railway Company whose directors included Henry Danby Seymour and Sir Ivor Guest of Canford. In March 1865 Waring, with Seymour's assistance, had obtained the necessary Parliamentary authority for an Act to set up a company to provide a much needed railway line between Poole and the new and rapidly growing

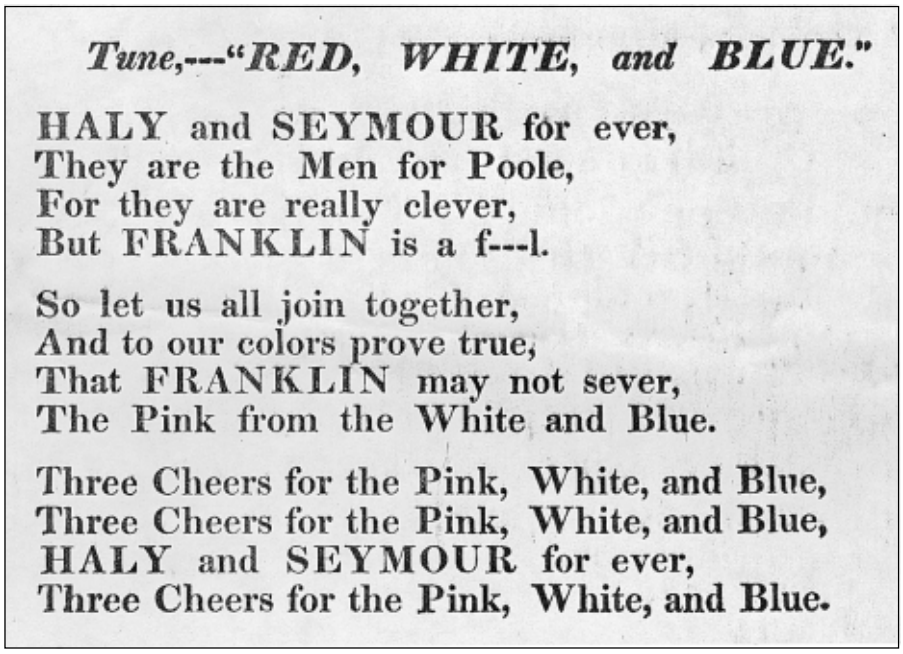
seaside resort of Bournemouth, a few miles to the east.

William Haly once again came forward as a candidate and on this occasion it seemed possible that he might have 'official' backing, albeit from those who should have been his political opponents. The Conservative member, Franklyn, had decided to retire after thirteen silent years in the Commons and Poole's Tories toyed with the idea of adopting Haly as the independent candidate for the town against the influence of the Canford Liberals. However, at a meeting called by the Tories at the *Antelope Hotel* three days before the nominations, a gentleman from Lincolnshire named Stephen Lewin and who had recently bought an iron foundry in the town, offered himself as a candidate and was accepted.

When the news of Lewin's adoption reached Haly 'he left the borough in disgust'.[23] The *Dorset County Chronicle* stated that a deputation from among Haly's supporters visited him in Bournemouth and asked him to fight the election 'in connexion with Mr Lewin'. Haly declined this offer and the *Chronicle*, after saying that this suggestion 'caused the Liberal party to tremble' and that it 'shook the foundations of all their hope', then concluded that the refusal was 'the wisest thing Mr Haly ever did for had he returned there would in all probability have been a riot on the day of nomination and polling'.[24] Perhaps Haly was simply a realist, knowing from bitter experience that he would again be fighting a hopeless battle and could not hope to overcome the Canford influenced suburban or 'outer district' vote. The wisdom of his decision to withdraw is shown by the eventual result, for when the poll was taken the two Liberals, Seymour and Waring, received 259 and 249 votes respectively whilst Lewin received only 178.

William Taylor Haly cannot be regarded, in the national context, as being even a minor historical figure. He was never important politically, just interesting as someone whose efforts to become an MP reveal something of the new breed of man entering public life at a time of great social and political change. Haly was, in some ways, a rather modern figure because of his opinions and his promise to be a 'full-time' member, even to the extent of offering to live in the constituency. The *Glasgow Citizen's* hunch that he would make a 'good working member' was probably an accurate one and, as the Liberal party evolved into a powerful provider of governments, he might well have become a junior minister.

After 1865 Haly ceased to be active in politics. Like Anthony Trollope, who admittedly made only one attempt, he had experienced the excitement and discomfort of fighting elections and presumably decided it was simply not worth the effort. A bachelor, he spent the rest of his life in London, but when he died there in 1874 at the age of 55, his body was brought back to Poole, the town in which he was born and spent much of his childhood, and whose politics he enlivened. He was buried in Poole cemetery where his tombstone still stands, a memorial which fails to reveal his role in the electoral history of the borough. In truth, though, his only enduring memorial is his inclusion in the pages of works of reference such as *McCalmont*. There his italicised name indicates not only his presence at election campaigns, but also the fact that he failed to win a seat.



Tune,---"RED, WHITE, and BLUE."

HALY and SEYMOUR for ever,
They are the Men for Poole,
For they are really clever,
But FRANKLIN is a f---l.

So let us all join together,
And to our colors prove true,
That FRANKLIN may not sever,
The Pink from the White and Blue.

Three Cheers for the Pink, White, and Blue,
Three Cheers for the Pink, White, and Blue,
HALY and SEYMOUR for ever,
Three Cheers for the Pink, White, and Blue.

Terry McDonald is a Senior Lecturer in history and politics at the Southampton Institute.

1 A. Trollope, *An Autobiography*, (Oxford, 1928), p.265
2 Ibid., pp. 272-4.
3 J. Vincent and M. Stenton (eds.), *McCalmont's Parliamentary Poll Book of all Elections, 1832-1918*, (Brighton, 1971).
4 The Manor had been bought in 1846 by the iron master and Liberal MP for Merthyr Tydfil, Sir Josiah John Guest from another Liberal (and former MP) the Hon. Charles Ponsonby.
5 His date of birth comes from a poster which Haly published on 30 June 1865, mentioning that it was the anniversary of his birth in Poole, and from his tombstone. He was not baptised until 27 December 1818. (Entry in parish register of St James, Poole.)
6 British Museum Catalogue, BM 8807 bb.37.
7 Obituary in *The Law Times*, February 1874.
8 It also has him as 'Captain' and 'deceased'.
9 Obituary in *The Law Times*, February 1874.
10 Cited in Haly's book on the Bread Street Scrutiny.
11 *Glasgow Citizen*, 10 April 1852.
12 The five letters were published in the Scottish newspapers in 1852 and in the *Poole Herald* in 1857.
13 Paisley Central Library collection.
14 Cited in H. Walmesley, *Life of Joshua Walmesley*, (London, 1879) p.268. The 'League' referred to was the Anti Corn Law League.
15 Ibid., p.277.
16 J.A. Hobson, *Richard Cobden – The International Man*, (London, 1918) p.141. The *Morning Star* was published between 17 March 1856 until 13 October 1869.
17 *The Poole Pilot*, 17 October 1868.
18 *Dorset County Chronicle*, 14 April 1859.
19 Reform, when it came in 1867, did indeed reduce Poole to one Member of Parliament. It ceased to be a Parliamentary constituency in 1885 but was re-created in 1950.
20 F.M.L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century*, (London, 1971), p.42.
21 Until 1997 when part of the town was joined with Mid-Dorset to create a new constituency.
22 F. Boase, *Modern English Biography, containing… memoirs of persons who have died since 1850*, 6 Vols., (Truro, 1892-1921.)
23 *The Poole Pilot*, 17 October 1868.
24 *Dorset County Chronicle*, 13 July 1865.

Reports

From Midlothian to Direct Mail: Parliamentary and political campaigning in the 19th and 20th centuries

Fringe meeting, March 2001 with Professor Michael Rush (Exeter University) and Graham (Lord) Tope

Report by **Neil Stockley**

The History Group's pre-general election campaign fringe meeting was about… general election campaigns.

Our first contributor, Professor Michael Rush of Exeter University, used the Great Reform Act of 1832, rather than Gladstone's Midlothian campaign, as his starting point. He described how the techniques of campaigning developed in line with major changes to the electoral system during the nineteenth century.

Immediately before the passage of the Great Reform Act, the House of Commons had 658 members, one fewer than today, and they were elected using the first-past-the-post system, just as MPs are now. The first major difference from the current day was that only half a million men were eligible to vote, a total that increased by around 800,000 in 1832. Until 1885, many constituencies were represented by two MPs; some, indeed, had three or four. The number of eligible voters in each varied considerably, from one (or even none) to 20,000. Ballots were open. As a result, election campaigns were entirely local affairs, typified by tawdry episodes of bribery and corruption.

As the franchise widened, to 2.4 million electors in 1868 and 5 million six years later, campaigns changed. Public meetings became more important for candidates and voters alike – and they were also more boisterous and unruly! The Great Reform Act introduced the registration of electors, which led to the establishment of local party organisations. The local parties assumed control of candidate selections and (whatever some members of the St Helens South Constituency Labour Party might say) still hold it today.

But Professor Rush did not try to draw a perfectly straight line from the election campaigns of the early nineteenth century to those of today. For example, while the advent of the secret ballot made corrupt practices more difficult, they did not stop them altogether. After all, the industrial revolution had created a new class of manufacturers who were keen to spend considerable sums of money on their favoured candidates.

Furthermore, over half the electorate did not have the opportunity to vote in all the general elections from 1832–68. At least a quarter of all seats were not contested until 1865; in one election, sixty per cent of constituencies were uncontested! As Professor Rush explained, there were powerful disincentives to standing for the House of Commons. Individual candidates, rather than their parties, paid the campaign expenses, as well as assisting their local organisations and paying subscriptions to local charities. All the candidates in a constituency shared the expense of running the election and maintaining the electoral register. They also faced the costs arising from any election petitions, of which there more than 1,000 between 1832 and 1885. According to one estimate, between 1867 and 1883, the average local expenses for a county candidate were around £50,000 per annum (in today's values) and, for a borough candidate, the figure was around £25,000. And successful candidates would have to pay their parliamentary expenses and their personal living expenses when in London.

The parties would sometimes make deals so as to avoid elections. For instance, in two-member constituencies, they would agree to contest one seat each. And in safe seats the deals were struck within the parties, with, for example, a more moderate Whigs balanced by a radical.

Still, Professor Rush showed how by the end of the nineteenth century, British politics had become 'nationalised'. National campaigns began with Gladstone's mass public meetings in 1865 and 1868, which culminated in his Midlothian campaigns of 1879 and 1880. Disraeli, Joseph Chamberlain and Lord Salisbury all addressed huge public rallies at various times in the latter part of the century. The Conservatives held the first national party conference in 1867. The modern party system can also be traced from around this time, when it was obvious that voters would choose candidates from two big national parties. By 1874, it was clear that those parties would be the Liberals and the Conservatives. The first national party manifesto, setting out a programme for government, was the Liberals' Newcastle Programme of 1891.

Professor Rush argued that from 1867 to around 1890, politics and elections were a 'spectator sport', with men attending political meetings, discussing politics and following events by reading national newspapers. With the exception of the 1885 election, when just six per cent of seats were not contested, he did not give figures for the number of seats fought during this period, but he implied that people were more likely to have the opportunity to vote. Political interest started to fall away

during the 1890s, partly because of the rise of organised sport. But the basis of modern politics – and campaigning – was now firmly established.

Lord (Graham) Tope, standing in at late notice for an unavoidably absent Bill Rodgers, told a personal story of late twentieth century campaigning. In December 1972, he won the Sutton & Cheam by-election for the Liberals. Lord Tope credited his upset victory to Sir Trevor Jones – 'Jones the vote' – who literally turned up on his doorstep one day, determined to prove that the campaigning techniques he had pioneered in Liverpool could work anywhere. The Jones style was, of course, founded on *Focus* leaflets that highlighted local issues and community concerns. 'They were done with Letraset, usually wonky, printed on the offset litho in Trevor's building in Liverpool [and] delivered by never more than twenty people, mostly from outside the constituency, who would deliver for eight, ten hours a day … that went on for month after month after month,' he recalled.

Lord Tope said that after Sutton & Cheam, the party used *Focus* everywhere, and was certain that this greatly assisted the Liberal revival of 1972–73. He also argued that it changed fundamentally the way the party fought elections, both local and national. In the longer term, he said, *Focus* campaigns helped to lift the Liberals' base level of support all over the country.

All of this seemed to be a total departure from Professor Rush's topic. Yet both contributions served to highlight basic tensions in the history of election campaigns. Professor Rush traced the development of national campaigns; Graham Tope recounted a breakthrough in local campaigning based on community concerns. Professor Rush explained how national parties had emerged; Graham Tope remembered being left to his own devices by the Liberal Party Organisation until two weeks before polling day, when a privately funded opinion poll showed that he might well win. Professor Rush suggested that a rich political culture evolved in the latter part of the nineteenth century; Graham Tope feared that *Focus* leaflets may now have 'dumbed down' Liberals' and Liberal Democrats' communication with the electorate, giving too little serious discussion of the party's philosophy and policies.

There was not enough time to show how Liberal and Liberal Democrat general election campaigns evolved since the 1970s. We have seen more effective and disciplined national efforts, more sophisticated polling and the advent of direct mail and, now, email campaigns. But in their very different ways Professor Rush and Lord Tope both demonstrated how candidates and parties will adapt their campaigning techniques to what they understand of the needs and demands of their electorates, the opportunities provided by new technologies and the limits of the law. In the end, what counts is what seems to work.

Letters to the Editor

John Meadowcroft

In their letters in reply to my article on community politics (*Journal* 28), Richard Ingham (Letters, *Journal* 30) and David Rebak (Letters, *Journal* 29) both make some interesting and valid points with regard to the contribution of different individuals to the development of community politics. I fear, however, that they have both missed the essential point of my article, which was not to assess the contribution of different individuals or groups of individuals to the development of community politics, but to ask how did the Liberal Party come to adopt the strategy of community politics in 1970?

The three reasons I propose remain, I believe, valid. First, the tradition of social liberalism that was very much alive in Liberal thinking at the time. Second, the electoral efficacy of local campaigning on local issues, as demonstrated by the party's growing presence in local government. Third, the role of the Young Liberal activists who, of course, wrote and proposed the amendment to party strategy and tactics passed at the 1970 assembly.

Finally, I feel compelled to also point out, in answer to one of Robert Ingham's specific points, that the fact that Liberals did not wish to 'politicise' local elections in areas where the party already had Parliamentary representation in the 1950s and '60s is probably illustrative of my argument rather than indicative of its weakness.

David Rebak

Without Michael Meadowcroft's encyclopaedic knowledge and always available help and encouragement, Liberal councillors in the 1960s would barely have been able to do our jobs at all. So it is with reluctance that I correct his letter in *Journal* 30 (spring 2001).

Frank Liberal Davis didn't join the Labour Party. He was elected as a Conservative. And the 'Grumble' sheet was invented by Frank's agent Mr Satin.

The radical end to which Michael refers was precisely what I, and quite a few others, had in mind when we encouraged groups of people to act together to obtain local reforms or improvements.

The following are good examples of how 'empowering the people' was encouraged by me and other Bushey Liberals:

The Aldenham Road
This road had a pavement only 2' 6" wide in places. When a mother took a toddler to school with a baby in a pram, either she or the toddler had to walk in the heavily trafficked road feeding into the M1. Bushey Liberals encouraged the formation of, and were involved in, a non party Aldenham Road Committee to draw up plans and pressure the UDC, the County Council and the Ministry to take remedial action. Eventually the Tory-led authorities caved in and agreed to the Committee's proposals.

King George Recreation Ground Children's Play Area
The Play Area was in a state of complete disrepair, the paddling pool full of broken glass and debris and the grass surround fouled by dogs. Two Liberal councillors encouraged residents to raise a petition. Hundreds of signatures were obtained by concerned parents who had no party affiliation. The petition was presented to the council by a Liberal councillor. The pressure from the petitioners eventually enabled the councillors to secure necessary improvements.

Malcolm Baines

I was delighted to see the biography of J. M. Hogge in issue 30 of the *Journal*. Hogge, like Vivian Phillipps and Donald Maclean, has been seen as one of the small band of Asquithians who tried to keep a separate Liberal identity following their titular leader's defeat in the 1918 election, and his career is well worth looking at more closely.

However, Ian Elder's overview of Hogge's career omits some of the tension there was between Hogge and the other Asquithian leaders, and underplays his role in promoting a reunion with Lloyd George's Coalition Liberals after the 1922 election. C. P. Scott, editor of the *Manchester Guardian* and a major Liberal figure of the time, refers in his diary to Hogge's low opinion of Asquith, his surreptitious meetings with Lloyd George and to his opinion that Liberal radicals would welcome Lloyd George back without any reservations providing he severed his Tory links.

He also refers to the derogatory view that many Asquithians had of Hogge – often linked to what were perceived as his rather loose morals. C. F. G. Masterman described him as a vulgar lowland Scot in the pay of Lloyd George, whilst Herbert Gladstone claimed that he was frequently drunk and had run off to Scotland with a House of Commons waitress. Many leading Asquithians spent the 1922 election campaign expecting the scandal to break in the newspapers.

Altogether, although exposure in the press was, I think, avoided, Hogge's political activities during the crucial immediate post-war years showed that despite his appointment as the Asquithians' joint chief whip he always remained something of both a social outsider and a political maverick.

Reviews

The party leader who never was

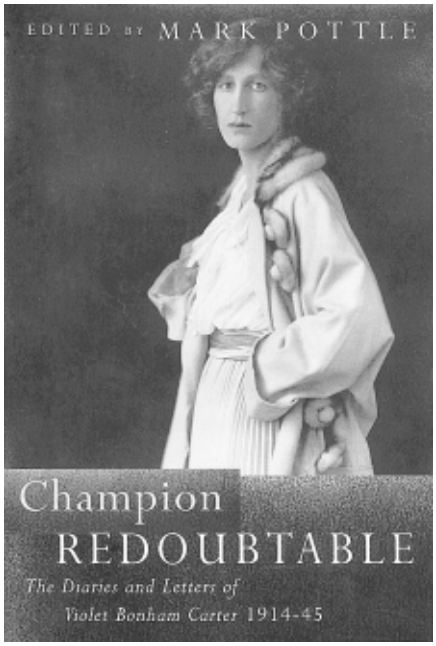
Mark Pottle (ed): *Champion Redoubtable: The Diaries and Letters of Violet Bonham Carter 1914–1945* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998; 418pp)

Reviewed by **Malcolm Baines**

Despite the existence of the Lady Violet Room at the National Liberal Club, Violet Bonham Carter – in common with most Liberal figures between Lloyd George and Jo Grimond – has not had the recognition of her contribution to twentieth-century Liberalism that she deserved.

The publication of the three volumes of her diaries and letters has begun to remedy this. All three volumes provide a fascinating insight into the character of a Liberal at the heart of both national life and the party from 1904 onwards. The first, *Lantern Slides*, covering the period to 1914, provides a portrait of upper-class life in the halcyon era of Edwardian England, while the last, *Daring to Hope* (reviewed opposite by David Dutton) is a moving account of how Violet Bonham Carter struggled to keep the Liberal flame alive in the post-war period.

This review is of the middle volume, *Champion Redoubtable,* which is concerned with the years from 1914 to 1945. The title comes from a quotation from Winston Churchill's *Great Contemporaries,* in which he describes Lady Violet as a champion redoubtable for her father, H. H. Asquith. The volume is not, however, focused primarily on Asquith, who died in 1928, less than half-way through its time-span, but rather on the two world wars. There is a little on Violet Bonham Carter's visits to Germany and Ireland in the aftermath of the First World War, and on her role in Asquith's election campaigns in Paisley. However, the 1920s as a whole receive only cursory coverage, and the 1930s an outline summary only. This makes the second volume the least satisfactory of the three because there is no coherent narrative, reflecting Mark Pottle's decision to focus on Lady Violet as a public rather than a private person. Consequently, he has ignored the bulk of the interwar period when she herself was preoccupied with her 'journal of motherhood'. This was the record that she kept of her children growing up, and its exclusion detracts from our understanding of her as a



person. Indeed, the reader finds this volume a little disjointed because there is no real sense of the progression from a young unmarried woman of twenty-seven in 1914 to a grandmother in 1938. This dysfunction is paralleled by a similarly sharp move from the governing Liberal Party of Asquith and Lloyd George at the opening of the volume to its divided remnants painfully reassembling themselves at the close to fight a post-war election.

However, *Champion Redoubtable* does give an insight into the byways of the Liberal Party's decline through the life of Violet Bonham Carter. In particular, there are some lively accounts of the Paisley campaigns of Asquith in the early 1920s, of the impact of the coalition with the Conservatives in 1915 on Asquith, and of Lady Violet's own campaign in Wells in 1945. Most interesting of all, perhaps, is the intriguing possibility of what might have happened had she entered the Commons in 1941, of which I was certainly not aware before reading this volume. In August that year Hugh Seeley became Lord Sherwood, leaving a vacancy at Berwick-on-Tweed. Violet Bonham Carter was clearly anxious to be selected in his stead. Under the conditions of the wartime truce either Labour or the Conservatives would not have opposed her. In retrospect, this was clearly her only realistic chance of entering the Commons. Given her forceful and campaigning character it is possible that she might have held the seat in 1945 when Beveridge lost it. One could even speculate that she would then have become leader in succession to Sinclair, as the hapless Clement Davies was no-one's first choice. The local Liberals' bias against women candidates which led to George Grey (subsequently killed in Normandy) being selected may have prevented the Liberals from being the first British political party to have had a woman leader.

More interesting, though, are the accounts of Violet Bonham Carter's life in the First and Second World Wars. The reader is made very aware of the constant stream of deaths of friends and acquaintances between 1914 and 1918 by Pottle's skilful editing, including his use of biographical footnotes linking individuals to their appearances in the social whirl of pre-war upper-class London in the first volume. Between 1939 and 1945 the accounts of the escape of Violet's son Mark from prison camp in Italy and his arrival in England, together with Lady Violet's roles as an air-raid warden and BBC Governor, make a lasting impression. It is these accounts that really bring the book to life, giving a deep insight into her character and confirming her place in the pantheon of Liberal heroes.

Overall, Mark Pottle is to be congratulated on the scholarship that has gone into his edition of the diaries and letters. Even though this volume is the weakest of the three, it deserves a place on the Liberal historian's bookshelf.

Malcolm Baines works in corporate tax for a large accountancy firm. His doctoral thesis at Oxford was on the survival of the British Liberal Party 1932–59.

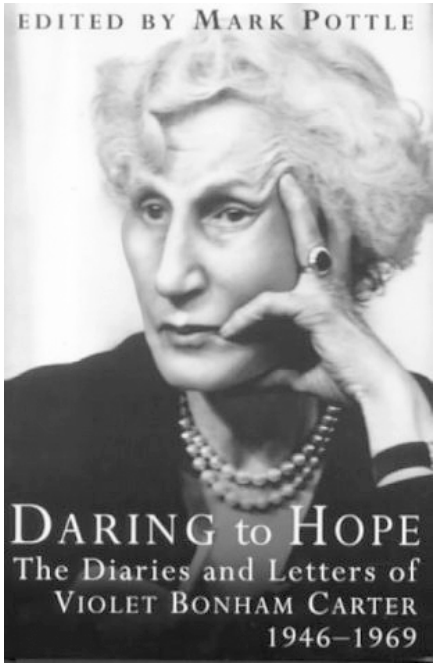
A life-long espousal of Liberal values

Mark Pottle (ed): *Daring to Hope: The Diaries and Letters of Violet Bonham Carter 1946 – 1969* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson 2000; 431pp)

Reviewed by **David Dutton**

Violet Bonham Carter's political career extended from the hey-day of Victorian Liberalism, when her father H.H. Asquith was Prime Minister, to the fag-end of Harold Wilson's Labour government in the 1960s. She made her first reported speech in 1909 at the age of twenty-two. When she died sixty years later she was still espousing Liberal values, protesting against the effects of British policy in the Nigerian civil war which, she argued, was contributing to mass starvation in the province of Biafra. With the volume *Daring to Hope,* Mark Pottle completes the huge enterprise that he began, in partnership with the late Mark Bonham Carter, of editing Lady Violet's voluminous diaries. The task has been expertly performed. This book, unusually for a published diary, is not just a book to dip into; it offers an often compelling continuous narrative. Pottle's editorial work is first-rate. I found only one footnote to which I felt exception could be taken – the suggestion that Anthony Eden made no recommendation to the Queen as to his successor when he resigned the premiership in 1957. In fact, with all the circumlocution to which his diplomatic training had conditioned him, he gave a firm – if fruitless – nudge in favour of R.A. Butler.

There are several recurring themes in this volume: Lady Violet's consistent support from the late 1940s onwards for the goal of European



unity and for British membership of whatever organisation emerged from this process – an aspiration that was still being thwarted at the time of her death by the apparently immovable presence of General de Gaulle; her deep and abiding friendship with Winston Churchill, from their common espousal of the European ideal through the sad years of his physical and mental decline; the fierce protection of her father's memory, even to the extent of trying to suppress Asquith's letters to his youthful female confidante Venetia Stanley; and her unshakeable commitment to traditional Liberal causes such as racial equality, including an unequivocal detestation of apartheid.

The volume also straddles a transitional period in the history of the Liberal Party. Lady Violet lived with the fear, and perhaps the expectation, that the party would disappear as a national political movement in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Yet she survived long enough to witness the first signs of revival, beginning, appropriately enough, with her son's victory in the Torrington by-election of 1958. But the fact that Mark Bonham Carter lost his seat at the general election eighteen months later, and that other supposed 'breakthroughs', such as Orpington in 1962, proved in fact to be false dawns ensured that Liberalism remained a relatively minor force in British politics at the time of her death. This situation meant that her own political career had to be pursued largely outside parliament. Her two attempts to enter the Commons in 1945 and 1951 were unsuccessful and she remained, as Colin Coote described her, 'the best politically equipped person who never sat in Parliament' until her belated elevation to the House of Lords in 1964.

The diary offers particularly interesting insights into her thinking on the future of the Liberal Party in the immediate post-war era. Violet Bonham Carter was somewhat equivocal about where Liberalism stood in relation to the other two parties. Her radical roots ought perhaps to have inclined her towards Labour, but the latter's lack of enthusiasm for Europe and her own affection and regard for Churchill certainly complicated matters. 'Until now' noted Harold Nicholson in October 1947, ' she had believed that the Liberal Party were closer to the Socialists than to any other party. Now she doubts it.'[1] By this date, as the diary reveals, she had become convinced that the Liberals could 'do no good at the next election and that our one chance of survival as a party in the immediate future would be a deal [with the Conservatives] over seats and P.R.' [p. 35]. Such thinking culminated in the unusual spectacle of Churchill, as leader of the Conservative opposition, speaking on Lady Violet's behalf at Colne Valley in the 1951 general election. At the 1950 election he had unsuccessfully offered her one of the Conservatives' election broadcasts.

As is well known, Churchill subsequently offered the Liberal leader Clement Davies a seat in his cabinet, even though the Conservatives had managed to secure a narrow overall majority in the new House of Commons. Lady Violet too, it seems, would have been offered ministerial preferment had she secured election to the Commons – and, unlike Davies, would have been inclined to accept. At this moment, perhaps, the historic Liberal Party came nearer than at any other time to disappearing from the political map. Lady Violet's hope, no doubt, was that liberalism could survive even if the Liberal Party could not. After all, 'the only purpose of politics (or so it seems to me) is the expression of one's own deepest convictions – and their translation into facts' [p.178]. She never had much regard for Davies' powers of political leadership. Only when he was succeeded by Jo Grimond did her faith in the continuing viability of the Liberal Party revive.

Like all good diaries this one contains some marvellously perceptive observations. An evening in the company of George Brown left Lady Violet with the conviction that she had 'never before – in the course of an unsheltered life, spent among all sorts and conditions of men – met anyone so completely un-house-trained' [p.140]. Lord Beaverbrook she found, despite his closeness to Churchill, 'the quintessence of evil' [p.287]. Prince Charles was '*so* different from his parents that one wonders where he has come from' [p.342]. And of Robert Boothby, it was 'odd that a man who always does the wrong thing in private life shld. be so invariably right on the political issues' [p.356]. One anecdote in particular sticks in the mind – that of Randolph Churchill, on the day that his father was constructing his last government in 1951, telephoning ministerial hopefuls and leaving a message to say that 'Mr Churchill rang you up'! [p.104].

Violet Bonham Carter once reflected that 'everything – or nearly everything – shld. be written down – because the sub-conscious memory keeps its secrets until they are demanded of it – and then yields them up as fresh as daisies' [p.239]. Her diary vindicates this sentiment. *Daring to Hope* will be read with much pleasure. But it also offers a rewarding insight into post-war British politics.

David Dutton is Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Liverpool and a Visiting Professor in the School of Arts and Science in the Bolton Institute. He is the author of biographies of Austen Chamberlain, John Simon and Anthony Eden.

1 N. Nicolson (ed.) *Harold Nicolson: Diaries and Letters 1945 – 62* (London, 1968) p.111

A Liberal partition

Thomas Hennessey: *Dividing Ireland: World War I and Partition* (Routledge, 1998; 280pp)

Reviewed by **Iain Sharpe**

In the summer of 1914, before the outbreak of the First World War, the Irish parliamentary party and their Liberal allies constituted a majority in Parliament, and stood at last on the verge of achieving their long-standing aim of bringing about Irish Home Rule. By the end of the war both parties had seen their political power and influence destroyed, and the Home Rule cause that united them discredited and superseded.

Thomas Hennessey's book describes the widening divisions within Ireland that undermined Home Rule and brought about the triumph of the separatist strand of Irish nationalism. In a sense the subtitle of the book serves to obscure rather than clarify its subject matter, since Hennessey primarily deals with the widening divisions between the Ulster Unionist and Irish Nationalist communities rather than with the process of partition itself.

On the outbreak of war, the Irish Nationalist leader, John Redmond, sought to demonstrate the loyalty of Ireland to the British Empire by making the nationalist Irish Volunteer force available for home defence. He hoped to win over both Irish and British unionists to acceptance of Home Rule. However, in committing Ireland to supporting the British cause, he alienated the more advanced nationalists, who felt no loyalty to their traditional, English, enemy. Redmond's gesture equally failed to placate the Ulster Unionists who were unhappy at the way the Home Rule bill was placed on the statute book (albeit suspended for the duration of the war) without any amending bill to make special provision for Ulster.

Redmond was asking Irish Nationalists to put on hold the nationalist view of Britain as the historic oppressor and instead to accept the justness of Britain's cause in the war. In 1914 this could be justified on the grounds that the British Parliament had legislated for Home Rule and that the Liberals, the traditional allies of the Irish parliamentary party, were in government. However, key events during the war pulled Liberals and Irish Nationalists in different directions, as each had different audiences to please. When the Liberals brought the Conservatives into government in 1915, to Irish Nationalists this felt like a betrayal of their cause, the more so as the Ulster Unionist leader Carson was now a member of the cabinet. At the same time Redmond was unable to accept a seat in the cabinet for fear of appearing to sell out to British imperialism.

Redmond's position was further undermined in early 1916, when nationalist Ireland became increasingly alarmed at the prospect of the introduction of conscription. He hesitated about campaigning against it for fear of undermining Asquith, since any alternative government seemed likely to be less sympathetic to Home Rule. But to many nationalists it seemed that he was paying too much attention to British opinion rather than fighting for Ireland's interests, and this led to further loss of confidence in the Irish party.

The brutal response of the British government to the 1916 Easter Rising, the revelation in the ensuing talks about Home Rule that Lloyd George had guaranteed to Carson the permanent exclusion of the six north-eastern counties, together with the 1918 conscription crisis, eroded and destroyed the power of the Irish parliamentary party for good. At the same time, the equivocal nature of the Irish Nationalist support for the British cause and the contrast between the apparent treachery of the Easter Rising and the sacrifice of Ulster regiments at the Somme in the same year reinforced Ulster Unionists' sense of attachment to Britain and their separation from nationalist Ireland.

In his conclusion, Thomas Hennessey argues that while Ireland might have been partitioned even without the intervention of the First World War, the war 'led to a form of psychological partition that could not have been predicted before the war'. He points out that the form of Home Rule envisaged in 1914 was devolved government within the framework of the United Kingdom, and speculates that this would have made the moves towards separation made by the southern Irish government between 1922 and 1948 much more difficult. In doing this he hints that but for the First World War, partition might not have been permanent, and a united Ireland could ultimately have remained within the orbit of the British Commonwealth, if not the United Kingdom.

I am not so sure about this. It seems to me that the Irish parliamentary party always depended on ambiguity about the ultimate objective of Irish nationalism, in order to keep republicans and moderate Home Rulers under its broad umbrella. But the lack of empathy with British imperial causes displayed by even the Irish parliamentary party during its period of political hegemony in Ireland suggests that in different circumstances progress toward independence might have been slower, but it would have happened sooner or later. Equally, while the Ulster Unionists' perception of what they saw as nationalist treachery might have strengthened their British rather than Ulster loyalty, they had made it plain over nearly three decades that they did not want to be part of a united, Home Rule, Ireland. Their attitudes were surely reinforced, but not fundamentally changed, by the course of Irish politics during the First World War.

What Thomas Hennessey has written, therefore, is a book that very clearly outlines the way the First World

War highlighted the depths of the divisions within Ireland. Readers whose primary interest is Liberal history may find it rather too much focused on the Irish rather than the British aspects of the issues under discussion. But since the book chronicles the ultimate failure of Home Rule – a great cause of Liberal governments – it should still be of interest.

Iain Sharpe is a member of the Liberal Democrat History Group and a Liberal Democrat councillor in Watford.

The Library knows Lloyd George

J. Graham Jones: *Lloyd George Papers at the National Library of Wales and Other Repositories* (National Library of Wales, 2001; 95pp)

Reviewed by **Duncan Brack**

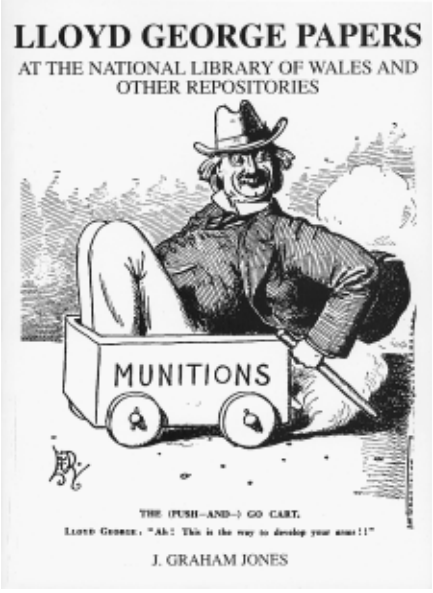
Readers of the *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* have been forewarned of the publication of this excellent booklet; it was mentioned in the guide to Liberal archives at the National Library of Wales written by its author, J. Graham Jones (assistant archivist), in issue 26 of the *Journal* (spring 2000). But the booklet is much more than a dry listing and numbering of archives: it includes a series of fascinating quotes from the sources themselves, a short chronology of David Lloyd George's career, a comprehensive bibliography of biographies and other monographs, some pictures and cartoons from the Library's collection, and a brief guide to Lloyd George-related material held in other archives.

The most important group of Lloyd George's political papers are held by the Parliamentary Archive at the House of Lords, but the Welsh Political Archive at the National Library of Wales holds no fewer than seven significant groups of papers, six of them acquired in the last two decades. In this it is fulfilling the prophecy of Sir John Herbert Lewis, Liberal MP for Flintshire, in 1910. Writing to thank Lloyd George for his grant, in his capacity of Chancellor of the Exchequer, to the newly established National Library, Lewis had expressed his belief that 'the Library will be, at, I hope, a very distant date your literary mausoleum'. As Jones puts it, 'to a large extent, this hope has by now been fulfilled', and he is confident that no major Lloyd George archive now remains in private hands.

Lloyd George was not a particularly prolific correspondent, but he did write regularly to his first wide Margaret, and to his younger brother William, and the latter group of letters are especially interesting for their political observations. The other groups of papers derive from three of Lloyd George's children – Richard (the eldest son), Olwen (the second daughter) and Gwilym (the second son, later Viscount Tenby) – from Lloyd George's principal private secretary A. J. Sylvester, and from his confidante, mistress and second wife Frances Stevenson. The booklet describes the contents and origins of each of these seven groups of papers, and provides quotes illustrating key points in his political career and personal relationships.

His affection for his first wife Margaret is very obvious, but so too are the strains in their marriage. Trying to persuade her to join him in London, for example, he implored her in 1896 to 'drop that infernal Methodism which is the curse of your better nature and reflect whether you have not rather neglected your husband. I have more than once gone without breakfast. I have scores of times come home in the dead of night to a cold, dark and comfortless flat without a soul to greet me.' But six years earlier she had written to him, warning him bluntly that: 'I am glad you have not seen anyone to flirt with. Remember to be careful in that line, or I will soon find out.' The profound differences in their characters are well illustrated by a letter Lloyd George wrote to his brother William in December 1907, shortly after the tragic death of his first daughter, Mair Eluned. He had resolved to go to the continent while Margaret remained at home. 'M. would rather go to Criccieth, otherwise she might very well come. But, as she puts it, she likes quiet & hates meeting people. On the other hand solitude or even quietness would kill me.'

For readers of the *Journal* it is the letters tracking the course of Lloyd George's political career, and his observations on political events and personalities, that will probably prove most interesting. In 1904 he wrote to Margaret, after a long conversation with Sir Edward Grey, that: 'We had a very frank chat about the prospective Liberal ministry – if it comes off. He says I am certain to have a seat in the Cabinet. Told him I must bargain for Wales.' In 1912, writing to William about the party's reaction to his land campaign, he observed that: 'Winston [Churchill] alone being doubtful – but he has become very reactionary of late. However Winston is not going to give



trouble provided I give him money for his navy. If he keeps quiet he is worth a million or two.' On 9 December 1916, another letter to William (expecting it would be read by his revered uncle Richard Lloyd) announced that he had 'presided over my first War Cabinet. Found it embarrassing to be addressed as "Prime Minister" by all the members … Love to all. Thank Anita for her very sweet letter. Tell Uncle Lloyd that he is responsible for putting me in this awful job.' And in 1924, writing to his daughter Megan (on a tour of India), he observed that: 'What changes are taking place. A Socialist Govt. actually in power. But don't get uneasy about your investments or your antiques … They are all engaged in looking as respectable as lather & blather will make them. They are out to soothe ruffled nerves … Ramsay is just a fussy Baldwin & no more.'

The archives contain letters to Lloyd George, as well as many from him. Two from Margot Asquith are of particular interest, given Lloyd George's replacement of her husband as Prime Minister in December 1916. In May 1914, commenting on C. F. G. Masterman, the proposed Liberal candidate in the Swansea by-election, she wrote: 'I've always had the same view of Masterman. With all his brains, he is *au fond* complacent, smug & soft as margarine … It wants a man of genius to prevent us being swept in the next Gen. Election & that man is to be sweet tempered, sunny, tactful & a man who understands men & *likes the job.* It is *you*.' And in May 1915, after the political crisis that forced the first coalition with the Unionists: 'I said years ago to Henry, I like Winston, but he is the man who will do for yr. Cabinet, he or Ll. George if he doesn't get fond of you.'

All this is simply a taster for the wealth of material available in the archives themselves, some of which, as Jones observes, have been very little used by historians. This book is an invaluable guide to those sources, and for serious students of Lloyd George, it will be required reading.

Duncan Brack is Editor of the Journal of Liberal Democrat History.

What might have been

Phillip E. Tetlock and Aaron Belkin (ed.): *Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics: Logical Methodological and Psychological Perspectives* (Princeton University Press, 1996)

Reviewed by **Andrew Hudson**

Counterfactual thought offers a method of evaluating the causes and consequences of historical events by considering how they might have had a different outcome had some of the antecedent events been different. This collection of essays considers the ground rules for constructing such 'counterfactuals', their application to case studies and classes of event, the use of computers and game theory, and other related factors.

Tetlock and Belkin describe what they consider to be the rules for constructing plausible counterfactuals in the opening chapter. Six criteria are suggested – clarity, logical consistency, historical consistency, theoretical consistency, statistical consistency and projectability. Their rules on consistency largely concern the relationship between antecedent and consequent, while the concept of projectability examines whether the implications are consistent with observations in the real world.

In the second essay James Fearon considers the use of counterfactuals in the social sciences, covering issues such as the 'butterfly effect' whereby a minor event results in a major outcome, and deterministic arguments whereby individual events are dampened down by long-term trends. Fearon also queries the legitimacy of some types of antecedent, including the much-quoted 'if Napoleon had had a stealth bomber' which is generally regarded as implausible. He also adds a criterion of proximity between the antecedent and consequent when judging the plausibility of a counterfactual.

Subsequent chapters include studies of individual events such as Munich and the Cuban missile crisis, classes of event including wars and revolutions, and the use of computer simulations and game theory. A final section deals with other factors including blending, causality, statistical inferences and psychological bias, including the tendency to see deterministic outcomes through hindsight.

The book demonstrates why counterfactuals tend to concentrate in detail on antecedents rather than consequent events, as can be seen in Niall Fergusson's *Virtual History.* Fictional equivalents, or 'alternate world' stories, as they are called by science fiction enthusiasts, are more entertaining, including books such as Keith Roberts' *Pavane* or Robert Harris' *Fatherland*. But counterfactuals are not intended for entertainment – they represent a serious study, concerned with the evaluation of historical events and the derivation of conclusions from them.

The essays are largely written by social scientists, with the bulk of the contributors being political scientists. The text is heavy going in places. The section covering computer simulations and game theory contains a considerable amount of mathematics, but this is not essential to understanding the principles.

The first two chapters, in particular, by Tetlock and Belkin, and James Fearon, are useful in providing a methodology that could be applied to the study of Liberal history. The techniques that the book suggests could also be used by council groups to consider the potential outcomes of policy options.

Andrew Hudson is a member of the Liberal Democrat History Group and of the Association of Liberal Democrat Trade Unionists.

A Liberal Democrat History Group Evening Meeting

Post-war Liberalism and the Politics of Race and Immigration

In the run-up to the 2001 general election, the issues of asylum and race relations moved to centre stage, with Liberal Democrats winning plaudits for their firm stand against discrimination.

But the arguments are not new. Race relations and immigration were a major phenomenon of post-war politics. From the Macmillan Government's 'voucher' system for would-be immigrants to Labour's 1968 legislation to end the passport privileges of Kenyan Asians, both major parties sought to pander to white prejudice. The late 1960s also saw Enoch Powell's infamous call for the repatriation of black and other Commonwealth immigrants and the rise of the National Front.

Where did Liberals stand? And what impact did racial politics and immigration have on Liberalism?

Speakers: **Dr Shamit Saggar** (Reader in Electoral Politics at Queen Mary, University of London and author of *Race and Politics in Britain*) and **Lord (Navnit) Dholakia** (President of the Liberal Democrats)

6.30pm, Monday 2 July

Lady Violet Room, National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, London SW1

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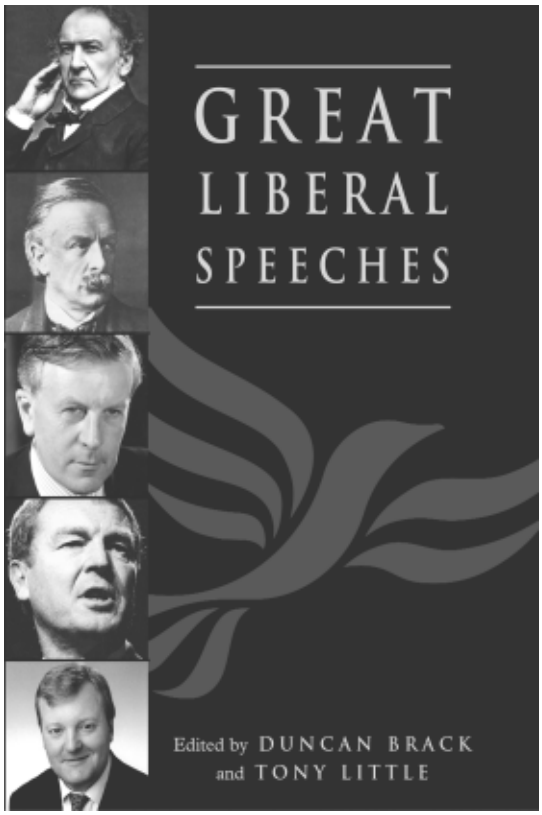

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