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Journal of Liberal Democrat HISTORY

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Liberal Democrat History Group

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Why a double issue?

Readers will notice that this issue of the *Journal* is a double issue, 34/35 (spring/summer 2002), containing approximately twice the material of a normal issue. The delay in producing number 33 (the special issue on Liberals and Ireland) meant that we were faced with either producing three issues in six months or doubling up on one of them, and decided to adopt the latter course. Normal service will be resumed from issue 36, due out in September.

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Dr J. Graham Jones re-examines the reopening by Lloyd George in September 1912 of the village institute at his native Llanystumdwy, when the proceedings were blighted by constant suffragette interruptions.

Lloyd George and the Suffragettes at Llanystumdwy

Among the Lloyd George correspondence acquired by the National Library of Wales from the third Earl Lloyd-George of Dwyfor in 1987 is a single stray letter, dated 19 October 1912, from Evan William Evans (1860–1925), a native of Dolgellau, a prominent journalist, editor and publisher, and owner of the Dolgellau-based printing office where *Y Goleuad* was produced. The *Goleuad* company assumed responsibility for the publication of a number of local newspapers and journals and several substantial volumes. Evans was himself an avid local historian and Calvinistic Methodist, and a diligent collector of manuscripts and printed works. The former group now constitutes the Frondirion Manuscripts in the custody of the National Library.[1]

The 1912 letter reads as follows:

The Suffragists at Llanystumdwy

Frondirion
Dolgelley, Oct. 19, 1912

To the Right Hon D. Lloyd George MP

Dear Mr Lloyd George

I find in to-day's paper that questions are to be asked in the House of Commons on Monday about the treatment of the Suffragists at Llanystumdwy. I was present at the meeting and was quite close to two of the women who disturbed the proceedings, and who were ejected.

The reports published in many of the newspapers were greatly exaggerated. It has been repeatedly asserted that the hair of one of the disturbers was actually pulled off in handfulls by the crowd. I was close by at the time and saw what did take place. The hat of the woman was taken off, and handfulls of hair did come off with it. A friend of mine picked up the hat, and I have it now in my possession as well as a considerable quantity of the 'hair' said to have been plucked off. But will you allow me to assure you that this woman did not on that occasion suffer the loss of any of her own hair! It was false hair that was artfully inserted inside the hat in such a way that it looked like natural hair, and of course 'it came off in handfulls'. I have been endeavouring to find out the name and address of the rightful owner of the hat and false hair, but so far I have failed. It was I think a very clever bit of stage acting and it came off well!

Yours sincerely
E. W. Evans [2]

The letter casts further light on an occasion of considerable interest. The intensive suffragette campaign to secure the enfranchisement of women was one of the most prominent political themes of the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the First World War. David Lloyd George, Liberal MP for the Caernarfon Boroughs since 1890, President of the Board of Trade, 1905–08, and subsequently Asquith's radical Chancellor of the Exchequer, was inevitably in a pivotal position. Until about the end of 1905 the suffragette campaign was strictly constitutional, relatively low-key, and generally keeping well within the law. From that point on, however, the techniques

of disruption ever more widely employed by the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) brought their demands increasingly into the public domain, while the eligibility of women to serve on town and county councils from 1907 onwards gave the movement a powerful fillip. Moreover, the election of a relatively left-wing Liberal government under Campbell-Bannerman in January 1906 raised real expectations of legislative change. It was estimated that fully 400 MPs in the new parliament, drawn from all political parties, were pledged to the principle of women's suffrage, while the prime minister was himself a convert to the cause.[3] Four members of the new Liberal cabinet were said to be stalwart supporters of the suffragette cause – Sir Edward Grey, Haldane, Birrell and Lloyd George.[4] Other Liberal ministers were generally hostile, among them Asquith (the Chancellor of the Exchequer), Lord Loreburn (the Lord Chancellor), Churchill, Lewis Harcourt, McKenna and Herbert Samuel. They tended to argue that women did not want the vote and did not need the vote, as they had no real grievances of their own and were already adequately represented. These sharply contrasting viewpoints caused a deep rooted schism within the Liberal Party at a time when it was attempting to maintain a positive mantle of radicalism.

In the event, private members' bills were introduced in the Commons in 1907 and 1908, but, deprived of government support, inevitably made but little headway. Lloyd George, who succeeded Asquith as Chancellor in April 1908, regularly faced well-orchestrated heckling during many of his public speeches, which he sometimes found difficulty in completing because of the constant interruptions. In October he was called as a prosecution witness in the celebrated trial at Bow Street of Mrs Pankhurst, Miss Christabel Pankhurst and Mrs Drummond. To an audience at the Albert Hall on 5 December he was optimistic concerning the inclusion of women's suffrage in a future Reform Bill.[5] It was noted that his speech took two hours to deliver (instead of the anticipated twenty minutes) because of the incessant interruptions by militant members of the WSPU lodged firmly (and somewhat menacingly) in front-row seats. During 1909, fully preoccupied with the preparation of the 'People's Budget', Lloyd George was inevitably more than happy to fall in with Asquith's delaying tactics as a number of imprisoned suffragettes went on hunger strike, provoking the government to institute the highly publicised process of forcible feeding.

By the beginning of 1910 the suffrage issue had attracted considerable public sympathy and support, and appreciable parliamentary backing. Asquith, however, refused to introduce a women's suffrage measure, and in the January general election, the Liberals remained committed simply to carrying his nebulous 1908 pledge to give consideration to the franchise question generally into the new parliament, not to any bolder initiative. Following the poll, the WSPU declared a truce which lasted to some extent until 1912. In the spring of 1910 the re-elected Liberal government set up an all-party Parliamentary 'Conciliation Committee' charged to draft suffrage legislation. The outcome was the first Conciliation Bill which proposed that the vote should be given to women who were £10 householders, with the further stipulation that married women could not qualify in respect of the same property as their husbands. The measure received the cautious endorsement of the suffrage societies on the 'half-a-loaf' principle, and of Conservatives who depicted it as a means of strengthening the anti-radical vote in the country. Both Lloyd George and Churchill opposed it for the very same reason, the former writing to his brother William during the debate on the second reading in July, 'Women's Debate going strong. F. E. Smith delivered a crushing speech against. I am dead against this Bill & mean to vote against it.'[6] Publicly he opposed the measure as being insufficiently broad and incapable of amendment. Both Lloyd George and Churchill voted against, but the bill was carried by a majority in the Commons, thereafter being referred to a committee of the whole House, temporarily blocking its progress. 'Women Suffrage killed for this year – killed altogether as far as yesterday's Bill is concerned', wrote Lloyd George to William, 'The suffragettes are for the moment concentrating their hate on Winston, although annoyed with me also.'[7] On several occasions violent scenes ensued.

A revised Conciliation Bill was introduced by a private member in the spring of 1911, a measure which removed the £10 householder qualification of the previous bill. In May Lloyd George voted in favour of it, and indeed seemed to endorse the revived clamour in favour of 'Votes for Women' at a time when he was fully preoccupied with his National Health Insurance commitments. By the end of the summer he had come to endorse a comprehensive reform of the franchise on lines which he expounded insistently to the Liberal Chief Whip, the Master of Elibank:

> I am very concerned about our pledges on the Female Suffrage question. We seem to be playing straight into the hands of the enemy. The Conciliation Bill could, on balance, add hundreds of thousands of votes throughout the country to the strength of the Tory Party … We have never really faced the situation manfully and courageously. I think the Liberal Party ought to make up its mind as a whole that it will either have an extended franchise which would put working men's wives on the Register, as well as spinsters and widows, or that it will have no female franchise at all … We are likely to find ourselves in the position of putting this wretched Conciliation Bill through the House of Commons, sending it to the Lords, and eventually getting it through. Say what you will, that spells disaster for Liberalism.[8]

The suffragette camp in turn became highly suspicious of Lloyd George's sincerity and intentions, Christabel Pankhurst writing in October:

> There exists a conspiracy of wreckers and reactionaries who are bent

> upon carrying widening amendments in Committee in the hope of destroying the majority for the Bill … The particular amendment which Mr Lloyd George intends to promote is one to give a vote to the wife of every elector, in virtue of her husband's qualification. This provision would apply to no less than six millions of women, so that the Conciliation Bill, instead of enfranchising one million women … would enfranchise *seven* million women.[9]

She was fully aware that no such measure stood any prospect of clearing the Commons without government support, and had come to the conclusion that the strategy of the devious Lloyd George was 'not, as he professes, to secure to women a large measure of enfranchisement, but to prevent women from having the vote at all'.[10] Within weeks Prime Minister Asquith had announced, somewhat unexpectedly, that it was the Government's intention during the next session to introduce a measure providing manhood suffrage for all *bona fide* residents, the bill being capable of amendment so that it might include the enfranchisement of women.[11] 'Asquith's declaration on manhood suffrage has taken everyone by surprise', wrote Lloyd George to William, 'It is entirely my doing. But I am amazed at the readiness & the proflitude [*sic*] with which he took the fence. I anticipated much more trouble. The Pankhursts are furious.'[12]

Asquith's announcement inevitably heralded a return to a somewhat more militant attitude on the part of the WSPU, while Christabel Pankhurst's intense fury was directed, first and foremost, at the 'turncoat' Chancellor of the Exchequer. In her broadsheet *Votes for Women* her wrathful indignation knew no bounds – 'The Government's latest attempt to cheat women of the vote is, of course, inspired by Mr Lloyd George. The whole crooked and discreditable scheme is characteristic of the man and of the methods he has from the first employed against the Suffrage cause.'[13] H. N. Brailsford, the secretary of the Conciliation Committee, had already informed Liberal journalist C. P. Scott that Christabel

David Lloyd George in 1903

'envisaged the whole suffrage movement … as a gigantic duel between herself and Lloyd George whom she designed to destroy'.[14] The energetic suffragette campaign continued unabated, violent outbreaks ensued regularly, and political meetings were often interrupted. 'Meeting a great success. No interruptions inside', reported a relieved Lloyd George in mid-December, 'Women outside were troublesome flinging things at the car but no harm done. All of us delighted this strenuous session is over. Now for rest & recreation.'[15]

As the new year – 1912 – dawned, feelings ran high and passions intensified. Persistent conjecture ensued that suffragette-inspired assassinations were being planned against both Asquith and Lloyd George. The former, it was rumoured, had only narrowly escaped death after a hatchet had been flung into his carriage at Dublin. By the spring of 1912 intense disillusionment and mounting exasperation prevailed in the suffragette camp because of the breaking was compounded by occasional arson attacks. As yet another Conciliation Bill was debated in the Commons chamber during March 1912, an exasperated Lloyd George, still one of the ministers more sympathetic to the suffragette cause, wrote dejectedly to his brother William:

> 1 March 1912. Suffragettes broken out once more. Smashed PM's windows – shop windows in Oxford St & Charing X. Lunatics.[17]

> 4 March 1912. Suffragettes raving mad. Another outbreak of window smashing in West End to day. They are destroying the last chance of carrying their Bill.[18]

> 5 March 1912. Newydd. Bydd y

> Pankhursts a'r Pethicks i gyd yn y gaol cyn y boreu – os y delir hwy. [*News. The Pankhurts and the Pethicks will all be in the gaol before morning – if they are caught.*][19]

The next day came the news that Sir A. A. Haworth had been narrowly defeated in his bid to retain the traditionally safe Liberal division of Manchester South in a by-election necessitated by his appointment as a Lord Commissioner of the Treasury. Lloyd George wrote stoically to William:

> South Manchester. Bad luck. Strike – suffragettes, undoubtedly prejudicially affected result, probably lost us the seat. It was also the worst constituency in which to fight Insurance … We must set our teeth & fight through the next 2 yrs. At the end of that time we war through into more favourable country. Benefits flow in. Home Rule & Welsh Disestab[t]. will be through & we can put forward more attractive fare. Cabinet quite resolute.[20]

It was rumoured in political circles that the third Conciliation Bill (again defeated on its second reading at the end of March) had been torpedoed by a whispering campaign initiated by Lloyd George and Churchill that Asquith would resign following the introduction of a private member's women's suffrage bill. This heartfelt fear, it was said, led to the loss of Irish Nationalist supporters of the suffragette cause, who looked suspiciously at any factor which might impede or delay the progress of their measure.[21] The fury of the more militant suffragettes knew no bounds; Lloyd George had become their especial *bête noir*. Every public function which he attended saw the Chancellor harried and threatened by the 'female lunatics'. At the end of June he was to address a political meeting at Walthamstow in Essex, a parliamentary division represented by Sir John Simon, the Solicitor General:

> I am off with Llwydyn [his daughter Olwen] to a meeting at Walthamstow in the Solicitor General's constituency. I shall probably be harried by the female lunatics. I am the only man in the Cabinet who could render them effective help & yet they have pursued me with unexampled malignity. Poor old PM, he has been worried by them these past weeks – & he minds them much more than I do.[22]

Two weeks later, about to deliver a speech at Kensington, Lloyd George was attacked by a male suffragist supporter who came close to striking him on the head, provoking a scuffle which resulted in the Chancellor being pulled to the ground.[23] On another occasion Prime Minister Asquith was clutched by the lapels of his suit and shaken forcefully. Such tactics caused something of a rift in the ranks of the suffragette sympathisers; at the end of August Mrs Fawcett asserted that the militant faction had a 'large share' in causing the defeat of the third Conciliation Bill in March, and had become 'the chief obstacles in the way of the success of the suffrage movement in the House of Commons, and far more formidable opponents of it than Mr. Asquith or Mr. Harcourt'.[24]

Further violent outbursts inevitably ensued. Upon his return from a late summer vacation at Marienbad (which he had at least ostensibly taken for the sake of his health[25]), Lloyd George attended the National Eisteddfod at Wrexham where on 5 September his speech was interrupted by persistent heckling – 'When are you going to give votes for women?' He responded, 'I do not know what these foolish people gain for their cause. (Here another male interrupter was put out.) I was saying that I fail to see what they think they gain by insulting a whole nation in the national festival of its democracy (Applause).'[26] Violent scenes ensued outside the Eisteddfod Pavilion as the suffragette sympathisers were mobbed by the crowd:

> An auburn-haired lady had several of her tresses torn out by the roots. In spite of the protection afforded by the police the terror-stricken suffragettes were hustled and knocked about, and to protect them from the violence of the angry crowd the police eventually rushed them into one of the ante-rooms behind the building. One of the constables remonstrated with the crowd and a suffragette, whose blouse was in tatters, and whose hair hung across her shoulders replied, 'We will go on doing it until we get the vote!' A man in the crowd was heard to explain, 'They are in Wales now. They are among ancient Britons, and we will show them how to deal with suffragettes.'[27]

Only two weeks later even greater savagery attended the opening of the village institute presented by the Chancellor to his native Llanystumdwy. To finance the munificent gesture he had made use of libel damages of £1,000 paid to him in 1909 by *The People* newspaper which had printed a series of articles suggesting that Lloyd George was about to have been cited as a co-respondent in a divorce action, but that the would-be plaintiff had been bought off for £20,000. The Chancellor sued the newspaper, making use of the professional services of Rufus Isaacs, Raymond Asquith (son of the prime minister) and F. E. Smith. Damages of £1,000 were eventually paid to Lloyd George which, three and a half years later, he contributed to the building of the village institute.[28] Ironically, by the time of the institute's opening in September 1912, the Chancellor was embroiled in an even more menacing affair – the infamous Marconi scandal – which again threatened to destroy his political career.

The opening of the institute was a notably high-profile occasion. The outer gates of the grounds were to be unlocked by Winston Churchill, the First Lord of the Admiralty, and the door of the institute by Sir Rufus Isaacs, the Attorney General. Both ministers were then to deliver short speeches, followed by Lloyd George and his close political associate C. F. G. Masterman. The Chancellor and his wife were then to give tea to the village schoolchildren and old age pensioners, while the new institute was to be the venue of an evening concert with Isaacs presiding and Masterman conducting.[29] A week before the occasion, fully aware that suffragette interruptions were almost certain, the officials of the Criccieth

branch of the National Union for Women's Suffrage had communicated with the WSPU:

> The suffrage cause is progressing steadily here under the auspices of the NUWSS [National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies]. Militant methods will only injure the cause which both societies have at heart. Personal attacks on and abuse of Mr Lloyd George on the part of strangers in his native village will naturally not be tolerated, especially on an occasion such as this, which is not even political. Serious damage will be done to the Suffrage cause if any attempt is made to prevent Mr Lloyd George and his guests from speaking.[30]

An evasive reply was received: 'We beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter. Speculation as to possible antics of ladies to-day is now all the more intense, as the reply is a polite intimation to wait and see.'[31] Mrs Pankhurst, it was reported, was unwilling to comment.

On the morning preceding the opening, Lloyd George and C. F. G. Masterman played golf on the Criccieth golf links against Sir Rufus Isaacs and G. P. Williams of Criccieth. An autumn picnic on the banks of the Chancellor's beloved River Dwyfor followed in the afternoon. For the opening ceremony itself the Chancellor was accompanied by his wife, children and brother William, together with political associates like Ellis W. Davies (Caernarfonshire Eifion), J. Herbert Lewis (Flintshire), Ellis Jones Griffith (Anglesey) and H. J. Ellis Nanney, his Conservative opponent in the Caernarfon Boroughs in 1890 and 1895.[32] Lloyd George's brother William was responsible for presenting the deed of gift of the land and premises to the institute trustees, noting that the gift was subject to two conditions: no intoxicating liquors were to be sold or consumed on the premises, and it should never be made a condition of membership that members should belong to a particular sect or party in religion or politics. Mr Masterman delivered the only English speech of the afternoon:

> As I am the only Englishman speaking this afternoon, perhaps I might be allowed to say in the name of a few hundred thousand Englishmen I am very glad to join in the demonstration. We are grateful to you for having brought him up and taught him the way he should go – with some difficulties perhaps – (laughter) – and given him to us – (cries of 'Oh, no') – for the comfort of some, for the disturbance of others, and for the interest and excitement of all (Laughter and cheers). I think you will all agree with me, whatever our politics are, and perhaps with different motives in your hearts, when I say that Mr Lloyd George is one of the few men given to us during a century of whom it may be said that his life has changed the world a little. (Cheers)

Lloyd George's opening sentences were immediately drowned by a cry of

Violent treatment of WSPU hecklers, Llanystumdwy, 21 September 1912

'Votes for Women' from a woman near the platform. 'Put her in the river', retorted the crowd as she was escorted away by a police constable and buffeted by the bystanders. As the Chancellor urged his listeners not to harm the suffragette sympathisers who were disrupting the meeting, a succession of interruptions followed. In the words of one of the press correspondents, 'Their treatment on the outskirts of the crowd was, however, the reverse of mild. Each was assaulted in turn, and it was only through the intervention of a police constable and the congestion at that particular spot that one woman was saved being placed under the village pump.'[33] Lloyd George spoke as follows:

> I have now been nearly a quarter of a century in political life, and I think I may say that, whether locally or nationally, I have during that period generally been in the hottest of the conflict, and I am glad to be able to give you my observations after twenty-five years … I am very anxious that this institute should provide at least one meeting place in the village where the villagers, without distinctions of creed, can come together to promote common objects and find joy in the same common entertainments.[34]

It was noted in the local press that the protestors had been stripped naked by a gang of local rowdies.[35] The London papers, too, reported these alleged incidents graphically and in detail. One of the women present described the events as a 'revelation of the latent beast in man', while, in the words of Sylvia Pankhurst, 'Men and women were beaten, kicked and stripped almost naked. The hair of the women was torn out in handfuls.'[36] It was further reported that the shirts of the protesting women were mercilessly cut up and distributed among the crowd as souvenirs of the momentous occasion.[37] Lurid press publicity inevitably ensued; a large picture of the women being assaulted and mauled dominated the front page of the *Daily Mirror*, and similar photographs occupied a full page in the *Illustrated London News*.

Two of the Liberal politicians present recorded the events in their personal diaries. Sir John Herbert Lewis' description of the occasion was predictably bland: 'Went by early train to Carnarvon & motored thence to Llanystumdwy for the opening of the Institute by the Chancellor. A huge crowd, a great suffragette disturbance followed by calm & an excellent meeting. In the evening a rollicking Concert in the Hall – Rufus Isaacs in the chair, Masterman conducting. That was a brilliant idea of LG's for the attempts to pronounce the various items caused endless fun.'[38] Ellis W. Davies outlined the scene in greater detail:

> The crowd was dense but very well-behaved & was representative of all parties & sects, the only exception being the local landowners. They were noticeably absent save Sir Hugh Ellis Nanney, who fought an election with Lloyd George. One felt it a pity that political and social bitterness prevented others from being present at a function to do honour to the most eminent of living Welshmen & one wondered how narrow and petty their minds must be. Is it any wonder that as a class they are held in such contempt by the people?

He proceeded to describe the events which he had witnessed:

> When the Chancellor got up to speak he had a great ovation but no sooner had he appealed to the crowd in Welsh to be gentle with any suffragettes present than one of the women quite near the stage shouted 'Votes for Women' & in the attempt to lead her out – she herself fighting & kicking those who tried to protect her – the crowd pressed down & [an] ugly rush was made for the platform. No sooner was one disposed of than other women cried in other parts of the field & whilst no doubt in the crush – at times dangerous – feeling got the better of some men, the accounts in the paper were untrue & on the whole the women came well out of a row into which they deliberately entered with a view of breaking up a social gathering & judging by their appearance no one would conclude that they were other than paid rowdies of a low class who did their work merely because they were paid. In time peace was restored but the excitement made it impossible for the Chancellor to speak effectively.[39]

Davies' words confirm the opinion of E. W. Evans in his letter sent to Lloyd George a month later. One of Lloyd George's earliest biographers, Herbert du Parcq, who penned his work close to the events which he was describing, made exactly the same point: 'They got some rough handling, which Mr Lloyd George did all in his power to restrain. There is, however, fortunately, no doubt that the attack which they provoked was very far from being as savage or as effective as many accounts in the newspapers led the public to believe. The ladies, expecting, as they were bound to expect, a summary retribution, had been prudent enough to put on old clothes, and these were badly torn; but the personal injuries which they suffered were happily slight.'[40]

These more moderate, dispassionate accounts give a more balanced version of the events at Llanystumdwy in September 1912. At the time, however, the exaggerated language of those involved inevitably received widespread currency in both the local and national press. The London *Evening News* published a lengthy account of an interview with Mrs S. Watson, one of the agitators attacked by the crowd, who claimed:

> I am bruised all down my side and arms and have had the skin kicked off my ankles. I still can hear the noise which was made by the tearing out of my hair in handfuls … I received a violent blow from behind, and my hat was torn off. In my pocket I had a dozen bannerettes with the sticks in a bundle. Some one snatched these from my pocket and struck me fiercely on the head. At that I became half unconscious, but I realised that I was being attacked from all sides. My hair was being torn out in handfuls. Once I was beaten down to the ground, but two constables and two other men

> succeeded in getting me up and out from among the hooligans. I was taken to a cottage, but the woman refused to give me admittance. The same thing happened at another cottage, but at the third, with the help of the police, I succeeded in getting inside. I was driven miles in a trap to get away from a remote railway station. The guard put me in his van, and told me that had I gone into one of the ordinary carriages the men would have thought nothing of flinging me on the line. He told me that the hair which had been torn from my head was distributed among the men as a souvenir of the meeting. Nearly all my clothing was torn to pieces.[41]

The Conservative *Western Mail*, too, published detailed accounts of the proceedings, concluding:

> The Welshmen behaved like fiends, and but for the heroic action of the Welsh policemen they would undoubtedly have been killed. One of them informed me that, though the men were bad, she had most to fear from the Welsh women, who took their hatpins out of their hats and made every attempt to use them. Neither would the Welsh women allow the suffragettes to take refuge in their cottages. Wales just now is in the very bad books of those suffragettes who seek relaxation from their domestic duties to cry "Votes for Women", on any and every occasion.[42]

Subsequently the press was bombarded with impassioned epistles from irate suffragette sympathisers, enraged by their view of the events at Llanystumdwy. The following letter is typical of dozens published in various newspapers during the weeks immediately following the attacks:

> *Llanystumdwy: A Woman's Protest*
>
> To the editor
>
> Sir, - When women ask Cabinet ministers about the vote, it is called by newspapers 'suffragette tactics'. When they are hustled, trampled upon, and finally thrown out to a kindred crowd of 'wild beasts', their hair torn out in handfulls, bereft of their garments, and even indecently assaulted, the newspapers term it 'retaliation'. 'Retaliation', forsooth! When will newspaper leader-writers realise a sense of fairness, and teach men to be manly towards his counter-part woman?
>
> In his speech on Saturday Mr Lloyd George declared: 'There is no country in the world where political warfare is fought under stricter and more honourable rules of fair play than Great Britain.'
>
> When has fair play ever been accorded to women since the beginning of their political agitation? The militant methods adopted by the Women's Social and Political Union six years ago consisted simply in questioning Cabinet Ministers after political meetings and in sending deputations to the Prime Minister at Westminster. Their legitimate asking of questions was answered by their violent ejection and the decision of Cabinet Ministers that thenceforward political meetings should be held for men only … Is this the 'fair play' that Mr Lloyd George talks about? The only negative comfort that I could glean after reading about the Llanystumdwy horrors in this morning's paper is that such dastardly outrages could not be perpetuated anywhere outside the area in North Wales that suffers delirium each time the Chancellor visits that district. It was all very well for him to have said on Saturday 'No violence!' This accords ill with the hint he gave them recently about 'the little Eisteddfod sticks being useful'. It is full time that we had ministers sincere enough to be fair to women and to concede to them in this country what women in other parts of the Empire (such as Australia and New Zealand) use for human betterment, namely the vote, I am, &c.
>
> Margaret Finlay
> Stow Park – Terrace, Newport, Mon.
> Sept. 23rd. 1912[43]

Ironically, the Llanystumdwy Institute, like many other such buildings in England and Wales, had been hailed in the North Wales press as a focal point of the village designed 'to break the monotony of rural life. The Llanystumdwy Institute will do a great deal to supply recreation for the folk of that parish, and make country life there more genial to the young people.'[44]

The opening sentence of the letter sent by E. W. Evans to Lloyd George also referred to the questions about to be asked in the House of Commons concerning the Llanystumdwy disturbances. Lord Robert Cecil had in fact already asked the Home Secretary for his reaction to the 'serious assaults' which had occurred on 21 September, only to be told that 'the police were unable to identify any of the assailants … Many of the persons at the meeting came from outside the county, and were strangers to the police who were there on duty, and who were fully occupied in affording protection to the women.'

Lord Robert persisted, referring to the photographs published in the newspapers, but was again given an evasive reply.[45] The matter was again raised the following day,[46] and again more forcefully on 21 October by Lord Robert Cecil and Mr Harold Smith who demanded to know whether 'as a result of investigations into the recent disturbances at Wrexham and Llanystumdwy, any information [had] been obtained as to the pulling out of women's hair; and, if so, whether any action [was] to be taken'. The Home Secretary replied that evidence of two cases of assault had been gathered by the Chief Constable, but he refused to elucidate further as criminal proceedings were likely. A further pertinent question on 'the pulling out of the women's hair' provoked no response. Finally, Mr Smith asked pointedly, 'May I ask if this is an attempt to whitewash the Chancellor of the Exchequer?' 'There is not the slightest ground for any suggestion of that sort', retorted Reginald McKenna, the Home Secretary.[47]

By this time the cause of 'Votes for Women' had been effectively blocked within parliament. The Liberal government was really in no position to push through any such measure; it was far

from united on the matter, and Prime Minister Asquith was firmly in the anti-suffragist camp. The subject largely vanished from parliamentary debate during what remained of the pre-war period. It re-surfaced briefly in January 1913 during the debate on the government's Franchise and Registration Bill. 'Insurance & Women's Suffrage engaging my attention today', wrote Lloyd George to his brother, 'Although I hate the militants one must not allow that to deflect his judgement on a great question of principle.'[48] 'Have no idea what will happen in the voting', he went on a week later, 'except that I think we shall be beaten by a small majority. It is entirely the fault of the militant section'.[49]

In the event, the Speaker of the House of Commons, James Lowther, ruled that the measure could not be amended to include women's suffrage clauses. Claiming betrayal, the WSPU immediately embarked upon another campaign of destruction. Christabel Pankhurst allegedly designed a strategy which included the 'pouring of acids into pillar boxes, the cutting of telegraph wires, and the slashing of pictures in public galleries … [suffragettes] set fire to empty houses, they destroyed golf courses, they threw bombs at churches'.[50] On 19 February the house which was being built for Lloyd George near the golf course at Walton Heath was blown up, and Mrs Pankhurst immediately claimed responsibility, and, charged with incitement to commit a felony, was in due course sentenced to three months' penal servitude. The Chancellor was also the recipient of regular assassination threats, and Scotland Yard detectives were assigned to shadow him, followers which irked him somewhat when he took a late summer holiday at Marienbad together with Sir Rufus Isaacs. He continued to be a major target for suffragette violence right through until the outbreak of war.

One writer argues that the women's suffrage cause during the immediate pre-war years fell victim to the Chancellor's loss of influence which in turn he attributes to the impact of the Marconi scandal:

> At a time when the Government was pressing a Franchise Bill and was split on suffrage, the only man with political force enough to secure the inclusion of suffrage, and prevent the break-up of the Government, was being embarrassed by charges of corruption … At the very time when his political instincts told him that the Liberals must break out of the sterility of coercion on suffrage, he was a captive of the chief architect of that policy – the Prime Minister … The Marconi affair is the crucial backcloth to the struggle that, at least in public, went on to amend the Government's Franchise Bill.[51]

But it should also be noted that Lloyd George's freedom of manoeuvre was severely restricted, too, by Asquith's implaccable opposition to the cause, and by the fact that his fellow radical *par excellence* within the Cabinet, Winston Churchill, was at best equivocal on women's suffrage. Whatever the reasons, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the failure of the pre-war Liberal governments to enfranchise women was one of the worst blots on their record.

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Paul Mulvey examines what was hailed, in the early years of the twentieth century, as the radical alternative to collectivism and even the New Liberalism.

The Single-Taxers and the Future of Liberalism, 1906–1914

The Single-Taxers were one of those political pressure groups, so typical of Edwardian Britain, whose adherents believed that they had found a relatively simple way to cure the ills of society. Their inspiration was the American economic theorist, Henry George, who in the 1870s had blamed the persistence of poverty, in spite of economic growth, on the rapacious exaction of rent by landlords on land which, in truth, was the birthright of all men. The cure to this injustice, George argued, was the appropriation by the community of all rent on the unimproved value of the land.

Around a core of committed advocates of the 'Single Tax', as it was called, there grew a wider Land Tax movement that supported the introduction of property taxes based on site value. These, they hoped, would improve the efficiency of land use and distribute the tax burden more fairly. The Single-Taxers themselves hoped for much more. Firmly in the libertarian tradition, they hoped George's scheme would bring about a new society – one without poverty, crime, or the exploitation of the weak by the strong. They had little time for the collectivist measures advocated by other progressive reformers. They were suspicious of state power, and hoped that their reform would shrink government, rather than increase it. They saw their theories as the natural progression of the Victorian radical ideals of liberty, laissez-faire and retrenchment, as true Liberalism in fact. Although few in number, they enjoyed a disproportionate voice in pre-1914 Liberal activism and the extent of their influence on Liberal support in the country, for good or bad, was a matter of dispute at the time, as it has been since.

The politics of land was central to pre-1914 radicalism. Aristocratic landowners were still powerful enough to prompt radical indignation. The growing awareness of urban and rural squalor aroused radical compassion, while the massive increases in the rates over the previous generation, hit hard at radical wallets. An attack on the landlords seemed to offer a solution to all three problems, and in doing so would hopefully win working-class support for the Liberals without splitting the electorate on class lines. But although radicals could agree that land reforms were needed, they could not agree on which ones.

The debate took place largely in the arena of local taxation where, by the end of the Edwardian period, rates and taxes took up some 28% of the annual rental value of property,[1] and in some areas exceeded 50%. Rates were widely seen as unfair, disproportionately hitting the poor, while the improvements they were used to fund – public transport, drainage, better roads – enhanced the value of land at little or no direct cost to the benefited landowners, as such windfall profits, or unearned increments, were not taxed.

Several groups campaigned to improve matters. The two most significant were the Land Nationalisers and the Land-Taxers, both of which contained a core of committed ideologues and a penumbra, overlapping between the groups, of less dogmatic supporters. The Land Nationalisers wanted a greater degree of government control over land. The Land-Taxers sought, as a minimum, a more equitable distribution of the tax burden between large landowners and small ratepayers.

The most committed Land-Taxers were the Single-Taxers, followers of Henry George, whose 1879 book, *Progress and Poverty*, had inspired movements for land reform in North America, Europe and the British Empire. George argued that land, and the minerals in it, which God had created for the whole community, was the essential prerequisite to the creation of all other forms of wealth. For those who owned no land, rent became a tax on their production. As population grew, competition for land increased, raising rents and suppressing real wages – which were driven to subsistence levels. Landlords withheld land from the market to drive prices yet higher, and so further increased overcrowding and destitution. George saw the evidence for this in the cities of North America and Europe, where sky-high property prices existed alongside empty lots and severe poverty.

His remedy was to tax the unimproved value of land and minerals, so reclaiming for the community any rise in value that was not due to the landlord's own efforts. This would also encourage the efficient use of land by taxing it on its re-sale value whether it was being used effectively or not. As more land came into production, its price would fall, giving every man the opportunity to work on the land if he so wished. With this alternative to accepting starvation wages, employers would be forced to pay more to keep their workers. They would be able to afford this because the proceeds of the land tax would allow for the abolition of all other taxes.

George, unlike his socialist contemporaries, saw the fundamental social battle as not between labour and capital, but between their combined forces and the landowners. He assumed that once the land monopoly was removed, men would be free and social harmony would prevail. His arguments were made with passion and style and were infused with religious sentiment. The Single Tax would, he claimed:

Raise wages, increase the earnings of capital, extirpate pauperism, abolish poverty, give remunerative employment to whoever wishes it, afford free scope to human powers, lessen crime, elevate morals, and taste, and intelligence, purify government and carry civilisation to yet nobler heights.[2]

George visited the British Isles five times between 1881 and 1890. In his wake, Land Restoration Leagues were established and a journal, *The Single Tax* (later renamed *Land Values*), was founded, which by 1896 had a circulation of 5,000. The movement soon became identified with the radical wing of the Liberal Party and from 1889 onwards, the National Liberal Federation endorsed the taxation of land values every year.[3]

Site value rating was well supported by local authorities, the Liberal leadership and Members of Parliament, the Labour movement, and even by some Tories, and in 1904 and 1905, bills to effect it, introduced by Charles Trevelyan, comfortably passed their second readings. The Liberal landslide of 1906 further swelled the ranks of supporters and the Parliamentary Land Values Group, which campaigned for taxes based on site value, grew to 280 members.[4] Most of these were not Single-Taxers; many supported land nationalisation, but all of them wanted to see the introduction of a valuation mechanism as a precursor to further reforms.

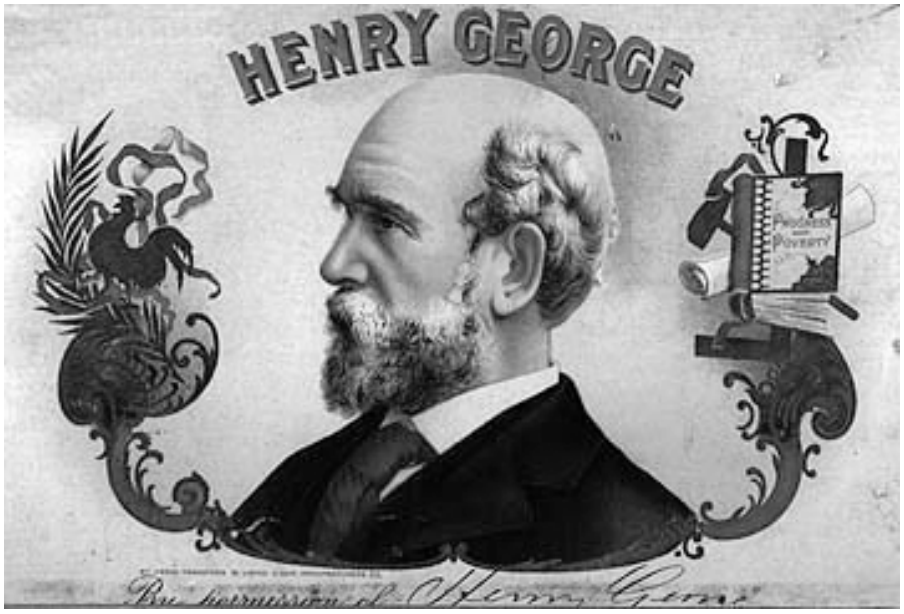
The Single-Tax centre of the movement was small. One of its leaders, the Radical MP, Josiah Wedgwood, claimed it was seven MPs in 1906, including himself, Philip Morrell, Charles Trevelyan and the Scottish Lord Advocate, Alexander Ure.[5] However, they were committed campaigners inside Parliament, and outside it via the various Land Values leagues. Membership of the leagues was modest – the total number of activists did not exceed a few thousand[6] – but though relatively few in number, the movement's supporters were very enthusiastic. J. A. Hobson later helped to explain what motivated them:

> Henry George … was able to drive an abstract notion, that of economic rent, into the minds of a large number of 'practical' men, and so generate therefrom a social movement … George had all the popular gifts of the American orator and journalist, with something more. Sincerity rang out of every utterance.[7]

George's mixture of simple economics and moral certainty, delivered in an evangelical style, filled a gap for some in an otherwise increasingly secular age. As Wedgwood said of his first encounter with George's work: 'Ever since 1905 I have known "that there was a man from God, and his name was Henry George." I had no need henceforth for any other faith.'[8]

George's ideas fitted in well with popular romantic notions of a free peasantry deprived of their birthright by foreign oppressors. They also offered

The lid of a cigar box showing Henry George, author of *Progress and Poverty*.



a conceptually simple and fiscally cheap way of returning population to the land – an aim widely supported right across the political spectrum. By removing the oppression of the landlord and revealing the inner goodness of men, society's ills would be cured without recourse to the bureaucratic meddling and concurrent limitations on personal freedom which came with the reforms advocated by socialists and, of course, by many other Liberals.[9] Indeed, it was a radical vision that competed with the collectivist ideas of 'New Liberalism' or of the Labour Party, and which its advocates claimed was more dynamic than either. Writing in the *Christian Commonwealth* of February 1914, for example, Wedgwood claimed that the Single-Taxers embodied the extraordinary spirit of rebellion that was abroad in the country, while the Labour Party was becoming more and more conservative. Labour men were essentially bureaucratic socialists, while his movement was individualistic:

> We believe that The State Has No Right to take from the individual anything that the individual creates. All that the State has a right to take is what the community creates – for instance, the economic rent of land.[10]

Such language was not best suited to appeal to cautious voters, and throughout their campaign, the Single-Taxers had a constant problem in distinguishing the revolutionary implications of George's idea – an effective end to private property in land and much reduced government revenues – from the modest improvements in land use that they claimed site value rating would bring. The ambiguity over the real aims of the movement played directly into the hands of their opponents, as the Single-Taxers well knew. Edward Hemmerde, another Georgeite MP, for example, warned a Land Values conference in 1912 to avoid any suggestion of the Single Tax when pushing for rates based on site value.[11]

Government bills to introduce site value rating in Scotland were twice rejected, in 1907 and 1908, by the House of Lords, making futile any similar attempt for England. To overcome this problem, the Land-Taxers urged the Government to tack the measure into the Budget. Asquith's assurance, in October 1908, that this was indeed the plan prompted a countrywide campaign in which the Government was deluged with petitions asking for a valuation and land taxes. The *Daily Chronicle*, *Daily News*, *Morning Leader* and *Manchester Guardian* all ran sympathetic articles.[12]

Lloyd George's final land taxation proposals were very modest, but the Land-Taxers were sanguine about that, for the Chancellor had agreed to a land valuation – the first step on the road to taxing land values.[13] They and other land reformers celebrated at the Great Land Reform Demonstration in July 1909 at Hyde Park, which was attended by up to 90,000 people.[14]

The Budget was, of course, initially rejected by the Lords, and between the two 1910 general elections which followed *Land Values* listed the Land-Taxers' demands:[15]

> 1. To abolish rates … replacing them with a tax on the unimproved value of land.
>
> 2. To help rural districts by making 'national' services a national burden paid for by a national land value tax … [and]
>
> 3. To abolish taxes on all foods and comforts of the people.

Meanwhile, the campaign continued in the country with a scheme to send out ten million sets of leaflets, one for every household.[16]

By May 1911, the legal and administrative complexity of the valuation meant that it was not now expected to be completed until 1915. The 173 members of the Parliamentary Land Values Group (out of 314 Liberal and Labour MPs),[17] frustrated by the delays, all signed a memorial listing their demands, which was presented to Asquith and Lloyd George.[18] In response, the Chancellor appointed a Departmental Committee on Local Taxation. Not satisfied with this, the Single-Taxers decided to make the taxation of land values the principle issue in two by-elections – at North-West Norfolk in May 1912 and at Hanley two months later. They won

Charles Trevelyan MP, one of the strongest Liberal supporters of the Land Tax movement

both, and saw this as proof of the popularity of their cause.

It was not necessarily so. In rural North-West Norfolk, Edward Hemmerde, who held the seat for the Liberals with a reduced majority, had argued that taxing land values would raise agricultural wages and had called for a minimum wage for farm workers. What the Land-Taxers saw as a great victory for their policy may simply have been a vote for higher pay. At Hanley, very much Wedgwood territory, the Land-Taxers ran a candidate, Leonard Outhwaite, against the wishes of Liberal headquarters, and in defiance of Labour claims for a free run at the seat.[19] Taxation of land values was an issue that played well in an urban constituency where the rates were eleven shillings in the pound.[20] As Outhwaite began to outpace the uninspiring Labour candidate, Asquith and Lloyd George jumped on the bandwagon with messages of support, though these did not specifically mention land tax.[21] In the last days of the campaign, Labour's support collapsed and Outhwaite won a surprising victory, which *Land Values* claimed as a great achievement,[22] but which *The Times* put down to anti-Labour tactical voting.[23]

A month after his victory, Hemmerde was made a member of Lloyd George's new Land Enquiry, set up to look into rural conditions and urban rating reform. This, alongside the

by-election victories, gave the Single-Taxers great confidence, and even more than usual they claimed to be speaking for Liberalism as a whole. As early as July 1911, Wedgwood, in urging the Government to get on with the valuation, talked of the need to 'bring Liberalism in this House more into line with Liberalism in the country'.[24] Speaking to Land Taxers in July 1912, Frank Neilson, by now the most active Single-Tax MP, dismissed the significance of Home Rule, franchise reform and Welsh disestablishment and added:

> When the decks are cleared of 'traditional Liberalism' what is the Liberal Party going to do? What is its policy to be? The 'new Liberalism' that is rising in this country today is moving under various names. It will want something very radical, very fundamental; something new that is going down to the bottom of things.[25]

It wanted taxation of land values. The monomania of the Land-Taxers was by now causing concern in more moderate Liberal circles. Victory at Hanley had a price – the Land-Taxers had broken the unofficial Gladstone-MacDonald electoral pact, costing Labour a safe seat and they, in retaliation, ran a candidate in the Crewe by-election of July 1912, who took nineteen per cent of the vote and so prevented a Liberal victory. Wedgwood and Outhwaite got a very offhand reception at a Liberal conference in Edinburgh at the end of August,[26] and the Chief Whip warned Lloyd George of the dangers of supporting too radical a policy – something most of the Cabinet agreed with.[27] In October, to appease these concerns, both Asquith and Lloyd George publicly denied that they were Single Taxers.[28] *Land Values* was not concerned, however, asserting that:

> The repudiation of the Single Tax by the Prime Minister and other Liberals means nothing. It leaves the practical steps toward that policy supreme in the Liberal programme, for the party is pledged to the hilt to the Rating and Taxation of Land Values.[29]

This view seemed to be endorsed when, on 13 October 1913, Lloyd George sent a message of support to the 300 delegates at a Land Taxing Conference at Cardiff, wishing them God's speed to every effort to put an end to the land monopoly. They, in return, strongly supported the Liberal Party – and booed an activist who suggested that the Chancellor was not to be trusted.[30] Lloyd George, though, continued to play hot and cold – his Swindon speech on 22 October proposed an agricultural minimum wage, a new bureaucracy and state land purchase, but made no mention of land value taxation.

Wedgwood, who saw this as symptomatic of a government whose actions got ever more 'Whiggish',[31] flew a kite in the Glasgow *Forward* to see if the Radicals could establish a joint land policy with Labour.[32] This was soon dropped, however, as it became apparent that Lloyd George had not abandoned site value rating after all, accepting its partial application in principle in a speech on 4 February 1914.[33]

In the May 1914 Budget, the Chancellor offered £9 million in grants in relief of rates if valuation and revenue bills were passed in the next session allowing for the introduction of site value rating. The grants were popular – they were equivalent to nine pence off the rates[34] – but the Budget's novelty in making current expenditure contingent on future revenue legislation prompted opposition from a 'cave' of about forty fiscally conservative Liberal MPs, and with the deadline for passing a Finance Act approaching, the Government was forced to drop the grants and postpone the requisite legislation until the autumn, by which time, of course, it had other matters to deal with.

In the summer of 1914, the Land-Taxers were more optimistic of success than at any time since 1906. The Government had at last agreed to introduce site value rating, and the legislation was due in a few months' time. The movement was solidly, if not always enthusiastically, behind the Liberal Party, and their by-election successes seemed to show that they did have a viable and radical alternative to the collectivist proposals and class appeal of the Labour Party. If they wanted to cooperate with Labour, and most of them did, it was to avoid the risk of splitting the progressive vote, and not because they feared losing seats directly to Labour.

Did the Single-Taxers help or a hinder the Liberals? Bentley Gilbert has argued that land reform divided and embittered the Liberals as tariff reform had the Tories,[35] and as we have seen, the Single-Taxers certainly did prompt disquiet in the Liberal ranks, but on the whole the evidence presented here suggests that they helped the party. They offered a radical and non-collectivist alternative to socialism, and their belief in individualism and a minimalist state appealed to many working-class voters who were unhappy with the increased tax burden and element of compulsion that came with such New Liberal measures as the National Insurance Act. Not least, their plan for site value rating had wide appeal to those who lived in rented accommodation and paid high rates.

They provided the Liberal leadership with a tool with which to balance the more conservative wing of their party, and both Asquith and Lloyd George played the game of encouraging the Single-Taxers while denying any Georgeite aspirations themselves. The Single-Taxers often sniped at the Liberal leadership and threatened revolt, but they had nowhere else to go, certainly not to a Labour Party that refused to accept the principles of Henry George and saw the future in collectivist terms. Certainly, in the summer of 1914, the Single-Taxers had every reason to believe that they would continue to play an important, and growing, part in Liberal and progressive politics for the foreseeable future.

Afterthought

In 1914, on the verge of seeing a modest version of their hoped for-tax introduced, the Single-Taxers were defeated by the advent of war. The war destroyed the Land Tax movement as it destroyed the Liberal Party, because it provided an issue that divided Land Taxers more than their pre-war ideology had united them. Wedgwood, for example, went off to fight almost immediately, while Trevelyan opposed entry to the war and Outhwaite was an outright pacifist. As

the Liberal Party divided, so did the Land Taxers. In the 1918 election, of the fourteen pre-war MPs most closely associated with the movement, four received the 'coupon', eight stood as Asquithians, one as an independent Liberal, and one, Wedgwood, as an Independent.[36]

Although there were later attempts to tax land value, most notably in Philip Snowden's budget of 1931, never again was George's Single Tax taken as a serious political idea in Britain. The movement shrank to insignificance as differences over the war fractured its membership and as the costs of the war, both financial and in terms of personal liberty, undermined their arguments and marginalised their policies. Without big government and a wide tax base, Britain would not have won the war. There was to be no return to small government.

Paul Mulvey is a Ph.D. student at the London School of Economics, researching the life and political career of Josiah Clement Wedgwood, 1872–1943.

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Archive Sources

University of Bristol Library

By M. T. Richardson

The Liberal Party collections at the University of Bristol Library originate from the acquisition in 1976 of the Gladstone Library of the National Liberal Club.

The Club was founded in 1883 to focus political energies in an era of widening political involvement and, from the earliest days, it was intended to develop at the Club a political and historical library, a fitting tribute to the national services of one of the most bookish of British statesmen. Surviving collections demonstrate that the founders' enthusiasm was channelled effectively and imaginatively into the creation of a library addressing not only matters of historical record but also current political issues, an aim shared by its custodians today. Thus the collection of the election addresses of candidates in London County Council and general elections began in 1889 and 1892 respectively. The series of LCC addresses covers elections until 1913, with the exception of 1910, and records, *inter alia*, the early involvement of women in the political process.

General election coverage continues to the present day. Every declared candidate is requested to submit to the Library an address and any other supporting material thought suitable. In addition, the Library attempts to garner a full range of party manifestos. A similar tradition has developed in the

monitoring of the UK elections to the European Parliament and the recent Scottish and Welsh elections were covered as well. Some retrospective but piecemeal acquisition of election ephemera, chiefly posters and handbills, went on at the Gladstone Library and this tradition is also honoured in Bristol. The earliest material is a substantial collection of posters and bills from the Durham County election of 1820, in which the Whig interest was triumphant and small caches survive for Plymouth (1846–47); Bristol (1868); and Shaftesbury (1880). One group of papers charts the involvement of the Stanton family in the Stroud constituency and includes election materials dating from 1847 through to 1880.

An early start was made at the Gladstone Library in the accumulation of pamphlet literature. Much came from the library of Charles Bradlaugh (1833–91), the freethinker and 'member for India'. To date well over 28,000 records have been added to the University of Bristol Library's catalogue, thanks to grants from the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Research Support Libraries Programme. These records include over 1,800 items issued by the Liberal Party Publication Department. The Department's annual accumulation of publications, the *Pamphlets and Leaflets* series, has been catalogued item by item from 1888 until 1914. As yet the annual volumes for the period 1915–30 have not been so catalogued but some pamphlets from the period have survived separately and have been entered on the catalogue. Naturally, the Library holds other important serials issued by the Publication Department, including the *Liberal Magazine* (1893–1949); the *Liberal Yearbook* (1887–88, 1905–17, 1919–39); and the *Liberal Agent* (1896–1916, 1919–29). The online catalogue is freely available at: www.lib.bris.ac.uk/ALEPH.

In 1991 a substantial part of the archive of the National Liberal Club itself was returned to the Club on permanent loan. The University Library has retained materials principally relating to the proceedings of the Cobden Club, the Eighty Club and the Political and Economic Circle. Documents concerning Liberalism beyond the confines of the Club have remained in Bristol and have been augmented through the good offices of local and national associations and interested individuals.

Thanks to a magnanimous gesture on the part of the British Library of Political and Economic Science, in transferring Minute Book 1 of the Liberal Central Association to Bristol, there now exists a run of the minutes of this body from 1860, at the very beginning of the Liberal Party, through to 1914. Other national bodies for which minute books have survived in the collection include the Liberal Council (Executive Committee, 1927–39); the Liberal Social Council (Committee, 1926–30 and 1934–38, and Executive Committee, 1914–26 and 1947–63, in incomplete form); the National League of Young Liberals (Executive Committee, 1964–71, General Purposes Committee, 1965–68, and Joint Political Planning Committee with the Union of Liberal Students, 1957–68); and the Union of Liberal Students (Executive Committee, 1964–68).

The Women's Liberal Federation has generously deposited its archive, a major collection, including Executive Committee minutes (1910–12 and 1949–88), agendas for Council, correspondence, and many of its publications. The National Liberal Federation is represented through the printed proceedings of its council, 1879–1939, and the correspondence of its galvanic secretary, Francis Schnadhorst (1840–1900), in the form of copies of letters apparently prepared for a publication which never saw the light of day. Resolutions, memoranda and other papers of the Liberal Party Organisation Executive it is thought have survived routine disposal in the case of a single decade, 1950–60, and have been sorted roughly under such headings as constituency and parliamentary strategy, trade unions, and Commonwealth and colonial affairs.

Looking to the provincial presence of Liberalism, the Association of Liberal Councillors has given papers covering not only the operation of the association but also a formidable record of local party publications in the period 1974–88. These papers are complemented by a presentation from the Yorkshire Region of the Liberal Party of records from the 1980s. In the Bristol region the Bristol West Liberal Democrats papers, relating to the Liberals and the Social Democrats from the 1960s through to the '90s were deposited as recently as July 2000 but under a rule of thirty years' closure from the date of creation of each document. The focus of the collection is local government. They have joined the minute books and ledgers of the Western Counties Liberal Federation (1922–67). Among the remaining small collections originating in local associations mention should be made of an album of letters and postcards from the Accrington Liberal Association (1838–1925).

Caches of personal papers housed in the library include letters of Charles Geake, head of the Liberal Publication Department; Sir Geoffrey Le Mesurier Mander, MP for Wolverhampton East; James White, MP for Brighton; and Alfred Austin, the poet laureate. There are political papers (approximately 1949–62) belonging to Derick Mirfin, who was involved with the Union of University Liberal Societies and there is a substantial collection of letters to Jane Cobden Unwin, accompanied by pamphlets and ephemera, covering the period 1880 to 1939. The chief subjects are Irish independence, Eastern Europe, anti-slavery agitation and the Aboriginees Protection Society.

An overview of the Liberal and other holdings of the Special Collections Department of the University Library may be consulted at www.bris.ac.uk/is/services. These holdings are made available to all, subject to appointment and the production of proof of identity. The hours of opening are 9.15 – 6.45 Monday to Wednesday; 9.45 – 6.45 on Thursdays and 9.15 – 4.45 on Fridays. The Department is located in the Arts and Social Sciences Library, Tyndall Avenue, Bristol, BS8 1TJ.

Tony Little introduces one of the speeches not included in *Great Liberal Speeches* because of shortage of space.

'Let us open to them the door of the House of Commons'

Thomas Babington Macaulay on Jewish Disabilities (House of Commons, 17 April 1833)

Thomas Babington Macaulay was born on October 25, 1800, the son of the Evangeli cal philanthropist Zachary Macaulay, a leading opponent of the slave trade. A precocious child, he began writing poetry and history before he was ten. At Trinity College, Cambridge, he developed his skills as a debater. His essay on the English poet John Milton, published in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1825, was the foundation of his fame. Although called to the bar he preferred politics and entered the House, ironically given his support for parliamentary reform, as the member for Lord Lansdowne's pocket borough of Calne.

The speech that made Macaulay's parliamentary reputation occurred early in his career, on 2 March 1831, and is included in *Great Liberal Speeches* under the title 'Reform that you may preserve'; it paved the way for the Great Reform Act of 1832. But Macaulay was a classic Whig reformer, and also fought against religious intolerance, the subject of the speech we reproduce here.

In the nineteenth century the critical battle against discrimination was fought not on the ground of race or sexual orientation but of religion. Although a small minority of the population in Britain, Roman Catholics were the overwhelming majority in Ireland, which had been part of the United Kingdom since 1800 and was subject to British legal discrimination. By winning a seat in parliament that he could not occupy, Daniel O'Connell forced the issue to the forefront. In the face of a threat of revolution in Ireland, Catholic Emancipation was conceded, but this still left the Church of England in a privileged position against which the dissenting churches were to campaign for most of the century.

It also left Jewish people unable to obtain high office. Macaulay spoke against the civil disadvantaging of Jews – 'Jewish disabilities' – several times, and wrote one of his more impassioned essays on the subject. As is very clear from the speech featured here, the case for full citizenship for Jews is the same as for tolerance for any other minority group. He was fighting the same bigotry which opposed Catholic Emancipation and he powerfully argues the case for the inclusion of all groups in civil society. Although resolutions were passed in the Commons from the 1830s, it was Disraeli, as part of Lord Derby's government, who delivered Jewish emancipation in 1858. The Liberal Lionel de Rothschild, who had been winning elections for the City of London since 1847 but had felt unable to take the oath of office as a matter of conscience, was finally able to occupy his seat.

After holding various government posts, Macaulay lost his own seat in 1847, partly as a result of his views on religious tolerance. His attack on the concept of leaving education to philanthropists (the subject of the second speech of his included in *Great Liberal Speeches*) and his defence of funding Anglican schools both antagonised nonconformists, and for

Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–59)

his Edinburgh constituents, this compounded the offence of his support for the funding of the Catholic College at Maynooth in Ireland.

The first two volumes of the *History of England from the Accession of King James II* were finished in 1848 and at once achieved success. In 1852 Macaulay returned to Parliament, but because of a weak heart he refused office. He was created Baron Macaulay of Rothley in 1857, a very early literary peerage, and died on 28 December 1859. He is buried in Westminster Abbey. Macaulay is best known, now, for his *History,* which is the epitome of the Whig view of history as progress but it is best read as great Victorian literature, for Macaulay's opinionated, rhetorical, driving narrative style.

On 17th April 1833, the House of Commons resolved itself into a committee to consider the civil disabilities of the Jews. Mr Warburton took the chair. Mr Robert Grant moved the following resolution:

'That it is the opinion of this committee that it is expedient to remove all civil disabilities at present existing with respect of His Majesty's subjects professing the Jewish religion, with the like exceptions as are provided with respect to His Majesty's subjects professing the Roman Catholic religion.'

The resolution was passed in the Commons but rejected by the House of Lords. Jews were eventually allowed to enter the Commons in 1858.

Mr Warburton, I recollect and my honourable friend the Member for the University of Oxford will recollect, that, when this subject was discussed three years ago, it was remarked, by one whom we both loved and whom we both regret, that the strength of the case of the Jews was a serious inconvenience to their advocate, for that it was hardly possible to make a speech for them without wearying the audience by repeating truths which were universally admitted. If Sir James Mackintosh felt this difficulty when the question was first brought forward in this House, I may well despair of being able now to offer any arguments which have a pretence to novelty.

My honourable friend, the Member for the University of Oxford, began his speech by declaring he had no intention of calling in question the principles of religious liberty. He utterly disclaims persecution, that is to say, persecution as defined by himself. It would, in his opinion, be persecution to hang a Jew, or to flay him, or draw his teeth, or to imprison him, or to fine him; for every man who conducts himself peaceably has a right to his life and his limbs, to his personal liberty and his property. But it is not persecution, says my honourable friend, to exclude any individual or any class from office; for nobody has a right to office: in every country official appointments must be subject to such regulations as the supreme authority may choose to make; nor can any such regulations be reasonably complained of by any member of society as unjust. He who obtains any office, obtains it not as a matter of right, but as a matter of favour. He who does not obtain an office is not wronged; he is only in that situation in which the vast majority of every country must necessarily be. There are in the United Kingdom five and twenty million Christians without places; and, if they do not complain, why should five and twenty thousand Jews complain of being in the same case? In this way my honourable friend has convinced himself that, as it would be most absurd in him and me to say that we are wronged because we are not Secretaries of State, so it is most absurd in the Jews to say that they are wronged because they are, as a people, excluded from public employment.

'Those conclusions are so monstrous'

Now, surely, my honourable friend cannot have considered to what conclusions his reasoning leads. Those conclusions are so monstrous that he would, I am certain, shrink from them. Does he really mean that it would not be wrong in the legislature to enact that no man should be a judge unless he weighed twelve stone, or that no man should sit in parliament unless he were six feet high? We are about to bring in a bill for the government of India. Suppose that we were to insert in that bill a clause providing that no graduate of the University of Oxford should be Governor General or Governor of any Presidency, would not my honourable friend cry out against such a clause as most unjust to the learned body he represents? And would he think himself sufficiently answered by being told, in his own words, that appointment to office is a mere matter of favour, and that to exclude an individual or a class from office is no injury? Surely on consideration, he must admit that official appointments ought not to be subject to regulations purely arbitrary, to regulations for which no reason can be given but mere caprice, and that those who would exclude any class from public employment are bound to show some special reason for the exclusion.

My honourable friend has appealed to us as Christians. Let me then ask him how he understands the great commandment which comprises the law and the prophets. Can we be said to do unto others as we would that they should do unto us if we wantonly inflict on them even the smallest pain? As Christians, surely we are bound to consider first, whether by excluding the Jews from all public trust, we give them pain; and secondly, whether it be necessary to give them that pain in order to avert some greater evil. That by excluding them from public trust we inflict pain on them my honourable friend will not dispute. As a Christian, therefore, he is bound to relieve them from that pain, unless he can show what I am sure he has not yet shown, that it is necessary to the general good that they should continue to suffer.

'The intolerance which he thinks a duty'

But where, he says, are you to stop, if once you admit into the House of Commons people who deny the authority of the Gospels? Will you let in a Mussulman? Will you let in a Parsee? Will you let in a Hindoo, who worships a lump of stone with seven heads? I will answer my honourable friend's question by another. Where does he mean to stop? Is he ready to roast unbelievers at slow fires? If not, let him tell us why – and I will engage to prove his reason is just as decisive against the intolerance which he thinks a duty as against the intolerance which he thinks a crime. Once admit that we are bound to inflict pain on a man because he is not of our religion, and where are you to stop? Why stop at the point fixed by my honourable friend rather than at the point fixed by the honourable Member for Oldham (Mr Cobbett), who would make the Jews incapable of holding land? And why stop at the point fixed by the honourable Member for Oldham rather than at a point which would have been fixed by a Spanish Inquisitor of the sixteenth century? When once you enter on a course of persecution, I defy you to find any reason for making a halt till you have reached the extreme point. When my honourable friend tells us that he will allow the Jews to possess property to any amount, but that he will not allow them to possess the smallest political power, he uses contradictory language. Property is power. The honourable Member for Oldham sees very clearly that it is impossible to deprive a man of political power if you suffer him to be the proprietor of half a county, and therefore very consistently proposes to confiscate the landed estates of the Jews.

But even the honourable Member for Oldham does not go far enough. He has not proposed to confiscate the personal property of the Jews. Yet it is perfectly certain that any Jew who has a million may easily make himself very important in the state. By such steps we pass from official power to landed property, and from landed property to personal property, and from personal property to liberty and from liberty to life. In truth, those persecutors who use the rack and stake have much to say for themselves. They are convinced that their end is good; and it must be admitted that they employ means which are not unlikely to attain their end. Religious dissent has repeatedly been put down by sanguinary persecution. In that way the Albigenses were put down. In that way Protestantism was suppressed in Spain and Italy, so that it has never since reared its head. But I defy anybody to produce an instance in which disabilities such as we are now considering have produced any other effect than that of making the sufferers angry and obstinate.

My honourable friend should either persecute to some purpose or not persecute at all. He dislikes the word persecution. He will not admit that the Jews are persecuted. And yet I am confident that he would rather be sent to the King's Bench Prison for three months or be fined a hundred pounds than be subject to the disabilities under which the Jews lie. How can he then say that to impose such disabilities is not persecution, and that to fine and imprison is persecution? All his reasoning consists in drawing arbitrary lines. What he does not wish to inflict he calls persecution. What he does wish to inflict he will not call persecution. What he takes from the Jews he calls political power. What he is too good-natured to take from the Jews he will not call political power. The Jew must not sit in Parliament, but he may be the proprietor of all the ten-pound houses in a borough. He may have more fifty-pound tenants than any peer in the kingdom. He may give the voters treats to please their palates, and hire bands of gypsies to break their heads, as if he were a Christian and a marquess. All the rest of this system is of a piece.

The Jew may be a juryman, but not a judge. He may decide issues of fact, but not issues of law. He may give a hundred thousand pounds' damages, but he may not in the most trivial case grant a new trial. He may rule the money market; he may influence the exchanges; he may be summoned to congresses of emperors and kings. Great potentates, instead of negotiating a loan with him by tying him in a chair and pulling out his grinders, may treat with him as with a great potentate, and may postpone the declaring of war or the signing of a treaty till they have conferred with him. All this is as it should be; but he must not be a Privy Councillor. He must not be called the Right Honourable, for that is political power. And who is it we are trying to cheat in this way? Even Omniscience. Yes, sir; we have been gravely told that the Jews are under the divine displeasure, and that, if we give them political power, God will visit us in judgement.

Do we think that God cannot distinguish between substance and form? Does not He know that, while we withhold from the Jews the semblance and name of political power, we suffer them to possess the substance? The plain truth is that my honourable friend is drawn in one direction by his opinions and in a directly opposite direction by his excellent heart. He halts between the two opinions. He tries to make a compromise between principles which admit of no compromise. He goes a certain way in intolerance. Then he stops, without being able to give a reason for stopping. But I know the reason. It is his humanity. Those who formerly dragged the Jew at a horse's tail, and singed his beard with blazing furze bushes, were much worse men than my honourable friend; but they were more consistent than he.

'Not for differing from us in opinion'

It has been said that it would be monstrous to see a Jewish judge try a man for blasphemy. In my opinion it is monstrous to see any judge try a man for blasphemy under the present law. But if the law on that subject were in a sound state, I do not see why a conscientious Jew might not try a blasphemer. Every man, I think, ought to be at liberty to discuss the evidences of religion, but no man ought to be at liberty to force on the unwilling ears and eyes of others sounds and sights which must cause annoyance and irritation. The distinction is clear. I think it is wrong to punish a man for selling Paine's *Age of Reason* in a back shop to those who choose to buy or for delivering a Deistical lecture in a private room to those who choose to

listen. But if a man exhibits at a window in the Strand a hideous caricature of that which is an object of awe and adoration to nine hundred and ninety nine out of every thousand of the people who pass up and down that great thoroughfare; if a man, in a place of public resort, applies opprobrious epithets to names held in reverence by all Christians; such a man ought, in my opinion, to be severely punished, not for differing from us in opinion, but for committing a nuisance which gives us pain and disgust. He is no more entitled to outrage our feelings by obtruding his impiety on us, and to say that he is exercising his right of discussion, than to establish a yard for butchering horses close to our houses and to say he is exercising his right of property, or to run naked up and down the public streets and to say that he is exercising his right of locomotion. He has a right of discussion, no doubt, as he has a right of property and a right of locomotion. But he must use all his rights so as not to infringe the rights of others.

These, Sir, are the principles on which I would frame the law of blasphemy; and if the law were so framed, I am at a loss to understand why a Jew might not enforce it as well as a Christian. I am not a Roman Catholic, but if I were a judge at Malta, I should have no scruple about punishing a bigoted Protestant who should burn the Pope in effigy before the eyes of thousands of Roman Catholics. I am not a Mussulman; but if I were a judge in India, I should have no scruple about punishing a Christian who should pollute a mosque. Why, then, should I doubt that a Jew, raised by his ability, learning, and integrity to the judicial bench, would deal properly with any person who in a Christian country should insult the Christian religion?

'Are we to exclude all millenarians from office?'

But, says my honourable friend, it has been prophesied that the Jews are to be wanderers on the face of the earth, and that they are not to mix on terms of equality with the peoples of the countries in which they sojourn. Now, Sir, I am confident that I can demonstrate that this is not the sense of any prophecy which is part of Holy Writ. For it is an undoubted fact that, in the United States of America, Jewish citizens do possess all the privileges possessed by Christian citizens. Therefore, if the prophecies mean that the Jews never shall, during their wanderings, be admitted by other nations to equal participation of political rights, the prophecies are false. But the prophecies are certainly not false. Therefore their meaning cannot be that which is attributed to them by my honourable friend.

Another objection which has been made to this motion is that the Jews look forward to the coming of a great deliverer, to their return to Palestine, to the rebuilding of their temple, to the revival of their ancient worship, and that therefore they will always consider England, not their country, but merely their place of exile. But, surely, Sir, it would be the grossest ignorance of human nature to imagine that the anticipation of an event which is to happen at some time altogether indefinite, of an event which has been vainly expected during many centuries, of an event which even those who confidently expect that it will happen do not confidently expect that that they or their children or their grandchildren will see, can ever occupy the minds of men to such a degree as to make them regardless of what is near and present and certain. Indeed Christians, as well as Jews, believe that the existing order of things will come to an end. Many Christians believe that Jesus will visibly reign on earth during a thousand years. Expositors of prophecy have gone so far as to fix the year when the millenial period is to commence. The prevailing opinion is, I think in favour of the year 1866; but, according to some commentators, the time is close at hand. Are we to exclude all millenarians from parliament and office, on the ground that they are impatiently looking forward to the miraculous monarchy which is to supersede the present dynasty and the present constitution of England, and that therefore they cannot be heartily loyal to King William?

In one important point, Sir, my honourable friend, the Member for the University of Oxford, must acknowledge that the Jewish religion is of all erroneous religions the least mischievous. There is not the slightest chance that the Jewish religion will spread. The Jew does not wish to make proselytes. He may be said to reject them. He thinks it almost culpable in one who does not belong to his race to presume to belong to his religion. It is therefore not strange that a conversion from Christianity to Judaism should be a rarer occurrence than a total eclipse of the sun. There was one distinguished convert in the last century, Lord George Gordon; and the history of his conversion deserves to be remembered. For if ever there was a proselyte of whom a proselytising sect would have been proud, it was Lord George, not only because he was a man of high birth and rank; not only because he had been a member of the legislature, but also because he had been distinguished by the intolerance, nay, the ferocity, of his zeal for his own form of Christianity. But was he allured into the synagogue? Was he even welcomed to it? No, Sir, he was coldly and reluctantly permitted to share the reproach and suffering of the chosen people; but he was sternly shut out from their privileges. He underwent the painful rite which their law enjoins. But when, on his deathbed, he begged to be buried among them according to their ceremonial, he was told that his request could not be granted.

I understand that cry of 'Hear'. It reminds me that one of the arguments against this motion is that the Jews are an unsocial people, that they draw close to each other, and stand aloof from strangers. Really, Sir, it is amusing to compare the manner in which the question of Catholic emancipation was argued formerly by some gentlemen with the manner in which the question of Jewish emancipation is argued by the same gentlemen. When the question was about Catholic emancipation, the cry was, 'See how restless, how versatile, how encroaching, how insinuating, is the spirit of the Church of Rome. See how her priests compass earth and sea to make one

proselyte. How indefatigably they toil, how attentively they study the weak and strong points of every character, how skilfully they employ literature, arts, sciences, as engines for the propagation of their faith. You find them in every region and under every disguise, collating manuscripts in the Bodleian, fixing telescopes in the observatory of Pekin, teaching the use of the plough and the spinning wheel to the savages of Paraguay. Will you give power to the members of a Church so busy, so aggressive, so insatiable?' Well, now the question is about people who never try to seduce any stranger to join them, and who do not wish any body to be of their faith who is not also of their blood. And now you exclaim, 'Will you give power to the members of a sect which remains sullenly apart from other sects, which does not invite, nay, which hardly even admits neophytes?'

The truth is, that bigotry will never want a pretence. Whatever the sect be which it is proposed to tolerate, the peculiarities of that sect will, for the time, be pronounced by intolerant men to be the most odious and dangerous that can be conceived. As to the Jews, that they are unsocial as respects religion is true; and so much the better: for surely, as Christians, we cannot wish that they should bestir themselves to pervert us from our own faith. But that the Jews would be unsocial members of the civil community, if the civil community did its duty by them, has never been proved. My honourable friend who made the motion we are discussing has produced a great body of evidence to show that they have been grossly misrepresented; and that evidence has not been refuted by my honourable friend the Member for the University of Oxford. But what if it were true that the Jews are unsocial? What if it were true that they do not regard England as their country? Would not the treatment that they have undergone explain and excuse their antipathy to the society in which they live?

While the bloody code of Elizabeth was enforced against English Roman Catholics, what was the patriotism of Roman Catholics? Oliver Cromwell said that in his time they were Espaniolised. At a later period it might have been said that they were Gallicised. It was the same with the Calvinists. What more deadly enemies had France in the days of Louis the Fourteenth than the persecuted Huguenots? But would any rational man infer from these facts that either the Roman Catholic as such, or the Calvinist as such, is incapable of loving the land of his birth? If England were now invaded by Roman Catholics, how many English Roman Catholics would go over to the invader? If France were now attacked by a Protestant enemy, how many French Protestants would lend him help? Why not try what effect would be produced on the Jews by that tolerant policy which has made the English Roman Catholic a good Englishman, and the French Calvinist a good Frenchman.

'Such has in every age been the reasoning of bigots'

Another charge has been brought against the Jews, not by my honourable friend the Member for the University of Oxford – he has too much learning and too much good feeling to make such a charge – but by the honourable Member for Oldham, who has, I am sorry to say, quitted his place. The honourable Member for Oldham tells us that the Jews are naturally a mean race, a sordid race, a money-getting race; that they are averse to all honourable callings; that they neither sow nor reap; that they have neither flocks nor herds; that usury is the only pursuit for which they are fit; that they are destitute of all elevated and amiable sentiments. Such, sir, has in every age been the reasoning of bigots. They never fail to plead in justification of persecution the vices which persecution has engendered. England has been to the Jews less than half a country; and we revile them because they do not feel for England more than half patriotism. We treat them as slaves, and wonder that they do not regard us as brethren. We drive them to mean occupations, and then reproach them for not embracing honourable professions. We long forbade them to possess land; and we complain that they chiefly occupy themselves in trade. We shut them out from all the paths of ambition; and then we despise them for taking refuge in avarice.

During many ages we have, in all our dealings with them, abused our immense superiority of force; and then we are disgusted because they have recourse to that cunning which is the natural and universal defence of the weak against the violence of the strong. But were they always a mere money-changing, money-getting, money-hoarding race? Nobody knows better than my honourable friend the Member for the University of Oxford that there is nothing in their national character which unfits them for the highest duties of citizens. He knows that, in the infancy of civilization, when our island was as savage as New Guinea, when letters and arts were still unknown to Athens, when scarcely a thatched hut stood on what was afterwards the site of Rome, this contemned people had their fenced cities and cedar palaces, their splendid Temple, their fleets of merchant ships, their schools of sacred learning, their great statesmen and soldiers, their natural philosophers, their historians and their poets.

'Let not us fight the battle of truth with the weapons of error'

What nation ever contended more manfully against overwhelming odds for its independence and religion? What nation ever, in its last agonies, gave such signal proofs of what may be accomplished by a brave despair? And if, in the course of many centuries, the oppressed descendants of warriors and sages have degenerated from the qualities of their fathers, if, while excluded from the blessings of law, and bowed down under the yoke of slavery, they have contracted some of the vices of outlaws and of slaves, shall we consider this as a matter of reproach to them? Shall we not rather consider it as a matter of shame and remorse to ourselves? Let us do justice to them. Let us open the door of the House of Commons. Let us open to them every career in which ability and energy can

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Biography

John Davies examines the life of Ivor Davies (1915–1986), who would have been the Liberal candidate at the Oxford by-election in 1938.

Keeper of the Liberal Flame

In the late 1930s, Ivor Davies was one of the brightest of the Liberal Party's rising young stars. For the leadership of the Union of University Liberal Students and for the candidacy in Central Aberdeenshire he was preferred respectively to Frank Byers and Jo Grimond, who became two of the most noted Liberals of that generation. He was three times elected President of his university Liberal Club and a profile in the student magazine concluded that 'he has many of the potentialities of a great man'.[1] He was certainly seen as a coming man in the Liberal Party and constituencies were almost queuing up for the services of this eloquent and personable young Liberal. He turned down a far from unpromising candidacy in Bewdley.[2] His celebrity within the party was such that it came as no surprise when he was chosen to fight a by-election of the highest profile in Oxford at the time of the Munich Crisis.

Davies came from the Celtic, nonconformist tradition of many of the Liberal activists of that period. His political beliefs were in the main radical and to the left of the Liberal Party of the day. His election addresses[3] frequently led on world peace and support for the United Nations. He supported unilateral nuclear disarmament and opposed conscription and German rearmament. He was an ardent free trader and advocate of separate Parliaments for Scotland and Wales. He pressed continually for the full implementation of the Beveridge Report, for affordable housing for those on low incomes and for Keynesian programmes of public works. He was very strongly anti-racist. His agenda included profit sharing and partial nationalisation. He wished to reduce indirect taxation and reform purchase tax, leasehold obligations and industrial rates of taxation. He was opposed to comprehensive schools and farm subsidies.

It was Davies' misfortune that the years of his political prime coincided with the bleakest period of the Liberal Party's electoral fortunes, culminating, after the 1956 Carmarthen by-election, in its reduction to five Members of Parliament with the majority of those dependent to an extent on the formal or informal agreement of the Conservatives not to field a candidate. Consequently he was never afforded the opportunity to serve in Parliament, which many thought to be his due. Drawing words from the old hymn, *One Church, One Faith, One Lord,* he was in the habit of referring to himself and his small band of supporters as 'the faithful few'. The present Liberal Party has every reason to be grateful to these few who kept the flame burning in its darkest days and maintained and developed bases from which it was possible to elect Liberal Members of Parliament in happier times for the party.

Ivor Davies was born in Pontrhydygroes, Cardiganshire, on 12 August 1915. He was the second son of Roderick Glyn Davies, a noted Minister of the Congregationalist Church[4] and Elizabeth Florence, neé Morgan, daughter of the local doctor. In those days, this area of Wales was undisputed Liberal territory and Ivor became a convinced and passionate Liberal in the radical Welsh tradition. His political hero was David Lloyd George, with whom his family was acquainted. Throughout his whole life, his home was full of books, pictures and memorabilia connected with the great Welsh statesman.

His father's ministries took him first to Kent and then to Shepherds Bush and to Acton in London, where Ivor received his early education. The family then moved to Morningside in Edinburgh and Ivor completed his education at George Watson's College and Edinburgh University.

While at University he edited the undergraduate magazine *The Student* and quickly gained a reputation

as an outstanding debater in the Liberal cause. He was elected President of the Union of University Liberal Societies. On leaving university, he worked as a journalist on the Liberal *News Chronicle*. His writings for this and for other newspapers and magazines[5] added to his standing within the party and he was soon adopted as Liberal candidate for Central Aberdeenshire.

In October 1938, a by-election occurred in Oxford as a result of the death of the sitting Conservative member, and Ivor Davies was chosen by the local Liberal Association to fight the seat. The Conservative candidate was Quintin Hogg and the Labour candidate Patrick Gordon-Walker, both later Cabinet Ministers for their respective parties. The Munich Agreement had been signed at the end of September and the issue of appeasement dominated the campaign.[6] This was the first and most famous in a series of by-elections in which a Popular Front was formed against the Government's foreign policy.

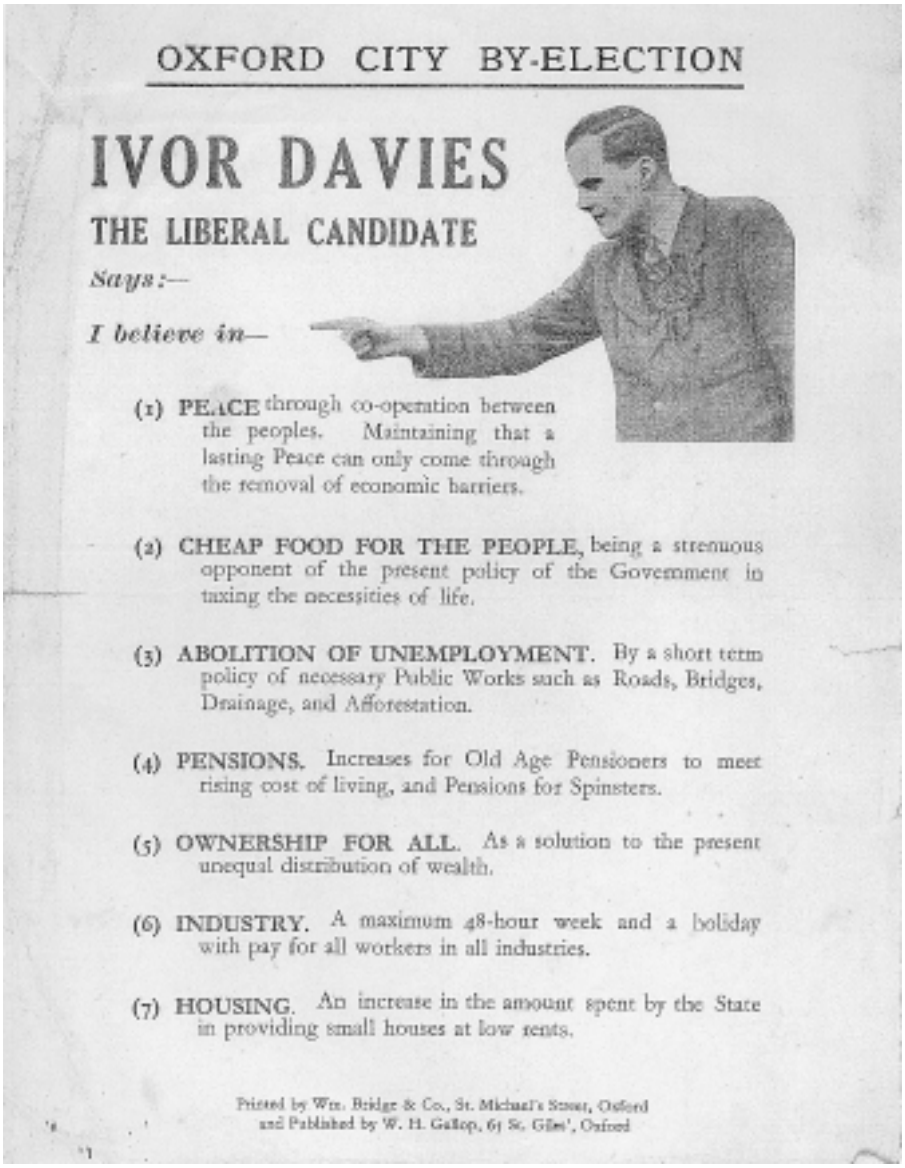
The Labour Party opposed any co-operation with the Liberal Party, but the Liberal Party Executive passed a resolution in October 1938 declaring that 'because of the present emergency it is ready to subordinate party considerations and to cooperate wholeheartedly with men and women of all parties, who realise the gravity of the time.' Davies entered the campaign against the wishes of the Liberal Party leadership, and received no support from the national party organisation.

According to Davies's own account:[7]

> The contest had not been in progress long before it became quite clear that the Liberals were succeeding beyond their most sanguine expectations. The prospect of success was small but the Labour candidate seemed destined to be a bad third. In view of the international situation, Davies offered early in the contest to withdraw, if Gordon-Walker would do the same, to allow an independent anti-Munich candidate to go forward. The offer was treated with scorn, but as the pattern became plain, the local Socialists in their alarm reconsidered the position quickly. Their leaders … Frank Pakenham and R.H.S. Crossman … made representations to Labour Party Headquarters and were met with a blank refusal. It was not until Transport House agents came into the Division and saw the exact position that some progress was made. Mr Gordon-Walker was most reluctant to withdraw, but three days before nomination day he agreed to do so and a move was promoted to persuade Mr A.D. Lindsay, the Master of Balliol, to go forward.
>
> He required little persuasion; few candidates can have manifested a greater enthusiasm to be adopted. By this time the local Liberal Association, and even their candidate, were disappointed that their sound work was to be in vain and took some persuading to withdraw from the fight. After an emotional and fervid meeting, their correct course of action became plain and Davies stood aside and handed over his organisation to Lindsay … The election itself came as something of an anti-climax after the historic preliminaries. Hogg was a first-rate candidate and made rings round Lindsay, whose classroom style and uninspiring delivery were ill-fitted for the hustings … An unusual feature of the contest was that a number of prominent Liberals, who had declared their inability to speak for their own candidate, found it convenient to visit Oxford to support Lindsay.

Ivor Davies said that during the negotiations he formed a high opinion of Pakenham's integrity and a poor opinion of his ability, and vice versa for Crossman.

One of the arguments put forward for adopting Lindsay as candidate was that 'everyone knew him'. Because he was a



OXFORD CITY BY-ELECTION

IVOR DAVIES

THE LIBERAL CANDIDATE

Says:—

I believe in—

(1) **PEACE** through co-operation between the peoples. Maintaining that a lasting Peace can only come through the removal of economic barriers.

(2) **CHEAP FOOD FOR THE PEOPLE,** being a strenuous opponent of the present policy of the Government in taxing the necessities of life.

(3) **ABOLITION OF UNEMPLOYMENT.** By a short term policy of necessary Public Works such as Roads, Bridges, Drainage, and Afforestation.

(4) **PENSIONS.** Increases for Old Age Pensioners to meet rising cost of living, and Pensions for Spinsters.

(5) **OWNERSHIP FOR ALL.** As a solution to the present unequal distribution of wealth.

(6) **INDUSTRY.** A maximum 48-hour week and a holiday with pay for all workers in all industries.

(7) **HOUSING.** An increase in the amount spent by the State in providing small houses at low rents.

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great figure in the university, his donnish supporters assumed that everyone in the town would know him as well. They did not. Over half the electorate had no idea who he was. There was great interest in the by-election among undergraduates, many of whom did not have a vote, and a fair amount of apathy among townspeople, who had. The Popular Front candidate and some of his supporters were, however, unwilling to campaign in a way that would win the popular vote. The street slogan was 'Oxford Wants Lindsay. Hitler wants Hogg', but, campaigning in the city, Lindsay palpably lacked the common touch. As a distinguished philosophy don and Lindsay supporter put it: 'If he can't win on his own merits, without being vulgar, better to lose'.[8] Hogg was elected by just under 3,500 votes.

Ivor Davies had always been a strong advocate of the League of Nations and an opponent of fascism and had been involved in some fierce demonstrations against Sir Oswald Mosley. When the Second World War was declared, he enlisted in the Royal Air Force on the first day and rose through the ranks to become Flying Officer, acting Flight Lieutenant. He served in Burma and was wounded in the drive for Rangoon. In 1940 he married Jean McLeod, who had been a fellow student at Edinburgh, in his father's church. They had three children who followed them in their interest in politics. His daughter Mary, prior to her tragic early death in 1982, had followed her father as President of Edinburgh University Liberal Club and had been elected a Liberal councillor in the London Borough of Havering. His son John was Parliamentary candidate for Labour against Mrs Thatcher in Finchley in 1987 and councillor and Group Leader in the London Borough of Barnet.

Both Ivor and his wife were opponents of the party truce that prevailed during the war. Jean acted as agent to the journalist Honor Balfour in the celebrated Darwen by-election of 1943 when, standing as an Independent Liberal, she came within seventy votes of defeating the National Government candidate.[9]

At the end of the war, Ivor returned to fight Central Aberdeenshire. With John Junor, later editor of the *Sunday Express*, who was fighting the neighbouring constituency, he toured the Highlands and Islands speaking for the Liberal cause. The Scottish Labour Party was interested in attracting his political talents to their ranks, and it was suggested that he might be offered the safe seat of Dunfermline Burghs, but Ivor was a resolute Liberal and spurned these advances.

In the streets of Central Aberdeenshire, local schoolchildren who supported the Liberals sang this rhyme about the three candidates:

> Vote for Spence
> And you'll get no pence.
> Vote for Hay
> And you'll get no pay.
> Vote for Ivor
> And you'll get a fiver.

– not to be taken literally, of course! In what proved to be a poor general election for the Liberals, Ivor finished strongly in third place, very close behind the Labour candidate.[10]

Following the 1945 election, his interest in international affairs and world peace led to him taking the post of Regional Officer for the United Nations Association in the North East of England. He returned to Scotland in 1950 to contest what was now West Aberdeenshire. He increased his vote but again just failed to overtake the Labour candidate. He had, however, established the strong base that contributed to Liberal electoral victories later in the century.

In 1950, he moved his family to Oxford to work in partnership with Donald McIntosh Johnson,[11] an old friend from the days of the wartime party truce, who had come very close to winning Chippenham in 1943 as an Independent Liberal but later became Conservative MP for Carlisle. It was reported that at one time Johnson and Davies had devised a scheme whereby they would divide the country in two and each fight all by-elections in their respective halves. Ivor Davies never allowed politics to interfere with friendship and he retained strong and lasting links with those like Johnson and Honor Balfour who left the Liberal Party. In fact, he supported Johnson in the particular campaigns he pursued in Parliament on such issues as

Ivor Davies in 1955

mental health, drug abuse, aid to travellers and the winding up of the National Liberals. Johnson had an eccentric streak and at one time mounted furious opposition to the dangers he saw in the introduction of winking indicators on cars, insisting that arm-operated indicators should continue. The situation that we would now face on modern motorways had he prevailed can barely be imagined.

Johnson owned the Marlborough Arms Hotel in Woodstock but later concentrated his energies on his small publishing firm Christopher Johnson (later Johnson Publications). Ivor was his co-director and in 1950 published his own book, *Trial by Ballot*, a political history of the years 1918 to 1945, regarded by academics as one of the best accounts of the period.[12] He was also heavily involved in writing and editing the best-selling *I was Churchill's Shadow* by Detective Chief Inspector W. H. Thompson, who had guarded Churchill during the war. He later moved to become Chairman and Managing Director of the book distribution company Trade Counter which expanded and prospered under his leadership. He served for many years on the Distribution and Methods Committee of the Publishers Association and was Secretary of the Independent Publishers Guild.[13] Both his sons also worked in publishing. John was a Director of the Publishers Association for twenty-four years. His second son, Michael, worked initially with his father at Trade Counter, was a co-founder of Wordsworth Editions

and later established his own book business in Ware, Hertfordshire.

Back in Oxford, Davies quickly threw himself into local Liberal politics and was selected as parliamentary candidate for the 1955 election.[14] The Liberals had not contested Oxford in 1951, and he lost his deposit, polling just above 5000 votes. He fought the seat again in 1959 and in 1964 and by then had raised the Liberal vote to a creditable 8797.[15]

Ivor Davies first stood for Oxford City Council in 1953 in the East Ward[16] where he finished bottom of the poll. For many years thereafter there was no set of council elections at which he was not a candidate. After several efforts in the North Ward, he concentrated on his home ward of Summertown & Wolvercote. He was diligent and conscientious on local issues,[17] from the building of motorways to the removal of the infamous Cutteslowe Wall and built up a considerable local following. At that time, the Labour Party rarely contested the seat. In 1962, aided by a swing to the Liberals in the wake of the remarkable Orpington by-election victory, he gained the Summertown & Wolvercote seat on Oxford City Council, being among the first Liberals to serve on that council for many years. He became Vice-Chairman of the Libraries Committee. He lost the seat in 1965. Here, as ever, politics did not impede friendship. He built strong and enduring relationships with the Oxford builder and Conservative councillor, Harry Bowdery, the Chief Clerk of the Council, Gilbert Phipps, and the left-wing Labour councillors Olive and Edmund Gibbs. In her autobiography,[18] Olive Gibbs, twice Lord Mayor of Oxford, Chair of Oxfordshire County Council and of the national CND, praised his 'life-long political and personal integrity' and described Ivor and Jean as 'close personal friends'. Ivor Davies's last redoubtable campaign for election to what was then Oxfordshire County Council was in the North Ward in 1982, at the age of sixty-six.

He remained on the radical side of Liberalism. At the Liberal Party Assembly in Edinburgh in 1961, he led a revolt against the platform on the recognition of East Berlin and was elected to the Liberal Party Council. Although he became a hero to many of the rank and file, this action did not endear him to the party hierarchy. He was also scathingly attacked in the press by Bernard Levin, who described him as 'the staring-eyed idiot from Oxford'.[19] Nonetheless, his contribution to the Party Council and committees was sufficiently valued for him to be seen as one of the front figures in the 1964 general election campaign.[20]

He chaired the Oxford Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. He developed strong links with the University Liberal Club, particularly when his son John was at Christ Church, and was appointed honorary Vice-President. Good friends and supporters in Oxford included Lord and Lady Beveridge, Lord and Lady Franks and Bob Hawke, later Labour Prime Minister of Australia.

The links with the University Liberal Club proved his undoing. A group of dons, led by Max Beloff, pressed for one of their number to be the Parliamentary candidate and Ivor was not re-selected for the 1966 election. He was deeply disappointed by this decision. Those who voted against him claimed he was 'too old and past it'. The reference to his age was unfair, for he was still some months short of fifty, but clearly, after four candidatures, there was pressure from some quarters for a change. In essence, this was a contest between Town and Gown of the type for which Oxford is renowned. Although university-educated, Davies associated himself much more with the people of the city than the dons in the colleges. Beloff was right wing in his views, hated CND and later became an ardent Thatcherite and Conservative life peer. Davies' hero in an Oxford context was the populist former Liberal MP Frank Gray. The conflict may be summed up in the response of the outspoken Ted Rosser, former Morris car worker and successful Oxford businessman, who stood in tandem with Ivor Davies on many occasions, to Beloff after the selection: 'They may call you Beloff, but all I say is bugger off'. Rosser and the other regulars of the City Liberal Association showed their appreciation of Ivor Davies' services by making him their President, a post from which he continued to enthuse the Liberal cause for many years.

With his wife Jean, he also built upon his interests in the Oxford community, chairing the North Oxford Grove House Club and the Victim Support Group. Jean was a magistrate in Oxford for fifteen years and a founder of Norreys House, a residential home for young women. Ivor adhered firmly to the Christian faith of his father and was a deacon and secretary of Summertown United Reform Church. In 1984, the Liberal leader, David Steel, nominated Ivor for the award of the CBE[21] for political and public service. He died two years later and is buried in the family grave at Strata Florida, Cardiganshire, with his wife Jean, who died eighteen months afterwards.

Ivor and Jean Davies gave a great deal to the people of Oxford, who showed their recognition by packing into the church in Summertown for their funerals. At Ivor's, the Minister, Donald Norwood, told the congregation 'how proud we have all been of our Ivor'. *Cwm Rhondda* was sung and the parting blessing was given in Welsh. At Jean's funeral, Olive Gibbs read the lesson and Honor Balfour gave the valedictory address, in which she spoke movingly of the bright young woman who had come with her to Darwen and served so valiantly in the momentous by-election forty-five years before. Tributes flowed in the local press.[22]

Ivor Davies was an able and eloquent man, both on the political platform and in the pulpit, where he was a tireless lay preacher. His was a fine life, guided by the deepest Liberal principles. He would have loved to have been a Liberal Member of Parliament and often said with complete sincerity and honesty that he would literally have given his right arm for six months in the House of Commons in the Liberal cause. He would have been delighted to have lived to see the outcome of the 1997 and 2001 general elections and to see the results of all his hard work in his old stamping grounds come to fruition, when the constituencies of Oxford West & Abingdon and Gordon in Aberdeenshire both returned Liberal Democrat MPs.

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Dr J. Graham Jones looks at the life and political career of the contentious, individualistic, right-wing Liberal MP for Cardiganshire from 1945 until 1966, Captain E. Roderic Bowen MP (1913–2001)

Grimond's Rival

Evan Roderic Bowen was born at the small market town of Cardigan on the coast of west Wales on 6 August 1913, the son of a retired businessman who had been much involved in local Liberal politics. He always proudly recalled his family's active involvement in local Liberal politics even when he was a small boy when he had dyed his pet terrier in the Liberal colours. Educated at Cardigan Council School and Cardigan County School, he graduated with first class honours in law at both the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth (forty miles from his home), and St John's College, Cambridge. Periods at the Inns of Court and on the continent led to the call to the bar by the Middle Temple in 1936. Bar practice commenced in 1937, Bowen taking chambers at Cardiff and practising on the South Wales circuit. At the outbreak of hostilities, he twice volunteered for military service, but was rejected on medical grounds before, in 1940, at his third dogged attempt, securing acceptance as a private, in which capacity he served for eighteen months. Securing a commission in the autumn of 1941, he was an officer for six months before being appointed chief instructor in administration of pay duties at a school for officers under the Southern Command. Bowen was later seconded to the staff of the Judge-Advocate General to the Forces, and towards the end of the war participated in duties associated with Courts Martial, Courts for Prisoners of War and the preparation of cases against National War Criminals.

As a barrister, his work often focused on workmen's compensation and he took a particular interest in local government administration. His devotion to Welsh culture was reflected in his involvement in the activities of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion and *Urdd Gobaith Cymru* (the Welsh League of Youth), while he also served as legal advisor to the local Teifi Net Fishermen's Association. Bowen's Liberal antecedents were notable. He addressed a number of political meetings in support of D. O. Evans, his predecessor as Liberal MP for Cardiganshire since 1932, and R. Hopkin Morris, Independent Liberal MP for the county, 1923–32, who subsequently re-entered the Commons as Liberal MP for neighbouring Carmarthenshire in 1945. He was also approached in connection with the Liberal vacancy at Brecon & Radnor. He played some part in Liberal activities in south Wales and came into contact with the leading Liberals in the area.

In June 1945, after the wholly unexpected death of county MP D. O. Evans, Bowen was chosen, perhaps surprisingly, as the Liberal candidate for his native Cardiganshire over the heads of a number of prominent local Liberals.[1] In the ensuing general election campaign no Conservative contender appeared, and the Liberal platform focused primarily on an attack on 'the rigid and inflexible policy of Socialism'.[2] The Labour candidate in the county was Iwan Morgan, an economist and Cardiff university lecturer with strong Cardiganshire connections. Although the absence of a Tory candidate meant that Bowen's election to parliament was nigh on certain, D. O. Evans, in his last public appearance in the county shortly before his death, had warned local Liberals that, 'It would be very unwise to be overconfident. That attitude of mind would only breed complacency.'[3] In the event he was probably overcautious, for Bowen defeated Morgan by the wide margin of 8194 votes, by far the highest majority of the twelve Liberal MPs returned in 1945, the new MP immediately describing the outcome as 'a victory for personal and political freedom … a defeat for bureaucracy and state control'.[4] 'The young upstart', chosen against the odds only a few weeks earlier, had, it seemed, already proved his worth.[5] At the same time veteran Liberal Sir Rhys Hopkin Morris narrowly captured highly marginal Carmarthenshire, the only Labour loss in the whole of the United Kingdom, and an enormous personal triumph for him.

Short, stout, bespectacled and balding, Roderic Bowen entered the House of Commons in 1945 as one of a tiny fragment of twelve Liberal MPs, no

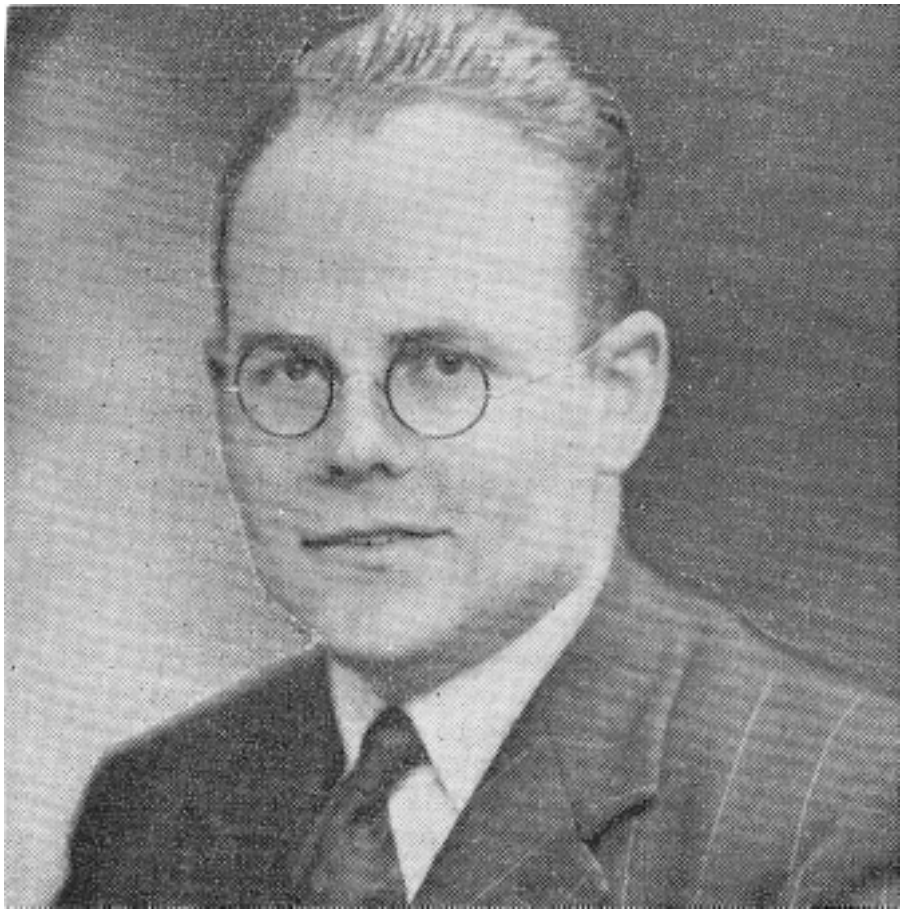
fewer than seven of whom represented Welsh divisions. Morale within their ranks was inevitably at an all-time low, for the party had been ravaged beyond belief at the recent poll in a socialist landslide which had engulfed even party leader Sir Archibald Sinclair (by the agonisingly slim margin of 61 votes) at Caithness & Sutherland, and its chief whip, Sir Percy Harris, at Bethnal Green South-West. Other casualties included Sir William Beveridge at Berwick-upon-Tweed, James de Rothschild on the Isle of Ely and veteran Sir Goronwy Owen at Caernarfonshire. Even so, some long-serving Liberal MPs remained at Westminster, and initially Bowen was dwarfed in stature by such figures as Clement Davies (Montgomeryshire), soon to be elected 'chairman' (if not leader) of the fragmented Parliamentary Liberal Party, Lady Megan Lloyd George (Anglesey), self-appointed champion of the party's left wing, her brother Major Gwilym Lloyd George (Pembrokeshire), a notable political maverick moving swiftly to the right, Tom Horabin (North Cornwall), another left-wing radical and the new Liberal chief whip, and Edgar Granville (Eye).[6] They were indeed 'a motley group',[7] totally lacking in cohesion, with no common political philosophy or parliamentary strategy, ever ready to dissent, even rebel, some of its members perched on opposing poles of the political spectrum.

Bowen was soon to make his mark in the Commons as a dextrous, amusing debater, but clearly on the right wing of his tiny party, and generally reluctant to break ranks with the party leadership, always adhering closely to the official party line – 'the plump Welshman with the polished manner'.[8] Lord Emlyn Hooson has written of both Roderic Bowen and R. Hopkin Morris in the 1945–50 parliament as determined to 'have nothing whatever to do with the Labour Party and socialism and were regarded as being of the right'.[9] The novice MP for Cardiganshire participated only occasionally in parliamentary debate, generally speaking on Welsh affairs, often on matters of direct relevance to his constituency. From the outset of his political career, however, Bowen was generally well-liked at Westminster. His sole critics at the Commons, it seems, were verbatim reporters; when he moved a motion in 1949 to appoint a royal commission on war pensions, it took him all of sixty-eight minutes.

Generally Roderic Bowen tended to be critical of the policies and conduct of the Attlee administrations. As severe economic depression hit the country during the winter of 1947–48, he told his local Liberal Association that the onset of slump was 'because the Government had concentrated on political dogma rather than on facing immediate economic difficulties', warning that both Aneurin Bevan's embryonic National Health Service and the National Insurance Act were 'being threatened by the growing danger of inflation'.[10] As the members of the fractious Parliamentary Liberal Party displayed highly inconsistent, even bizarre, voting records in the Commons lobbies, Bowen's personal performance at the House came under scrutiny, provoking him to retort that 'he had always voted as his judgement dictated', and to point to his support for the setting up of the National Health Service. He asserted that, by following their consciences on each major issue, the small group of Liberal MPs constituted 'a far more critical opposition to the Government than the Official Opposition did'.[11] Yet, although highly critical of doctrinaire socialism, Bowen doggedly renounced an overture from the local Conservative Party that a joint candidate might stand at the next general election, rejoicing in the decision of the Cardiganshire Liberal Party to reject out-of-hand an approach from Sir Arthur Harford, chairman of the Cardiganshire Conservatives, that the two parties might field a joint candidate at the forthcoming election. Ironically, in the neighbouring Pembrokeshire constituency a formal 'Lib–Con' pact was formed to support the re-election of National Liberal (or Liberal and Conservative) MP Major Gwilym Lloyd-George.

Failure to conclude such an agreement in Cardiganshire meant that a keenly contested three-cornered fray was likely in 1950, Bowen fearing for his political future and sensing that Cardiganshire Tories and local socialists were 'collaborating in their efforts to oust the Liberal member'.[12] His heartfelt pessimism was clearly shared by party leader Clement Davies, who dejectedly wrote to his predecessor, Sir Archibald Sinclair, in the early days of the new year, 'I do not know whether I shall be back here … Even if I do pull it off, it will be "a damned near thing". … Each of us in Wales will have a very tough fight.' 'No-one knows who will be here' was his pessimistic conclusion only days later.[13] Again Iwan Morgan, reluctantly re-selected by the Cardiganshire Labour Party as its candidate, could point the finger at Roderic Bowen's unimpressive and inconsistent voting record in the Commons lobbies.[14] An intense three-cornered fray threatened to undermine Bowen's position; in his carefully phrased election address he pointedly noted 'the intervention of a third candidate' which, he felt, had 'subsequently increased the danger of the socialist being returned'.[15] In the event, his personal anxiety was misplaced, for he was re-elected by a majority of no fewer than 8,038 votes over Morgan, again the highest margin enjoyed by any of the nine Liberal MPs returned. Bowen had captured 52 per cent of the Cardiganshire vote, and his was the only division apart from Montgomeryshire where the Liberals had secured an absolute majority in a three-cornered contest. Thereafter he was not to face a Conservative opponent until October 1964.

When the second Attlee administration, with its much reduced overall majority, was compelled to go to the country again in the autumn of 1951, Roderic Bowen, now facing a sole Labour opponent, Revd. Brynmor Williams, vicar of Llansamlet, was sure of re-election, increasing his majority to 10,262, again the highest of the six Liberal MPs returned to Westminster, although the turnout in Cardiganshire plummeted sharply. In his election address the Liberal candidate urged his constituents 'to resist any attempts to impose Nationalisation upon our Agricultural Industry and to take land unreasonably for non-agricultural purposes'.[16] But the total number of Liberal MPs



Roderic Bowen in 1950

now shrank to an all-time low of six, while the defeats of Lady Megan Lloyd George (Anglesey) and Emrys O. Roberts (Merionethshire) meant that the three Liberal MPs who remained in Wales – Bowen, Clement Davies and Sir Rhys Hopkin Morris – were all seen as right-wingers, having much in common with Churchill's Conservatives. None had faced a Tory opponent in 1951, suggesting that their political philosophy was acceptable to Conservative Party headquarters. As Conservative local organisation remained relatively weak in these three constituencies, Central Office was generally happy to endorse the re-election of sitting Liberal MPs perched on the right of their tiny party rather than see the seats fall to the Labour Party in three-cornered contests. All three MPs increased their majorities in 1951, but none was the beneficiary of a formal 'Lib–Con' electoral pact as was Donald Wade at Huddersfield West (a perpetuation of the 'Huddersfield arrangement' instituted in 1950) and Arthur Holt at Bolton West. It was generally felt, however, that Clement Davies and Roderic Bowen would have held on even if they had faced Conservative opponents.[17] Rumours circulated during the 1951 election campaign that Davies might well be offered ministerial office in the event of a Tory victory at the polls (as, in fact, he soon was).

The defeats of Lady Megan and Emrys Roberts also reduced sharply the involvement of Welsh Liberals in the tenacious Parliament for Wales agitation inaugurated in July 1950. In reply to a newspaper questionnaire circulated during October 1951 which included the question, 'Are you in favour of a Welsh Parliament and does your party officially support that view?', Bowen replied, 'Yes, to deal with the domestic problems of Wales, but not in substitution for, but in addition to, Welsh representation at Westminster.'[18] Yet none of the three remaining Welsh Liberal MPs actively endorsed the campaign's activities, Bowen years later attributing his reluctance to participate to his view that 'there were too many political viewpoints represented' within the movement.[19] Generally Bowen had tended to favour the grant of Dominion status to Wales. Presumably Clem Davies's taxing role as party leader during the years of the Welsh Parliament movement prevented his active involvement, although he was a consistent vocal advocate of the national rights of Wales. But there was some substance to Plaid Cymru gibes that Liberal support for the agitation was at best 'anaemic'.[20]

By the mid 1950s Roderic Bowen was firmly entrenched in his Cardiganshire citadel, the impressive victor of three parliamentary elections by a wide margin. At the end of 1952 a full-time secretary-organiser to the Cardiganshire Liberal Association, in the person of J. Parry Williams, a former employee of the Ministry of Labour, was appointed. The position had previously been vacant for a full eighteen months.[21] The nomination of David Jones Davies, a native of Tregaron within the county, who had served as further education officer for Caernarfonshire, as the county's next Labour candidate spurred county Liberals to overhaul their organisation. 'We are inclined to be slack in our efforts between elections', warned local organiser Mrs Arthian Davies, 'Why should we worry? Mr Bowen is sure to get in, and it is in that attitude that the danger lies.'[22] During 1954 a concerted effort was made to streamline local organisation and increase support for Bowen.[23] At the end of May there was widespread rejoicing in Welsh Liberal circles as Clement Davies celebrated his silver jubilee as Liberal MP for Montgomeryshire. Major J. Parry Brown, chairman of the Liberal Party of Wales, in a major speech assured his listeners that a 'tremendous Liberal revival' was about to happen, triggered by the recent re-establishment of local Liberal associations in many parts of Wales.[24] As yet another election campaigned dawned, intense rumours pervaded Cardiganshire that ill health might well compel Bowen to retire from political life, conjecture which was emphatically repudiated by the Member.[25]

In May 1955 Roderic Bowen faced the Cardiganshire electorate for the fourth general election in succession, again opposed only by a Labour contender, in the person of D. J. Davies. But the 1955 campaign was a more heated affair than the previous contests, characterised by notably venomous personal attacks. Bowen had represented

the county in parliament for nigh on ten years. Almost immediately upon his first election in 1945, however, he had resumed his practice at the Bar and had built up an extensive and lucrative legal business in south Wales. In 1952, at barely thirty-nine years of age, he took silk, an accolade all the more notable because he was the first Welshman to become a QC for fully sixty years. He had been appointed Recorder of Cardiff in 1950 and Recorder of Merthyr Tydfil in 1953. His appearances in his constituency declined, he became slack at attending to correspondence and spoke in the Commons only sparingly, generally on legal matters or Welsh affairs, subjects of especial interest to him. He was absent from many debates of importance to his constituents, and generally seemed to support the Conservative government in the division lobbies. Although he had become President of the Liberal Party of Wales in 1948, and was to be elected chairman of the Welsh Parliamentary Party in 1955, there was a widespread feeling that in his heart of hearts Bowen preferred his highly lucrative legal career to his political and parliamentary work.

At D. J. Davies's adoption meeting at the end of April 1955, D. J. Jones, the president of the Cardiganshire Labour Party, accused Bowen of being the latest in a long line of 'playboy' MPs to represent Cardiganshire: 'No man can pursue a private career and do justice to his constituents at the same time. No man can be in Cardiff and Westminster at the same time.'[26] Bowen responded at his adoption meeting by quoting from the 1955 *Yearbook* of the Cardiganshire branch of the National Farmers' Union: 'Cardiganshire is extremely fortunate in its MP, he was first elected in 1945, and the trust reposed in him by the electors has been amply rewarded for he has always served the county well.'[27] In a straight fight with Labour, the outcome was never in any real doubt, although Bowen's majority was reduced somewhat to 8,817. Somehow, in spite of an appalling Gallup rating of only 2 per cent at the beginning of the election campaign, and a total of no more than 110 candidates, all six Liberal MPs held on, although only one of these – Jo Grimond (Orkney & Shetland) – survived a three-cornered contest, an impressive personal victory. No Conservative contender appeared in the other five Liberal seats (the only divisions in the whole of the United Kingdom which they did not contest), again the result of a 'Lib–Con' electoral pact at Bolton West and Huddersfield West. Once again Bowen recorded the highest majority of the six Liberals, just ahead of veteran party leader Clement Davies, who polled 8,500 more votes than his sole Labour opponent. None of the six had experienced an especially close shave.

During the winter of 1954–55 Clement Davies had suffered a serious illness and had been forced to spend much of the ensuing spring recuperating. His involvement in the 1955 election campaign, both nationally and in Montgomeryshire, was minimal. Thereafter he faced mounting pressure to retire from the party leadership, for it was widely felt throughout the Liberal Party that more assertive, radical, dynamic helmsmanship was essential.[28] Davies at first seemed reluctant to yield, but eventually announced his retirement at the October 1956 party assembly at Folkestone. The natural successor, by background, temperament and dedication, was Jo Grimond. Sir Rhys Hopkin Morris, now fully sixty-eight years of age, totally lacking in political ambition, and hamstrung by his official position as Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means, was immediately ruled out of the succession. Both Arthur Holt and Donald Wade owed their continued re-election to local Conservative support within their constituencies, and should this be withdrawn, they faced electoral defeat, a situation clearly wholly unacceptable for the leader of a national party. That left only Grimond and Bowen.

Many Welsh Liberals began to press Roderic Bowen's claims as the champion of the tiny party's right wing, ever extolling as he did the virtues of private enterprise and the re-introduction of flogging, strikingly at odds with Grimond's radical anti-Conservative leanings which had led to his frequently advocating a 'Lib–Lab' pact. Most of the party faithful, however, felt that a Bowen leadership, like that of Clement Davies, would have been 'soft and round, and enveloped in a cloud of words'. Grimond, who had come to prominence at Westminster as his party's chief whip since 1950, was considered generally 'craggier and capable of stirring the faithful with dramatic conference speeches'.[29] Indeed, Davies may well have held on until the autumn of 1956 against his better judgement to allow Grimond an opportunity to serve his apprenticeship and win his spurs as party whip. At the party assembly Grimond first nominated Bowen for the party leadership, but Bowen, sensing that his rival was the popular choice of the vast majority of delegates, promptly nominated him for the top job. Predictably it was Grimond who won the day, but Bowen still appears to have harboured a grudge, pointedly boycotting the next Liberal Party assembly by taking advantage of a free trip to the United States. Thereafter relations between the two men were distinctly frosty – Grimond did not once even refer to Bowen in his extensive *Memoirs* published in 1979 – and, when he accepted the position of Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (*ex officio* the second Deputy Speaker of the Commons) years later in 1965, Bowen may have been motivated to some extent by feelings of revenge against Grimond and the Liberal Party hierarchy.

Moreover, murmurs of discontent intensified within Cardiganshire. Early in 1957 some members of the Aberystwyth Town Council expressed their concern that Bowen did not participate in the debate on the Rating and Valuation Bill, thus failing to advance the claims of the county and borough, local councillor Elfed Williams protesting, 'Unfortunately the Member for Cardiganshire was not there, and Cardiganshire's views were not pressed.'[30] Again rumours circulated both in the constituency and at Westminster that the Member would not seek the Liberal nomination at the next general election. The conjecture was sharply repudiated by Roderic Bowen: 'It's all twaddle and nonsense. It's a hardy annual put up by the Labour boys when things are quiet. Where did you hear about it?'[31] Soon he found himself one of only five Liberal MPs at the Commons as Carmarthenshire fell to Labour after a hotly contested by-election in February 1957 following the

death of Sir Rhys Hopkin Morris. The pain for the Liberals was all the greater as the Labour victor was Lady Megan Lloyd George, Liberal MP for Anglesey until October 1951 and a convert to socialism only since April 1955. Within Liberal ranks she was widely viewed as a 'defector'; during the intense by-election campaign respected party elder statesman Lord Samuel had felt impelled to warn Carmarthenshire Liberals not to support Lady Megan.

The all-time low point of five Liberal MPs remained for more than a year. In many constituencies the party's organisation was stagnant, financial resources were hopelessly inadequate, there were only thirty salaried party agents throughout Britain, and there remained a desperate need for the strengthening and overhaul of the party's research department to devise radical and progressive new policies.[32] At the end of April 1958 Jo Grimond spoke at Aberystwyth, a rousing speech which underlined the need for a measure of electoral reform to enable support for the Liberal Party to be reflected in the composition of the Commons, but, revealing his left-wing leanings, he went on, 'It would be disastrous for this country if all non-Socialists simply made a "cynical pact" to keep the Labour Party out of office.'[33]

As yet another general election loomed, the secretary of the South Wales Liberal Federation wrote to the party's county organiser in Cardiganshire, 'I am very glad to know … that there is so much activity in your Constituency which might well be described as the safest seat held by a Liberal member.'[34] Again, for the third general election in succession, local Conservatives resolved to stand aside, almost assuring Roderic Bowen of re-election. But local Socialists had secured a formidable and vivacious candidate in Mrs Loti Rees Hughes, a long-serving member of the Carmarthenshire County Council, whose husband, Alderman W. Douglas Hughes, was the local political agent to Jim Griffiths MP for Llanelli.[35] Once again there was criticism of Roderic Bowen for taking a 'part-time' attitude to his political work, county Labour Party president D. J. Davies asserting to his party's annual general meeting at the end of February that:

> It is my belief that the time has come when we should ask the Member of Parliament to give all his time to Parliament for the benefit of the people of Cardiganshire. In these days when the tempo of all things has increased so much, the value of a Member of Parliament to his constituents lies in his being part of a pressure group, and his influence in that group depends in no small measure on the amount of hard work he puts in on behalf of his constituents.
>
> In order that MPs can do this, their salaries have been raised to £1,750 per year and expenses. Parliament is the only place where a person can get £1,750 and expenses, and turn up for work when he likes or not at all. If any other worker did that he would get the sack.
>
> The time has come when MPs should be asked to give their whole time to Parliament or not at all. No man can serve two masters; he will neglect one master, and love the other.
>
> One of the questions the Labour Party asked our Prospective Candidate was: 'Are you prepared to devote the whole of your time to Parliament if you are elected?' Mrs Loti Rees Hughes has given a firm promise that she would do so.
>
> So I say to you in Cardiganshire, when the General Election comes, vote for Loti Hughes and get a full-time MP for Cardiganshire.[36]

Again Bowen's disappointing and inconsistent voting record in the Commons lobbies was carefully scrutinised; during the 1958–59 parliamentary session he had voted in only 106 out of a total possible 177 divisions, he had supported the government on 72 occasions and the Labour opposition on 34.[37] It would appear that the Labour Party organisation in Cardiganshire and nationally entertained genuine aspirations of victory; in the words of local party agent Ron Bundock, 'We are going to shock Cardiganshire, the country and Transport House. I am extremely *confident* and the reports coming in each day are encouraging. The feeling in the county is different to any I have known in previous elections.'[38] A novel dimension was provided by the first-ever Plaid Cymru candidature in Cardiganshire's history, in the person of Dr Gareth Evans, a native of the county and a Swansea lecturer. But the Labour campaign did not receive the recognition at the polls so widely anticipated, and Roderic Bowen was again re-elected by a majority of 9,309 votes over Labour. Like other Liberal MPs such as Arthur Holt and Donald Wade, he had been returned, for the third time in succession, with the tacit support of local Conservative sympathisers. This was, however, to be the last occasion on which this happened. Local socialists, although grievously disappointed at the outcome of the 1959 election, realistically saw the presence of at least 'a hard core of 8,500 Labour voters' in Cardiganshire and were spurred to redouble their efforts.[39]

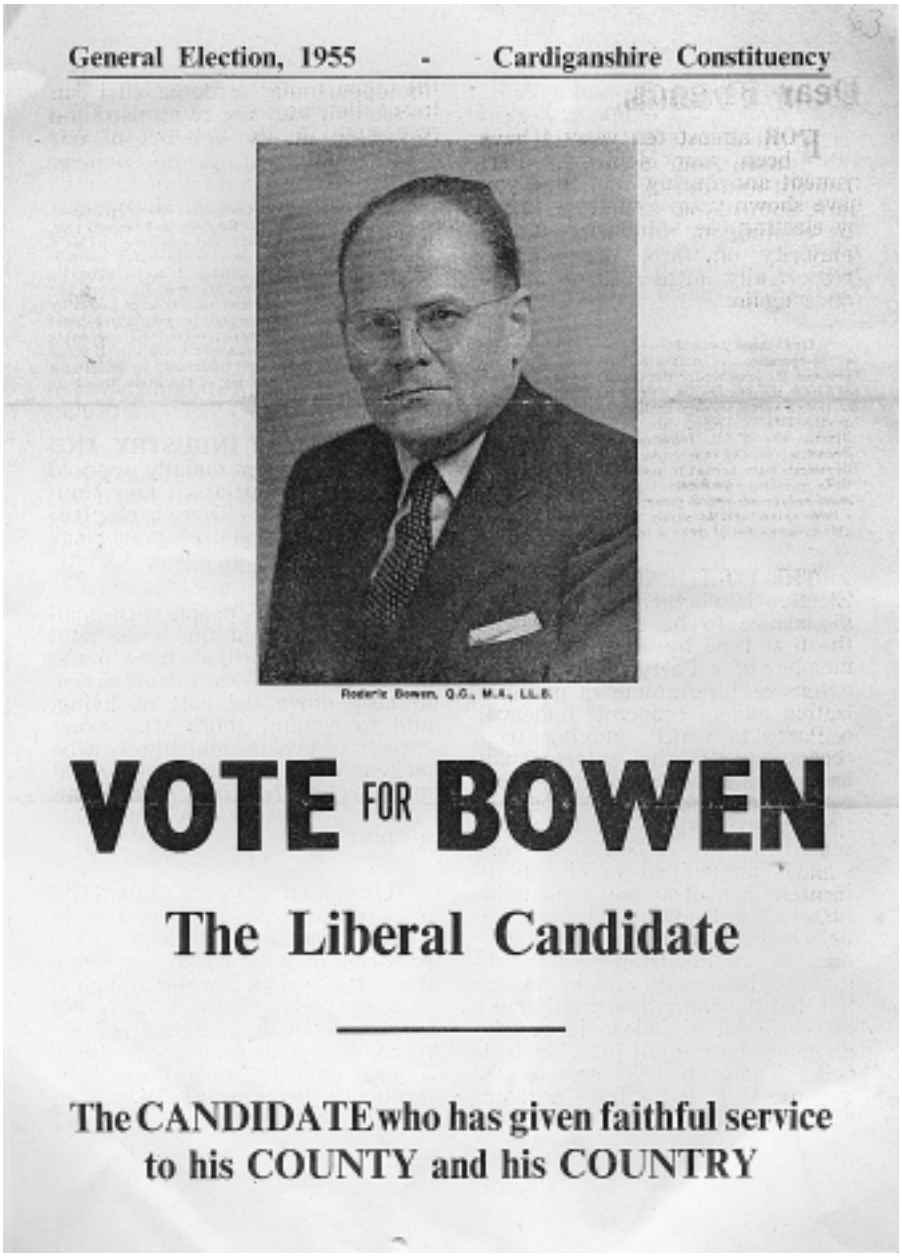
As a new decade – the 1960s – began, the political life of remote, largely rural Cardiganshire inevitably became much less insular. The influence of nonconformity and temperance demands seemed much less relevant to the new generation. Distinctive local and regional problems came to the fore, crystallised in proposals for the reorganisation of Welsh local government and calls for a development corporation for mid-Wales. In the wake of the infamous 'Beeching axe', the key Aberystwyth–Carmarthen railway line, a vital life-line in mid-Wales, ceased to carry passengers. Nationalist impulses crystallised locally in the earliest protests during 1963 of the fledgling *Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg* (the Welsh Language Society), blocking the traffic over the bridge near Aberystwyth and plastering the town's main post office with notices demanding official status for the Welsh language. A contrary view soon surfaced in protests from non-Welsh speakers at the increasing preponderance of Welsh language television broadcasts which they could not avoid.

Roderic Bowen did not change his style of representation one iota. His appearances in the constituency were few and fleeting, his participation in Commons debates a rarity, his political life clearly taking at best second place to his ever-increasing legal activities. During the

1959–60 parliamentary session he took part in only 61 out of a total of 141 divisions. In the latter year he took up the position of Recorder of Swansea, and in 1964 was appointed Recorder of Cardiff. From 1959, following in the footsteps of Clement Davies QC, he also became chairman of the Montgomeryshire Quarter Sessions, a position he held until 1971. When he was present in the Commons, his attention was absorbed primarily by his strong anti-nuclear views and his opposition to the British invasion of Egypt in 1956.

Described by the *Manchester Guardian* in 1952 as 'one of the most successful advocates at the Welsh bar', his political impact was much less.[40] Indeed by the early 1960s Bowen seemed to many to be the last in a long line of successful Welsh barristers who simply doubled up as a Liberal MP. In August 1962 and again in June 1964 he spoke briefly in the Commons on the need to introduce industrial initiatives into mid-Wales, strengthen the authority of the Development Commissioners and tackle the vexed problem of rural depopulation.[41] But such interventions were rare, brief and made little lasting impression. In August 1964 the secretary of the North Wales Liberal Federation wrote critically of Emlyn Hooson, who in May 1962 had succeeded Clement Davies as MP for Montgomeryshire, 'I am inclined to think he ought to spend more time on his job as Member of Parliament or else we shall have another Roderic Bowen … one who does not spend much time in his constituency.'[42]

As disenchantment with Bowen grew, Labour were spurred to redouble their local efforts, opening a new county headquarters at Aberystwyth and chosing long-serving local president David John Davies as their prospective parliamentary candidate. In October 1964 Cardiganshire became a marginal constituency. The decision of the Conservatives to put up their own candidate for the first time since 1950, coupled with the national swing to Labour, cut Bowen's majority sharply to 2219. Of the five Liberal MPs who had stood successfully for re-election – Bowen, Jo Grimond, Emlyn Hooson, Eric Lubbock (the Orpington victor of March 1962) and Jeremy Thorpe – the MP for Cardiganshire now enjoyed by far the smallest majority. In the same contest, Tory intervention simultaneously unseated Arthur Holt at Bolton West and Donald Wade at Huddersfield West. Bowen's total poll had fallen by more than 6,300 votes and Labour could scent the prospect of victory. The MP for Cardiganshire was unlikely, it was felt, to mend his ways.



Events soon took a bizarre turn with the sudden death of the Speaker of the House of Commons, Sir Harry Hylton-Foster, as he walked along Duke Street, St James's, London SW, on 2 September 1965.[43] The question of his successor caused a crisis for Harold Wilson's Labour government, which had a tiny overall majority of only three seats in the Commons. It was widely anticipated that the Deputy Speaker, Dr Horace King (Labour, Itchen), would succeed, and that the Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means, Sir Samuel Storey (Conservative, Stretford), would in turn become Deputy Speaker. This would then leave vacant the position of Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (who was *ex officio* the second Deputy Speaker). The ideal solution for the beleaguered Labour administration was to persuade a Liberal MP to accept the position. Most of these lacked the long experience necessary of Commons procedures, but two did not – the party leader, Jo Grimond, and Roderic Bowen, veteran MP of nigh on twenty years.

It was considered unthinkable for Grimond even to countenance the vacancy; he had no successor as Liberal Party leader.[44] But Bowen demurred.

He had much to lose – he still enjoyed a flourishing, highly lucrative practice at the Bar as a QC and Leader of the Wales and Chester Circuit and the status and salary of Recorder of Swansea. Discussions followed between Ted Short and Eric Lubbock, the government and Liberal chief whips. Bowen's name was mooted, but most prominent Liberals did not disguise their annoyance, reluctant 'to run the risk of losing their electoral identity by consenting to an expedient arrangement in which they would take the responsibility of prolonging the Government's life without having any say in what the Government does'.[45] It was well known that there was little love lost between the two senior Liberal MPs, Grimond commenting pointedly that the decision was purely a personal one for Bowen. Desperately anxious to avoid an early general election at an unfavourable time for his government, Harold Wilson (who had just told George Brown, his secretary of state for economic affairs, that their government's economic policies amounted to 'a pretty dismal and gloomy set of squeezes', necessitating the introduction of measures 'of a popular and heart-warming character'[46]) probably cajoled Bowen into accepting the vacant position.

The decision horrified most of Bowen's Liberal colleagues at Westminster, and many staunch Liberals in Cardiganshire, where his motives were keenly debated during the ensuing 1966 general election campaign. Here was a firmly right-wing MP, his policies close to the Tories in many respects, propping up an ailing Labour government clearly up against the ropes, ever liable to collapse. 'The Prime Minister has brought off his coup', rejoiced Labour Minister of Housing and diarist Richard Crossman, 'Our majority of three has not been cut to one!'[47] Bowen's decision immediately nourished speculation about a possible 'Lib–Lab' pact at Westminster and confirmed the Prime Minister's well established reputation as a dextrous political manipulator, capable of out-manoeuvring the newly elected Conservative leader Ted Heath and the opposition, a master *par excellence* of the 'politics of survival'.[48]

After all, what had Bowen to gain personally? He had made enormous material sacrifices in return for a modest parliamentary salary of £3,750, plus the standard parliamentary allowance of £1,250 which was available to all MPs. To add insult to injury, he had accepted Wilson's offer without even consulting Jo Grimond, and had angered most of his fellow Liberal MPs whose voting strength was consequently reduced from ten to nine. Of the Parliamentary Liberal Party, only fellow Welshman Emlyn Hooson and David Steel, the newest Liberal MP, came out in support of his decision to accept the office. Bowen may have been looking to get his own back on Grimond for taking the party leadership nine years earlier. He may have been eyeing the Speaker's chair, for which he was reasonably well suited, or he may have hoped that Harold Wilson would one day reward him with a judgeship, perhaps even a peerage on his eventual retirement from the House of Commons. If so, he miscalculated badly; only very minor rewards, in the form of service on public bodies in his later career, lay ahead. The peerage which many expected him to receive never materialised.

Roderic Bowen's decision came at a particularly vexed time for his party, especially in its relationship with the Labour government, a theme which had dominated the Liberal assembly only the previous month. Jo Grimond, ever ready to consider any amicable working arrangement with Labour, anticipated possible 'real enthusiasm' for 'common aims behind which a majority could unite', but, he went on, 'The throwing of life-belts to a sinking Government is not a job I would welcome.'[49] Bowen, it appeared, had indeed thrown a life-belt to Wilson's government.

In any case, his parliamentary career was drawing to a close. Ever since October 1964 the Labour Party hierarchy had considered Cardiganshire a crucial marginal which lay within their grasp. Their new parliamentary candidate was Elystan Morgan, an articulate young lawyer who had actually stood as the Plaid Cymru candidate at Wrexham in 1955 and 1959 and Merionethshire in 1964, and who had changed parties only in August 1965, shortly before his selection as the Labour candidate for Cardiganshire.[50] He enjoyed a network of family contacts throughout the north of the county, and appeared to enjoy extensive Plaid Cymru support in spite of his change of allegiance. Bowen seemed to make even less effort than in previous election campaigns, undertook but little canvassing, and was content to rely on the county's Liberal tradition and his bedrock of loyal supporters. Ominously, Jo Grimond refused to send his colleague a personal letter of support during the crucial election campaign although asked to do so by the president of the Cardiganshire Liberal Association, and this became well known in the constituency during the campaign.[51] On this occasion Labour swept to victory by 523 votes, capturing no fewer than 32 of the 36 Welsh constituencies, a record high never repeated before or since, its dramatic breakthrough in Cardiganshire extending its hegemony over all the constituencies of the western seaboard of Wales. Cardiganshire was one of eleven constituencies captured by Labour in 1966 which it had never previously held. To some extent the loss of Cardiganshire, held continuously by the Liberals ever since 1880, was offset by four Liberal gains, among them Colne Valley (Richard Wainwright), North Cornwall (John Pardoe) and Cheadle (Dr Michael Winstanley).[52]

Although the writing had been on the wall since at least October 1964, Roderic Bowen was, it seems, still disappointed by his defeat. At only fifty-two years of age, at the height of his powers and political maturity, with more than thirty-five years of life still ahead of him, he shunned party politics thereafter, rarely venturing to the county.

In the wake of his defeat, he was sent by Foreign Secretary George Brown to Aden to investigate interrogation procedures in the British colony, which had been subject to international criticism, notably by Amnesty International. His report found, by implication, that the claims were exaggerated, though not baseless, and proposed a number of changes to ensure that they did not recur. Bowen's report was admirable as far as it went. Its terms of reference, however, were perhaps too limited. He was

asked to decide whether particular cases of alleged ill-treatment were true or not, and he did hear the point of view of the former investigators.

In 1967 Bowen became National Insurance Commissioner for Wales, resigning his position as Recorder of Cardiff, and he remained in the post until 1986. In the spring of 1971 he was appointed chairman of a governmental committee charged to examine road signs policy in Wales set up by Peter Thomas, Secretary of State for Wales in the Heath Government, in response to a campaign for bilingualism spearheaded by *Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg* (the Welsh Language Society). The committee took its work seriously, even travelling to Finland and other countries to contrast the situation there, and its majority report, which appeared in the autumn of 1972, was generally in favour of bilingual signs: 'The chief arguments hinge on the place of Welsh in Wales, on the principle of "natural justice" for the Welsh language.'[53] From 1977 to 1992 Bowen also served as a conscientious president of St David's University College, Lampeter.

Apart from his brief brushes with fame in 1956 and 1965, Roderic Bowen's impact at Westminster was minimal, yet he was generally popular with politicians of all parties and his relaxed bonhomie and quick repartee in the smoking rooms of the Commons stood in striking contrast to his serious, tight-lipped professional demeanour when acting in the courts.[54] A potentially amusing and clever debater, capable of gracing Liberal platforms with wit and distinction, he was much sought after as an after-dinner speaker. He remained a Liberal MP throughout the long, arduous years of Clement Davies's leadership of the party from 1945, but had little rapport with Davies's successor Jo Grimond who, in Bowen's view, seemed intent on seeking 'a realignment of the Left' in British politics. A lack of mutual understanding and admiration between these two senior Liberal MPs resulted. Hence Bowen became increasingly aloof and detached from the vortex of political life at Westminster, rather on a limb from the mainstream of the Parliamentary Liberal Party, attending the Commons at best irregularly, participating in debate but rarely.

A warm admirer of Sir Rhys Hopkin Morris, Bowen's Liberal credentials were impeccable, reflected in his unwavering belief in the responsibility of the individual and the duty of each one to contribute to the betterment of society. Although veering generally to the right in the political spectrum, sharply opposed to socialism and communism, he was just as dismissive of the claims of those vested interests championed by the Conservative Party. Bowen's Welsh patriotism was beyond question, reflected in his stalwart support for equality for Wales with Scotland and for Welsh representation in the Cabinet, a commitment recognised by both the National Eisteddfod, which he attended regularly, and the University of Wales. An individual of deep religious convictions, he became a deacon of the Presbyterian church. A life-long bachelor, tending in his last years to be a recluse living frugally in a small flat in the Welsh capital and suffering from deteriorating health, Roderic Bowen died at Cardiff on 18 July 2001.

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The author is grateful to Robert Ingham for reading an earlier draft of this article with meticulous care and for making a number of most helpful suggestions for its revision; and is indebted to him for sending me a detailed summary of his interview with Roderic Bowen on 26 July 1995.

1 National Library of Wales (hereafter NLW), Cardiganshire Liberal Association Records, no. 1, minute book, 1923–50, minutes of special meeting, 16 June 1945.
2 *Cambrian News*, 29 June 1945.
3 *Cambrian News*, 29 June 1945.
4 *Cambrian News*, 3 August 1945.
5 The phrase is that used in NLW, Clement Davies Papers Q4/126, 'Ifor', Cambridge, to Stanley Clement-Davies, 20 June 1945. I am most grateful to Mr Stanley Clement-Davies, London, for permission to make use of his father's papers.
6 See David M. Roberts, 'Clement Davies and the Liberal Party, 1929–56', unpublished University of Wales MA thesis, 1975, pp. 87–92; J. Graham Jones, 'The Liberal Party and Wales, 1945–79', *Welsh History Review*, Vol. 16, no. 3 (June 1993), 329–33.
7 The phrase is that used in Roberts, 'Clement Davies', p. 87.
8 Victor Thompson in the *Daily Herald*, 18 March 1950.
9 Lord Hooson, *Rebirth or Death? Liberalism in Wales in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century*, the 1993 Welsh Political Archive Lecture (Aberystwyth: the National Library of Wales, 1994), p. 2.
10 NLW, Cardiganshire Liberal Association Records, no. 1, minute book, 1923–50, AGM minutes, 8 November 1947.
11 Ibid., executive committee minutes, 19 February 1949.
12 NLW, Cardiganshire Liberal Association Records, no. 1, minute book, 1923–50, executive committee minutes, 28 May 1949, AGM minutes, 29 October 1949.
13 NLW, Clement Davies Papers J3/10 and J3/12, Davies to Sinclair, 6 and 17 January 1950 (copies).
14 *Cambrian News*, 17 February 1950.
15 Election address of E. R. Bowen, February 1950.
16 Election address of E. R. Bowen, October 1951.
17 *The Times*, 31 March 1951, p. 4. On election 'pacts' in 1951 and reactions to them, see also Roy Douglas, *The History of the Liberal Party, 1895–1970* (London, 1971), p. 262.
18 *Cambrian News*, 19 October 1951.
19 Alan Butt Philip, *The Welsh Question: Nationalism in Welsh Politics, 1945–1970* (Cardiff, 1975), p. 259.
20 *Welsh Nation*, May 1956.
21 *Western Mail*, 1 December 1952.
22 *Welsh Gazette*, 5 November 1953.
23 NLW, Cardiganshire Liberal Association Records, file 56, memorandum entitled 'The Importance of the Next Six Months', dated 1954.
24 *Welsh Gazette*, 29 July 1954.
25 *Western Mail*, 19 April 1955.
26 *Cambrian News*, 29 April 1955.
27 *Welsh Gazette*, 13 May 1955.
28 For a somewhat negative view of Liberal Party attitudes to Clement Davies at this time, see Geoffrey Sell, '"A sad business": The resignation of Clement Davies', *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* 24 (Autumn 1999), 14–17.
29 The phrases are taken from Bowen's obituary by Andrew Roth in *The Guardian*, 25 July 2001, p. 20. Douglas, op. cit., p. 268, dismisses Bowen as 'too busy with his legal practice' even to consider the vacant party leadership.
30 *Cambrian News*, 15 February 1957.
31 NLW, Cardiganshire Liberal Association Records, file 135, unlabelled press cutting.
32 See NLW, Clement Davies Papers C1/107, W. H. Grey to Lord Byers, 10 March 1958 (copy). Jo Grimond's decisive contribution was to set up a number of new policy committees, each with specific areas of responsibility, to devise radical novel policies.
33 *Cambrian News*, 2 May 1958.
34 NLW, Cardiganshire Liberal Association Records, file 56, J. Ellis Williams, honorary secretary of the South Wales Liberal Federation, to E. Jones, 11 February 1959.
35 J. Graham Jones, 'The Cardiganshire election of 1959', *Ceredigion*, Vol. 12, no. 2 (1994), 84–105. There is much valuable material on this intriguing contest in the Deian R. Hopkin Papers at the National Library of Wales.
36 *Welsh Gazette*, 5 March 1959.
37 NLW, Deian R. Hopkin Papers, file 135, John Milwood, Labour Party research department, to James Griffiths, 20 October 1959.
38 Ibid., R. J. Bundock to W. Douglas Hughes, 26 September 1959.
39 Ibid., file 136, Cardiganshire Labour Party minute book, 1958–65, entry for 31 October 1959. Cf.

the *Welsh Gazette*, 14 November 1959, for a detailed account of the 1959 AGM of the Cardiganshire Liberal Association and its reaction to the outcome of the recent general election.

40 Cited in Bowen's obituary in *The Guardian*, 25 July 2001, p. 20.

41 See the reports in *The Times*, 3 August 1962, p. 6, col. g, and ibid., 26 June 1964, p. 15, col. e.

42 NLW, Lord Ogmore Papers, file 3, Margaret J. Lawson, secretary of the North Wales Liberal Federation, to Lord Ogmore, 3 August 1964.

43 See *The Times*, 3 September 1965, p. 10, cols. a–b.

44 *Liberal News*, 17 September 1965, p. 1.

45 *The Times*, 14 September 1965, p. 10, cols. c–e.

46 Cited in Bowen's obituary in the *Daily Telegraph*, 23 July 2001.

47 Richard Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister, Vol. 1: Minister of Housing, 1964–66* (London, 1975), p. 362, diary entry for 26 October 1965.

48 The phrase is that used in Kenneth O. Morgan, *The People's Peace: British History, 1945–1989* (London, 1990), p. 250.

49 Jo Grimond, 'The Liberals and the Government', *Guardian*, 20 September 1965. See also Alan Watkins, 'Mr Grimond spells it out', *The Spectator*, 24 September 1965, for an astute commentary on the Liberal leader's views and policies. There is a perspicacious analysis of the problems facing the Liberal Party during these years in 'The Liberal predicament', chapter IV of D. E. Butler and Anthony King, *The British General Election of 1966* (London, 1966), pp. 74–84.

50 Howard C. Jones, 'The Labour Party in Cardiganshire', *Ceredigion*, Vol. 9, no. 2 (1981), 160.

51 See the reflections on the 1966 contest of Dr. E. G. Millward, the Plaid Cymru candidate, in *Golwg*, vol. 13, no. 46 (26 July 2001), 6. See also the text of the Robert Ingham interview with Roderic Bowen, 26 July 1995.

52 See *Liberal News*, 7 April 1966, and *The Times*, 1 April 1966, p. 12, col. a.

53 *The Times*, 30 November 1972, p. 4, col. f.

54 There is a thoughtful and warm tribute penned by Lord (Emlyn) Hooson in *Liberal Democrat News*, no. 675 (7 September 2001), 4.

Research in Progress

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

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

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

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

Edmund Lamb (Liberal MP for Leominster 1906–10). Any information on his election and period as MP; wanted for biography of his daughter, Winfred Lamb. *Dr David Gill, d.gill@appleonline.net.*

Joseph King (Liberal MP for North Somerset during the Great War). Any information welcome, particularly on his links with the Union of Democratic Control and other opponents of the war (including his friend George Raffalovich). *Colin Houlding; COLGUDIN@aol.com*

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

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

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

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

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

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

Clement Davies – research for the first full biography. Of particular interest are the activities of government departments where Clement Davies worked in the First World War, including Enemy Activities in Neutral Countries, Economic Warfare and Trading with the Enemy; also the period 1939–42, after Davies left the Liberal Nationals but before he rejoined the independent Liberals, and his relationships with MacDonald, Boothby, Attlee and Churchill. *Alun Wyburn-Powell; awyburn-powell@beeb.net.*

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

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

The revival of the Liberal Party in the 1960s and '70s; including the relationships between local and parliamentary electoral performance. Access to party records (constituency- and ward-level) relating to local activity in London and Birmingham, and interviews with key activists of particular interest. *Paul Lambe, University of Plymouth; paul.lambe@ntlworld.com.*

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

Report

Speeches and speech-makers

Fringe meeting, September 2001, with Roy Jenkins, Max Atkinson and Paddy Ashdown

Report by **Duncan Brack**

The Liberal Democrat History Group's latest publication, *Great Liberal Speeches* (reviewed in this issue of the *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* by Conrad Russell), was launched at the Liberal Democrat autumn conference in Bournemouth.

Ably chaired and introduced by Paddy Ashdown, a capacity audience was addressed first by Max Atkinson, a freelance communications consultant and Visiting Professor at Henley Management College, and author of the excellent book on political rhetoric, *Our Masters' Voices.* His talk was a concise version of his introduction to *Great Liberal Speeches*, 'Mere rhetoric?', so we do not summarise it here – buy the book and read it!

Essentially he argued that political rhetoric was an important communications skill; furthermore, although some politicians have an innate talent for it, everyone can study and learn it, and improve their ability to put over their message. He lamented the propensity of modern broadcasters to downplay the importance of speeches and to transmit only soundbites and their own interpretations of the speakers' words – and also to play up the importance of interviews, 'however sterile and tedious they may be'. As he argued:

> One piece of evidence to which their attention should be drawn is the fact that editors and publishers of books do not seem to find televised interviews interesting, inspiring or provocative enough to merit the publication of collections of *Great Interviews*, whether Liberal or of any other kind. Rhetoric and oratory may well have had a bad press in recent years, but readers of this book will surely be thankful that it consists of speeches rather than transcripts of interviews. They can therefore look forward to reading carefully developed arguments in language robust enough to have survived the immediate moment of delivery to become a form of historical literature.

Roy Jenkins' speech, fulsomely admired in *The Times* by Matthew Parris, is reproduced here verbatim:

I'm going to talk about Liberal oratory, in a reflective historical context. I begin with 1859, when the Liberal Party was effectively founded, in Willis' Rooms in London. The great scene there was that Lord Palmerston shook hands with Lord John Russell – he hadn't done for a long time past. John Bright was also there. The great beneficiary of that coming together was Gladstone, though Gladstone, ironically, was not present – he was still detached, in his Peelite mode, at that stage.

He was the first great orator of the Liberal Party – although Palmerston should by no means be entirely dismissed. The thing was that Palmerston hardly ever spoke outside the House of Commons, or, say, a Lord Mayor's banquet in the City of London. He did make one great speech, in the market place at Tiverton, for which he was Member of Parliament (and about five other constituencies, not all at the same time), but broadly he was a parliamentary orator, and certainly his 1851 *Civis Romanus Sum* speech echoes down the ages. Apart from anything else, it was so long that it was always said to have begun when the light was slowly fading, on a summer evening in June, and when he sat down, dawn was distinctly visible through the windows on the other side of the chamber.

But broadly, Gladstone was the first great mass orator. Gladstone made an art out of mass oratory; to some extent, Disraeli came along behind him. And when I was in the latter stage of my life of Gladstone, one of the things that most intrigued me was what was the secret of Gladstone's mass oratory. His parliamentary oratory I can understand; he rarely gave the House of Commons less than two and half hours. In the country he was more restrained; an hour and forty minutes was about his average. But what was the quality that made him hold his audience? – say, in the Waverley Market at Edinburgh, where 10,000 people were present, and several of them fainted and had to be carried out over the heads of the others, for an hour and forty minutes, for a detailed analysis of Disraeli's budgetary policy.

He didn't make many jokes. He had quite a good, if rather boisterous, sense of fun in private, but he was not a great wit in public. He never remotely played down to his audience. What was the secret that enabled him to hold these great audiences, largely of working people, as they were then called, and make them come back for

Paddy Ashdown and Roy Jenkins (photo: Peter Dollimore)

more on future occasions? I decided, after a good deal of reflection, that it was essentially that although he spoke a bit above their heads, he elevated their appreciation of themselves. He made them feel that they were more important in the world than they thought when they came in. A very good example of that, I think, was given in his speech at the end of the first Midlothian Campaign of 1880, when in West Lothian, he started: 'It is the honour of England which is at stake' – couldn't get away with that in West Lothian today – ' a great trial is now proceeding before the nation. We have none of the forum of a judicial trial. There are no peers in Westminster Hall. There are no judges on the Woolsack. But if we concentrate our mind upon the truth of the case, apart from its mere exterior, it is a grander and more august spectacle than was ever exhibited either in Westminster Hall or in the House of Lords – a nation called to undertake a great and responsible duty, a duty on which depends the peace of Europe and the destinies of England.'

That was an example of his style, which, may, as I say, enormously increased the self-esteem of his audience. And as people like their self-esteem being increased – we all of us do – that, I think, if one gets to the core of it, was the secret of his remarkable oratorical power.

Going on to former Liberal leaders, Gladstone was followed briefly by Rosebery. Rosebery I regard as one of the most inflated reputations of whoever got to the top of politics. He was a florid orator, with a certain flamboyance; he once hit a lectern with such force that the typically very large ruby in his ring sprang out of it and ran down the centre aisle of the hall. But I have not a great respect for Rosebery.

Campbell-Bannerman was a cosy leader; a very good healing leader for the party when it needed one. Then there was Asquith. Asquith made his reputation as a great logical debater. In the two and quarter years of Campbell-Bannerman's premiership, whenever there was a difficult issue in the House of Commons, Campbell-Bannerman always said: 'send for the sledgehammer', and by that he meant Asquith, who would come and destroy the arguments of the opposition with a relentless logic. And although I would put Asquith very high amongst Prime Ministers of this century – certainly third, maybe for real political genius Churchill and Lloyd George exceeded him, maybe Attlee ran him close, as someone who could hold a reforming government together, but I would certainly put Asquith third amongst the Prime Ministers , as the Peel of the twentieth century, and that is no mean tribute to anybody – in the days of his premiership, he probably depended less upon oratory than any other major Prime Minister except for Attlee – who certainly didn't depend upon oratory.

Greater oratory was in a way supplied by his daughter Violet – Violet Bonham-Carter as she became – and my only criticism of this admirable book of speeches is that, while it includes one from her, it does not include her truly great speech at the luncheon in the National Liberal Club after Asquith had been humiliatingly defeated in East Fife in 1918 – we had to wait a long time for Menzies Campbell to avenge that defeat – and was re-elected for Paisley in 1921. In that speech in the National Liberal Club – and unfortunately her oratory wasn't entirely immediately fulfilled – she contrasted the thin range of chairs inside the House of Commons with the great crowd which welcomed him back outside. 'Hold on', she said, 'hold on, we are coming'. Well, we are coming now, but it's some time after that. Violet was a remarkable female orator.

And then we come to Lloyd George, and his contrast both with Gladstone before him, and Churchill after him – because Churchill qualifies as a Liberal orator, at any rate in the early days, up to 1914. Compared with Gladstone, Lloyd George had far less range of knowledge, classical and other, and far less intellectual range – but he was a far more seductive orator than either Gladstone before him or Churchill after him. Both of them spoke *at* their audiences, Churchill even more than Gladstone, but Lloyd George insinuated himself into the mind of his audiences, and carried them with him. The example I give of that is a passage, not the best known of the passages from his Limehouse oration in July 1909, dealing with the fairly narrow subject, you might have thought, of the mineral rights duty in his Budget of that year, directed to setting up a miners' welfare fund.

'Have you ever been down a coal mine?' he said. 'I went down one the other day. We sank into a pit half a mile deep. We then walked underneath the mountain, and we did about three-quarters of a mile with rock and shale above us. The earth seemed to be straining – around us and above us – to crush us in. You could see the pit-props bent and twisted and sundered until you saw their fibres split in resisting the pressure. Sometimes they give way, and then there is mutilation and death. Often a spark ignites, the whole pit is deluged in fire, and the breath of life is scorched out of hundreds of breasts by the consuming flame … And yet when the Prime Minister and I knock at the door of these great landlords, and say to them: "Here, you know these poor fellows who have been digging up royalties at the risk of their lives, some of them are old, they have survived the perils of their trade, they are broken, they can earn no more. Won't you give them something towards keeping them out of the workhouse?" they scowl at us, and we say: "Only a ha'penny, just a copper." They say: "You thieves!" … If this is an indication of the view taken by these great landlords of their responsibility to the people who at the risk of life create their wealth, then I say their day of reckoning is at hand.'

Now, Churchill – a strong supporter, junior partner with Lloyd George as a constructive radical in those days – could never have done that. This passage in which Lloyd George made his East End audience feel the tensions and terrors of life underground, though very few of them had ever been nearer a coal mind than Paddington Station, could never have been done by Churchill. He might have extolled the place of coal, and consequently of miners, in Britain's island story, the rise of the national wealth of Great Britain. He would have done it

with phrases more elevated than Lloyd George's, but in the abstract. He would never have made his audience feel the menace of the great weight of earth above then, and the testing almost to destruction of the pit props. And though of course Churchill, when his time came – that was after his Liberal time, I am afraid – was the greatest and most important orator in the history of the twentieth century, on the whole, it is remarkable the amount of time which he devoted, during the war years, under tremendous pressure, to speech preparation.

He was never, unlike Lloyd George, a spontaneous orator. He always needed to have everything very carefully prepared. There is evidence that in the summer of 1940, at the worst and most pressured time, he devoted ten hours to preparing one House of Commons speech. He had the virtue of being an immensely dedicated and fluent dictater, but it was ten hours of fluent dictation to get it right. On another occasion, in Washington, when he was about to address Congress, his dictating secretary spoke of the fourteen and half hours of the dictation she had to take. Was this misapplied time? I don't really think so, because those great speeches of the summer of 1940 marked out the history of that remarkable period like choruses in a Greek play. They did help to sustain the nation; in most other circumstances they would have been somewhat over the top, but not then – and also I think that the catharsis, the satisfaction which he got from delivering these great orations, and the increase in his energy for the future which came as a result of them more than compensated for the time which he had devoted to their preparation.

Broadly, as I say, he was an abstract, powerful, sometimes over-the-top orator, but I came across one example I'd like to quote to you of his trying to learn from Roosevelt. Roosevelt was a very interesting transitional orator – he was sort of half-way between the grandiloquence of Gladstone and Churchill and the chatty manner of Reagan and Clinton – but he always liked homely metaphors. His most famous homely metaphor was when he defended lease-lend, by saying that 'if fire broke out in my neighbour's house, and I had a garden hose, what would I do? I would lend it to him. I wouldn't sell it to him, I wouldn't tell him to go and buy a hose of his own, I would lend it to him. And he would say, what should I do afterwards, well, give it me back when the fire's put out.'

Not much chance, actually, of getting the lend-lease supplies back, or much use they would have been afterwards, but it was a brilliant homely metaphor, and I was struck by Churchill, having apparently half learned from FDR, half trying to learn, when he came back from the first Quebec conference – there were two, in 1943 and 1944 – on Sunday 20th September 1943. He went to the House of Commons on the Monday, and began by saying that when he'd arrived at Greenock from North America on the Sunday morning, he'd immediately read the Sunday newspapers, and they were rather critical – interesting example of the enormous priority he always gave to newspaper reading. He was reminded, he said, of the tale about the sailor who jumped into a dock – at Plymouth, I think it was – to rescue a small boy from drowning. About a week later, the sailor was accosted by a woman, who asked: 'are you the man who pulled my son out of the dock the other night? The sailor replied, modestly, 'that is indeed true, ma'am'. 'Ah', said the woman, 'you're the man I was looking for. Where's his cap?' That seems to me a very clear example of Churchill trying to reduce his grandiloquence, and learn from Roosevelt, with whom he'd just spent some time.

Oratory – I agree strongly with Max Atkinson – is on the whole at a discount; just as debating, as opposed to the quick exchange at Prime Minister's question time, is at a discount in the House of Commons. One shouldn't be too dismayed – though I am a bit dismayed by that – because it's an art with certain advantages, and although it seems to be almost dieing before our eyes, it is bound to change. No-one would expect a Gladstone speech of two and half hours, redolent with many Latin quotations, to be persuasive at the fifth time – Burke wouldn't sound all that good in the present House of Commons. But nonetheless I think one does regret the almost complete decline in politics, in the last twenty-five years or so, I think, of the sustained arguing of a case, with the careful use of language and phraseology which helps to advance it. But there we are.

That's my review of Liberal oratory over the last 150 years. And it gives me confidence in the future of Liberal oratory. One never knows, there may be a great outbreak of Conservative oratory under Mr Iain Duncan Smith, who may be an underestimated figure, though I doubt it. I have more faith in the ability of Charles Kennedy.

Paddy Ashdown wound up the meeting by stressing his own belief in the power of language. 'I've always thought that words are the battleground of politics. If you can find the right words, and you own them, you've owned the battle. And the one thing you can't do is let others borrow your words … However long you spend on that, in the end it is worthwhile.'

And, using an extract from a speech by Gladstone, itself included in *Great Liberal Speeches*, quoted by Paddy in his last speech to the House of Commons, and used once again by more than one speaker in the conference debate on Afghanistan the day before (less than two weeks after September 11th), he showed how Gladstone's words could speak to the present:

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

As Paddy concluded, 'Those are words from the last century, but sentiments that are truly Liberal, and we heard them expressed yesterday. We are, in a real sense, the children of our history.'

Report

Public Services or State Services? – the Liberal Legacy

Evening meeting, February 2002, with Professor Peter Marsh and Dr Graham Davis

Report by **Neil Stockley**

With public services firmly at the top of the political agenda and the Liberal Democrats reviewing their approach from first principles, this meeting provided the opportunity for a timely discussion of the Liberal tradition.

The speakers took us back to the nineteenth century, to the policies of Joseph Chamberlain in Birmingham and the all-but-forgotten Sir Jerom Murch in Bath. The meeting highlighted the crucial role of local government in Liberal thought and action on public services. While today's debate focuses on the NHS, transport and education, our nineteenth century counterparts were concerned with water and gas services – what we now call utilities – and civic investments to address social problems.

The first speaker was Professor Peter Marsh, Honorary Professor of History at Birmingham University. He described how, in three terms as Mayor of Birmingham, from 1874 to 1877, Joseph Chamberlain articulated the creed of 'gas and water socialism' pursued through strong local government and, more importantly, how he made it happen. His municipal policies were a prototype for what became the 'New Liberalism' of the early twentieth century, founded on the belief that government should intervene in the economy and the community to tackle social problems.

Chamberlain, using his business experience, devised a form of public finance that sought to provide the maximum services at the lowest cost to the ratepayer. First, the local gasworks was placed under municipal control, which produced a profit for the City Council. Second, this money was in turn used to 'municipalise' the water supply in order to reduce the cost of this service and to improve water purity. Third, Chamberlain launched a slum clearance programme as a public health measure and balanced the cost against that of the jails that would be needed if people continued to live in squalor. Fourth, he was willing to use public money for productive purposes. The slum clearance scheme may have dramatically increased the city's public debt, but the city gained a commercial strip, Corporation Street, which boosted the council's economic base. Fifth, he devised ways to provide new social services at lowest cost to the taxpayer. For example, a workmen's compensation scheme was funded by placing a levy on employers, on the basis that they could pass that cost on to consumers. These moves were widely applauded; indeed, Birmingham was lauded as the best governed city in the industrial world.

Graham Davis of Bath Spa University College outlined the very different experience of Sir Jerom Murch, Unitarian curate, early practitioner of community politics and Mayor of Bath twice during the 1860s. Dr Davis showed that despite its public image as a genteel city, nineteenth century Bath had its share of deep poverty, poor housing, crime and major public health problems, in particular a high mortality rate and outbreaks of cholera and typhoid. There were some fierce political battles for control of the city council. From the 1830s, the Liberals were usually dominant on the council – but they relied on the aldermanic system and the votes of the industrial artisan classes to keep their power.

Enter Sir Jerom Murch, the 'Joe Chamberlain of Bath'. Dr Davis described his 'mission … the civic gospel', which was born out of Murch's strong dissenting tradition, and showed how it was married to his strong belief that the ruling elite – of which he was actually part – had a moral duty to work for the good of the people and across class barriers. In practical terms, this meant regenerating the power of local government – using the revenue from rates to borrow the funds to pay for civic amenities. Murch's big scheme was to establish a civic corporation to ensure that every house in Bath had an adequate supply of water. In an early experiment with 'joined-up government', he tried to build support for the water scheme as foundation for economic prosperity as well as a solution to Bath's health and social problems. Yet it was thrown out by a split party and divided council in 1866. Murch pressed on with his civic gospel, trying to increase the wealth of Bath by promoting new hotels and other businesses, trying to put the city on the map with amenities and building new parks. But he achieved somewhat less that Chamberlain; indeed, Dr Davis called his career 'to some extent a heroic failure'.

Why did 'Uncle Joe' succeed where Sir Jerom did not? Professor Marsh explained that Chamberlain was a great campaigner and a charismatic politician. Crucially, he was able to make the financial case for his policies, helped by the credibility provided by his accounting experience and status as a local manufacturer. Dr Davis agreed that Chamberlain had a far greater understanding of public finance than Murch. And while Murch was a gifted public speaker who could make the moral case for his policies with great passion, he had to rely on a council colleague, who was certainly no communicator, to make the financial case.

Second, Dr Davis argued that Murch's

remarkable ability to build alliances across the community, straddling the class divide, finally foundered when the representatives of the labouring classes did not back his water scheme. Dr Davis suggested that this may have been because Murch was too much part of the elite at the very time when universal male suffrage was a major issue in Bath. He represented a paternal, authoritarian style of Liberalism and his own personal style was somewhat patronising to the working classes. The nascent trade unionists eventually went off to follow their own political star.

The meeting spent some time discussing the belief systems that drove the policies of the two men. Dr Davis was clear that Murch was 'an apostle of Gladstonian Liberalism' and that his politics were primarily 'morally driven'. He wanted to use the council rates to invest in his city's prosperity and thereby raise the 'moral condition' of the people. For his part, Professor Marsh argued that Chamberlain had an 'environmentalist ethic', based on an essentially optimistic belief that the moral well-being of the poor could be improved by removing the physical manifestations of poverty. This was very different, he suggested, from Gladstone's 'religious ethic'. He also perceived a clear difference between Chamberlain's enthusiasm for investing public money in economic infrastructure and social amenities and the Gladstonian traditions of small government, moral improvement and self-help. Indeed, Professor Marsh believed that while Chamberlain was a Liberal in name, at least until 1886, he is hard to place on the liberal ideological spectrum. This was particularly true in his later years, after he split the Liberal Party over home rule for Ireland, became 'the embodiment of the new imperialism', and then led the assault on free trade. Instead, Professor Marsh painted Chamberlain as a committed democrat, who strongly supported the extension of voting rights to all men and believed in 'a dictatorship of the democratic majority'. Indeed, he was something of an authoritarian, who believed in strong leadership that exercised governmental powers to the full and with as few constraints as possible, and a radical in that he was always prepared to challenge existing policies and accepted beliefs.

But Chamberlain and Gladstone may not have quite represented the 'yin' and 'yang' of nineteenth century Liberalism. The chair, Dr Eugenio Biagini saw them as compatible at a personal level, in a religious way and in terms of their social/moral influences. And Gladstone was prepared to use state intervention to advance his aims. He nationalised rail in the 1840s and land in Ireland in 1886 and in the 1870s, passed the Education Act, and increased grants in aid to local government ten-fold. While he maintained that there was a difference in emphasis over the role of government spending, Professor Marsh agreed with Dr Biagini, to the extent that up until the home rule crisis, Chamberlain and Gladstone were allies more often than not.

Second, on financial matters, Dr Biagini argued that there was a close interdependence between the Gladstonian emphasis on reducing the economic role of the state and Chamberlain's belief in increased local government spending on services. These were two sides of the same coin, he argued, because retrenchment in London meant that local councils could afford to spend more.

Third, Professor Marsh acknowledged that Chamberlain's belief in strong local government did not represent a distinctive strain of political thought. Local government enjoyed widespread, bipartisan support during the nineteenth century, albeit with Conservatives preferring country magistrates and Liberals town councils.

So, for today's debate on public services, did Chamberlain and Murch and their colleagues leave today's Liberal Democrats any kind of legacy? At first glance, the answer seems to be no. The municipal socialism and civic gospel were about reform of what we now call utilities. In the last 140 years, gas, water (and electricity) have been municipalised, centralised, nationalised and privatised. Liberal Democrats have firmly resisted calls to take them back into public ownership and they are largely out of the political frame. But certain aspects of what Chamberlain and Murch attempted remain relevant today. They showed the potential for local government as a vehicle for advancing the public good. Liberal Democrats continue that commitment, even if today's councils have less power than those led by Chamberlain and Murch. Yes, Chamberlain's authoritarianism and Murch's paternalism may be unwelcome reminders that 'Newer' Liberalism can be a more 'top-down' brand of politics than some of us care to admit. But they used an arm of the state constructively, ignoring the false boundaries between 'business' and 'social' concerns, developing innovative and practical 'win-win' solutions. Their real legacy is that when old approaches – be they from the market or from government – fail people and erode their personal freedom, the Liberal instinct is to act.

Liberal Democrat History Group website

The new Liberal Democrat History Group website is now up and running, with a new, more professional look and expanded contents. When it is completed (it is currently still under construction), you will be able to find on the site:

- Latest History Group news, including announcements of meetings, the latest *Journal* and new publications
- A complete listing of all *Journal* contents, back to issue 1, and downloadable files (pdf format) of the oldest issues.
- Details of History Group publications and where to buy them.
- A complete listing of all History Group meetings and speakers.
- A brief history of the party, together with a suggested reading list.
- Research resources, including guides to archive sources, and a listing of research in progress.

What else would you like to see? We welcome your views and comments; email them to Mark Pack at webmaster@liberalhistory.org.uk

See our website at: **www.liberalhistory.org.uk**

Reviews

Keeping the faith

Duncan Brack and Tony Little (eds): *Great Liberal Speeches* (Politico's Publishing, 2001; pp492)

Reviewed by **Conrad Russell**

This is a book to be proud of. This is not just praise of the editorial team, who wear their scholarship with the deceptive lightness of a Grimond speech. It is a tribute to a party which, from century to century, through good times and bad, has kept a faith worth keeping.

In the first section of the book, the editors have had the good fortune which favours not only the brave, but those who understand the issues with which they deal. This book was complete in proof before September 11th. When it was written, the Anti-Terrorism Bill was not yet even a bristle in David Blunkett's beard. Yet the whole of the first section, dealing with the reaction against civil liberties provoked by the French Revolution, takes us straight into the territory we have been debating since September 11th.

Charles James Fox on the suspension of *habeas corpus,* George Tierney on the Six Acts, down to Macaulay on the Great Reform Bill, state the traditions Liberal belief that we do not deal with the threat of terror by random repression, which maximises the number of our enemies, but by more legal, and more selective, methods which separate our natural enemies from our potential allies. To those of us who have been through recent debates, we might be inside Charles James Fox's mind: we know where he will go next. Yet, contrary to the belief fostered by our opponents that we are dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants, Charles Kennedy, Shirley Williams and their Home Affairs team have done it better than Fox, who was no minnow in the Liberal aquarium.

Among the inspired selections is the speech by Earl Grey in 1814 against the blockade of Norway. This provides the answer to the question Nancy Seear once shot into my ear in the middle of a boring committee meeting: 'Why were we so much in favour of the nation state in the nineteenth century, and so much against it now?' It is the simple application of the Lockeian doctrine of government by consent. In terms of persuasive skills, rather than sheer rhetorical brilliance, this is one of the best speeches in the collection. For the twentieth century realisation that government by consent is more complex than just a matter of nationalism, one may look at Sir Archibald Sinclair's speech in the Munich debate of 1938. That speech is conspicuous for its combination of personal courtesy and devastating evidence. If I had been at the government dispatch box, I would rather have faced twenty of Lloyd George than one of Sinclair: it was so impossible to ascribe anything he said to malice.

The collection is particularly valuable for its refutation of the mythical Friedmanite interpretation our Labour and Conservative opponents agree in trying to fix on us. Macaulay, in one of many expressions of belief in state support for education, warns against 'a disposition to apply to political questions and moral questions principles which are sound only when applied to commercial questions'. Opponents of state education have applied the principle of free competition to a case to which the principle is not applicable.

Any critic of Liberalism should read and re-read the speech by Richard Cobden, for it is so utterly different from the image Friedmanites have fastened on him. For Cobden, free competition was an assault on monopoly, and therefore an assault on privilege. He casually dismissed his opponents as 'the Dukes and Earls'. It is hard to believe that this man, alive today, would be champion of the Enrons and Monsantos of this world. He would surely regard them as the enemies, not the allies, of the free market. For him, and for his allies, free competition was equal competition within the law. Buying Senators, for example, was not free competition. If the WTO is to continue its resistance to protection, we must aim at getting it to do so in a more Cobdenite spirit. The task is difficult, but surely not impossible.

Pride of place, hardly surprisingly, goes to Gladstone, for three speeches so different in style that it is hard to realise they were delivered by the same man. His speech on Irish Home Rule, in content one which makes a modern Liberal feel inside his mind, is a style which could have been delivered by Robin Cook at his most pugnacious. It puts the reader in stitches, yet the treatment of Chamberlain, in particular, confirms all Roy Jenkins' doubts of his political judgement.

Among the surprises, Palmerston's 'Don Pacifico' speech, which I had always thought of at second hand as rather illiberal, now makes me hope that a copy is on its way to Harare at this moment. For criticism of Labour,

Churchill and Asquith has pride of place, and Asquith's exposition of how to run a Liberal Party in a three-party system is impeccable.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the most challenging speech is by Keynes to the Liberal Summer School in 1925. His forecast of the key questions is one we are only just catching up with seventy-seven years later. His prediction that questions of contraception, marriage law and the relations of the sexes will become politically central is only just beginning to come true, as is his similar warning about drugs. His question about the growing bulk of business Parliament cannot handle is one we are not yet on top of. His most serious warning is that the economy is becoming so complicated that the laws of supply and demand no longer work effectively. When we have come to terms with these fundamental insights, casually tossed off, we may be ready to get started.

Conrad Russell is Professor of History at King's College, London, Liberal Democrat spokesman on work and pensions in the House of Lords, and Honorary President of the Liberal Democrat History Group.

Restorative Conservativism

Eugenio Biagini: *Gladstone* (Macmillan Press, 2000) Reviewed by **Tony Little**

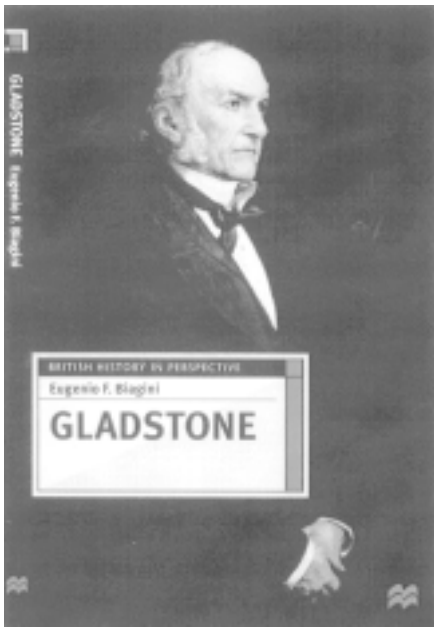
With a political career that spanned more than sixty years, William Ewart Gladstone is the dominant figure in Victorian politics, initially taking office even before Victoria came to the throne and only leaving the premiership in 1894. In many ways, he defined the nature of Victorian Liberalism, based on free trade, fiscal rectitude and the incorporation into active political life of ever-wider groups of the population, in a career which, despite all his intentions, became progressively more radical as it unfolded.

It is no surprise that he has been the subject of a multitude of biographies. But following Colin Matthew, Richard Shannon and Roy Jenkins, who have all produced different modern biographies, is there room for more? Biagini's volume looks very much as if it is aimed at the undergraduate market. The great advantage it has over its competitors is its length, 138 pages including the index, but this is a succinct rather than a skimpy tome. The other difference is Biagini's adoption of a thematic rather than purely chronological approach, which engages with Gladstone on an intellectual level, sparing only the minimum necessary space for the incidental and personal. This is not the book in which to explore the complexity of his dealings with Peel or Palmerston or in which all the Home Rule intrigues of 1886 are disentangled.

The limitations of space also force Biagini to focus closely on the forces which unified Gladstone's approach and on his major achievements, whose scale few politicians can hope to approach – reform of taxation, tariffs, army, church, education and the electoral system. One cannot hope to understand this statesman without recognising the lifelong influence exercised over him by Burke and Butler. From Burke he gained a 'method of historic assessment and his sensitivity for tradition and the possibility of change through organic growth' – which reinforced Gladstone's Platonic notions of the perfectibility of society, producing a form of 'utopian conservatism'[1] which the Tories of the time were unwilling to acknowledge. It was to Edmund Burke that he turned for the intellectual and historic backing for his ideas for Home Rule. From Bishop Butler[2] he drew the means to reconcile uncertainty with moral obligation which became the key to Gladstonian decision making: 'first … to amass information, then to weigh the probabilities, and finally, once a decision was taken, to pursue the policy with undeviating commitment'.[3]

Gladstone prided himself in his ability to spot that the time was ripe to tackle an issue but did not always prepare his colleagues for the conclusions at which he had arrived or the forceful purpose with which he then pursued them. Although this laid Gladstone open to charges of Jesuitical casuistry and to inconsistency, it was the foundation of his moral strength of character which in turn was the basis of his popularity with the working and non-conformist classes, a popularity reinforced by his politicisation of the Exchequer in the 1860s, particularly when he accomplished the abolition of the paper tax – a 'tax on knowledge' – despite the opposition of his prime minister and the House of Lords. Gladstone's tax policy eased the creation of a mass media of popular newspapers.

Gladstone quickly demonstrated ministerial competence under Peel but his rise to pre-eminence in parliament was more a tribute to his eloquence than to his man-management skills. Biagini argues that this same oratorical skill saw him supremely well placed to take advantage of and to channel the enthusiasm of the enlarged electorate which emerged from the 1867 and 1884 reform acts and which formed



the readership of the new mass circulation papers and periodicals. Radicals such as Bright had demonstrated that the masses could be mobilised for positive political purpose, as opposed to mob violence, but Gladstone was a pioneer among the ministerial elite in harnessing this force and in utilising it to overcome opposition from the establishment in both Houses of Parliament. Biagini concludes that his true strength was not so much the individual reforms he accomplished but that 'he found the people who live in cottages hostile to political parties, and … succeeded in uniting them with the rest of his countrymen'.[4]

Biagini has created a first-class introduction to one of the most successful and yet baffling of all premiers, with a fine judgment on the key controversies. The limitations of the space within which he has been confined may even have been an advantage in cutting to the essentials of each issue. Any diligent reader will be well equipped to tackle one of the more complex biographies such as Matthew's or to dip into any number of the specialist topics derived from the multi-faceted life of the Liberal Party's greatest leader. Only the price, at nearly 10p a page, is a deterrent.

Tony Little is the Chair of the Liberal Democrat History Group.

1 E Biagini, *Gladstone* (Macmillan, 2000), pp 11, 13.
2 Joseph Butler (1692–1752) English moral philosopher and divine. Gladstone published a two-volume edition of his works in 1896.
3 Biagini, *Gladstone*, p. 13, citing D. W. Bebbington, *William Ewart Gladstone: Faith & Politics in Victorian Britain* (1993).
4 Biagini, *Gladstone*, p. 117, quoting *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* 7 August 1880.

Internationalism and interdependency

Richard S. Grayson: *Liberals, International Relations and Appeasement* (Frank Cass 2001; pp194)

Reviewed by **Ian Hunter**

This book proves the proverb that you shouldn't judge a book by its cover. The cover is terrible. The book is very good, if, at only 156 pages, a little short for the money.[1]

Richard Grayson's latest publication makes a significant contribution to the history of the British Liberal Party in the interwar period.[2] It furthers our understanding of the role that the Liberal Parliamentary Party and its associated interest groups had in developing a coherent opposition to the policy of appeasement. Its period of study is from 1919–1939 and, as such, is, ultimately, a study in failure. The Liberals were increasingly marginalised after the fall of the Lloyd George Coalition in 1922, as a result of the party's internal splits between Asquith and Lloyd George and then Samuel and Simon. These divisions led to the Liberal Party being reduced to a rump of only seventeen MPs by the late 1930s. Even when the Liberals held the balance of power (during the two minority Labour Governments of 1924 and 1929–31) their ability to shape policy was very limited. Liberalism during this period shifted from being a coherent, credible political competitor for government to being almost the brand label for a fragmented pressure group of non-socialist radicals. It is a sad story of lost opportunities and overlooked warnings. But the Liberal Party can draw comfort from being broadly right when the majority in both the Conservatives and Labour Parties, certainly up until 1938, were decidedly wrong in their opposition to rearmament and support for appeasement.

Grayson maps out the development of Liberal thought driven from the principle of international interdependency – where institutions such as the League of Nations were held up as the tools by which the greatest good for the greatest number could be achieved. Whether this was ultimately realisable is obviously a moot point. As J. M. Keynes made clear, the concept of interdependency could only hold good if a sense of mutual benefit, equity and ease of redress existed. None of these factors were found in abundance following the peace settlement of 1919. One of the most interesting sections of this book is its chapter on 'Liberal Thinkers'. In direct contrast to its electoral weakness during the inter-war years the broad church of the Liberal Party attracted some of the biggest intellectual heavyweights to its pews. Most notable were figures such as J. M. Keynes, Walter Layton, William Beveridge, Gilbert Murray, Lord Lothian (Philip Kerr) and Ramsay Muir. These individuals made significant contributions to the development to Liberal policy, in particular in challenging the concept of a belief in national sovereignty as the basis of long-term security, and in developing the concept of interdependency. Keynes, Layton, Murray and Muir were also very active in the influential Liberal Summer Schools, often overlooked by historians, but which are covered in depth in this book and provide significant insights into the development of Liberal thinking up to 1939.

Grayson provides a particularly clear summary of the key role from 1935 that the Liberal Party under Sir Archibald's Sinclair leadership played in leading the opposition to Chamberlain's appeasement policy. It is often forgotten that appeasement was a popular policy with large sections of the British population. Sinclair risked unpopularity and accusations of war-mongering with his attacks on Chamberlain's foreign policy, but he built a national reputation for himself and he enabled the small parliamentary Liberal Party to punch considerably more than its parliamentary weight of seventeen MPs.

Grayson makes a critical assessment of the overall practicality of Liberal policies during the interwar period. He questions the party's approach to issues

such as the revision of the Versailles Treaty and dependency on the League of Nations for resolution of international conflicts during the 1920s. He is sceptical about the Liberal belief and advocacy of collective security as an answer to the aggression of Hitler's Germany. However, as Grayson argues, there was at least as much chance of the Liberals' policy of peace through collective security working as there was of appeasement containing Hitler. Ultimately, on the big issues concerning international relations during the 1930s the Liberal Party was more right than wrong, which is more than can be said for either the Tories or the Labour Party. On the ultimately crucial issue of Hitler, Sinclair's opposition to appeasement was absolutely correct, and it is an appalling shame that the electoral facts of life prevented the Liberal policy of opposing German aggression from being put into practice prior to the invasion of Poland in 1939.

Ian Hunter is completing a part-time doctorate on the Liberal Party and the Churchill Coalition.

1 The book is 194 pages long including some very useful appendices on the Liberal Summer Schools, Liberal conferences and extracts from contemporary documents on Liberal policy.
2 Richard Grayson has previously published *Austen Chamberlain and the Commitment to Europe: British Foreign Policy, 1924–29* (Frank Cass, 1997).

Labour and Liverpool

Peter Kilfoyle: *Left Behind: Lessons from Labour's Heartland* (Politico's Publishing, 2000)
Reviewed by **Chris Rennard**

Peter Kilfoyle's fascinating account of Liverpool Labour politics has particular interest for me, as so much of his career parallels some of my own. His story is one of internecine warfare within the Liverpool Labour Party. His account is that of a Labour Party activist, official and then MP whose major battles were never as clearly focused on winning over the electorate as they were on winning internal party battles, most notably with the Militant Tendency.

I grew up in the part of Liverpool where *Focus* leaflets first began, in the first ward in the city to elect a Liberal councillor and in the only city in modern times to be governed by the Liberal Party. As a twelve-year-old activist I remember the sense of excitement on the streets during the 1973 city elections, when we won 48 of the 99 seats on the new council.

Peter Kilfoyle describes the opposite emotions about this election, although *Left Behind* also served to remind me of the debilitating rows within my own party, as its probably too rapid accession to power meant that the first Liberal administration included more than a few members with dubious backgrounds. Of course, the author also recognises the sincerity and decency of many of the leading Liberals of the early '70s, including the late Cyril Carr (who recruited me to the party) and Mike Storey, who remains a very close friend and who is now proving to be the most formidable and effective leader that the city has ever seen.

Liverpool council politics were at their most notorious in the Militant era, when Labour unexpectedly gained overall control of the council in 1983, in what was probably a reaction against the Thatcher Government and the perceived closeness to it of the then Liberal Leader, Sir Trevor Jones. For the first part of this period, Peter Kilfoyle had emigrated to Australia. He missed some of the classic battles in the city's media and in the annual elections between the Militants, relying on strong anti-Thatcher sentiments, and the Liberals, who sought to highlight the corruption of the Militant regime and the damage that they were doing to the city's reputation and finances.

A number of people who watched Alan Bleasdale's drama about these times (*GBH*) have suggested to me that things could not possibly have been as bad as it portrayed. They were far worse. The thuggery, intimidation and corruption were very real. It is hard to describe the damage done to the city when all 31,000 city council employees were declared redundant. My wife was a teacher, whose redundancy notice was in a package for all the staff thrown through the school kitchen window by one of the many taxi drivers hired to deliver them. Any possible promotion within the city's education system was clearly blocked as she was a known opponent of the regime and, in common with many professional people, she was amongst those effectively forced to leave the city.

I still feel resentment that Neil Kinnock's Labour Party only started to act against the Militants when their antics became too embarrassing and electorally damaging to the Labour Party elsewhere. Around the time I left Liverpool, Peter Kilfoyle returned and was put in charge of the Labour Party's organisation. His book describes the tough approach required as he attended up to four branch meetings per evening, trying to ensure that rules were upheld and not exploited by the Militants and their allies. But it was a battle that was won at least as much by the courage of the Liberals (and then Liberal Democrats), who continued to present the only electoral opposition to the Militants, and by the courts, who eventually disqualified forty-six members of the Labour group from membership of the council when they failed to set a legal rate.

Peter Kilfoyle considers his battle against the Militants was won when he was elected as Eric Heffer's successor in the 1991 Walton by-election. I think that he was actually a lucky man, who ironically owed his by-election win to the Militants. But for a totally false impression, in an ignorant media, that

the by-election was a straight Labour versus Militant fight, I am confident that Liberal candidate Paul Clark (who had succeeded Trevor Jones) would have won. As it was, Paul Clark polled 36% of the vote, the Militant candidate lost her deposit (as did the Tory) and Peter Kilfoyle held the seat with Eric Heffer's majority cut from 23,000 to 6,000.

I met Peter Kilfoyle recently, found him to be a charming man and told him how much I enjoyed his book. I chose not to tell him, however, of my own role in running Paul Clark's campaign, and how I felt that with a bit of luck I would have kept him out of Parliament – and this very good book would probably never have been written.

Chris Rennard (Lord Rennard of Wavertree) was Secretary of the Liverpool Wavertree Constituency Liberal Association in 1976, agent to David Alton (Lord Alton of Liverpool) when he first won his Liverpool Mossley Hill Constituency in 1983, and has been the Liberal Democrats' Director of Campaigns and Elections since 1989.

'When in doubt what should be done, do nothing'

David Cecil: *The Young Melbourne & Lord M* (Phoenix Press, 2001)

Reviewed by **David Nolan**

William Lamb, the 2nd Viscount Melbourne (1779–1848) was Home Secretary at the time of the Great Reform Act in 1832 and went on to lead the Whig government that held office from 1835 to 1841. In the first of these roles he was tasked with suppressing the violent disturbances that accompanied the passage of the reform legislation through Parliament; in the latter, more famously, he guided the young Queen Victoria through her early years as head of state.

David Cecil's *The Young Melbourne* appeared in 1939; *Lord M,* his study of Lamb's ministerial career, followed fifteen years later. The two are now reissued in a single volume, although they amount to more than a single 'life', not least because the first part is as much about his wife Caroline Ponsonby as it as about the future Prime Minister. Both sections, even that dealing with the late blossoming of Melbourne's career, are more personal than political biography. Yet this is almost inevitable given that Melbourne always gave a higher priority to personal rather than political considerations.

Reading Cecil's book, it is almost possible to forget that England in the years following Waterloo was a country beset by fear of revolution, nonetheless going through a period of significant change and reform. Riot and disorder are mentioned, but they somehow lose their sting amid the mood of calm that prevails through this book. Melbourne, we are told, could smile at anything; it seems his biographer is inclined to do the same.

It is not all smiles, however, for Melbourne's life was frequently touched by sadness. His marriage to Caroline Ponsonby was an unhappy one. A romantic dreamer, who saw the world as an epic poem with herself cast as the heroine, Caroline was easily bored and soon turned to men other than her husband for romantic gratification. Had she merely confined herself to discreet affairs there would not have been a problem: the era of rigid Victorian morals (or hypocrisy depending on your viewpoint) had not yet dawned, and it was still possible to retain your place in polite society even when someone other than your spouse was occupying their place in your bedchamber. However, Caroline overstepped the mark by the degree to which she publicised her liaisons, not least a stormy affair with the poet Byron, which culminated in her cutting her arms with broken glass in a fit of rage over being spurned by him at a ball. Such tantrums were a serious embarrassment to the future Lord M, and to the families on both sides. As a result, repeated efforts were made to persuade William to separate from his wife, but on more than one occasion he backed down in the face of emotional demonstrations of regret from Caroline and, as a result, they were not to be finally separated until her death in 1828.

Further sadness was to follow with the illness and premature death of his son and only child, and with Melbourne being named in a divorce case as a result of an apparently innocent relationship with Caroline Norton – all of which gives Cecil plenty of material with which to spin a good old historical yarn.

The dramatic episodes of Melbourne's marriage are not the only aspects of this book that keep it from being a dry-as-dust political biography. Wit is also present. In a phrase characteristic of this biographer's engaging style, Cecil points out that: 'Like the other young men of his circle, he thought chastity a dangerous state: and he seems early to have taken practical steps to avoid incurring the risks

attendant on it.' This remark is typical of a book that is as easy going as the character it depicts.

At the same time as telling his tale, Cecil does find time to explore Melbourne's deeply cautious political outlook. He took a sceptical view of grand reform schemes put forward by various interests, once remarking, 'When in doubt what should be done, do nothing.' He may have mistrusted reform, but he was ready to accept it when he judged it necessary in order to achieve his most abiding aim, the preservation of order and tranquillity. On occasion his concern for order led to mistakes, such as his heavy-handed treatment of the Tolpuddle Martyrs – one of the few features of his career to come in for criticism by Cecil – but it also led him to change his mind in favour of an extension of the franchise, and it motivated his constant efforts to chart a middle course between the radical and conservative pressures on his government from 1835. Like Gladstone later, though less frequently and far more reluctantly, his conservative ends sometimes led him to employ reforming means.

Unlike Gladstone he got on extremely well with Queen Victoria. Ascending the throne at just eighteen, she looked to her Prime Minister as her principal source of advice and guidance on the execution of her duties. Nor was it all strictly business; they became very close friends who met several times a day as much as a means of mutual support than because of any need to attend to matters of state. Indeed, Victoria became so reliant upon him, and as a result so prejudiced against his political opponents, that Melbourne had to work hard to educate her out of her antipathy to Peel and the Tories. In the end though, it was Melbourne rather than the Queen who had the harder time adapting to the drastic change in their acquaintance that inevitably followed the collapse of his government in 1841.

With narrative history now very much back in fashion it is hardly surprising that David Cecil's novelesque and sympathetic study of Melbourne should now be republished. Whilst it may be rather too hagiographical by modern standards, it is nonetheless welcome as one of the surprisingly few biographies of the man currently in print.

David Nolan is Secretary of Crosby & Bootle Liberal Democrats, and an amateur historian with an interest in 19th century British political history.

The most complex character

Antony Lentin: *Lloyd George and the Lost Peace: From Versailles to Hitler, 1914–1940* (Palgrave, 2001)

Reviewed by **David Dutton**

The main problem with this book is its title. It is not, as the reader might have suspected, a systematic survey of Lloyd George's attitude towards the problems of the peace settlement between the signing of the Treaty of Versailles and the fall of France two decades later. It consists in fact of a collection of six essays, four of which deal with various aspects of the 1919 settlement itself. Furthermore, earlier drafts of all but one of the essays have already been published, and the author himself wrote a monograph on Lloyd George, the peace settlement and the seeds of the next war almost twenty years ago. Is there, then, much to be said to justify the present volume?

The answer is an emphatic 'yes'. It is precisely because Antony Lentin has devoted the majority of his academic career to trying to get to grips with this most slippery of biographical subjects that his latest book may be read with such profit. What we have is a perceptive and insightful study of the complex Welshman, which at times borders on the psychoanalytical but which rarely fails to convince, such is the author's rapport with the subject of his enquiries. The analysis of the relationship between Lloyd George and Lord Cunliffe over the negotiation of the reparations settlement is particularly persuasive, and represents a significant modification of accepted historical wisdom. Lentin probably takes us nearer to a genuine understanding of what Lloyd George was seeking to achieve during the peace negotiations than has been reached by any other author. The British Prime Minister rejoiced in what he had done in the Versailles settlement, but was fully aware of the work which remained to be tackled. He would probably have endorsed General Smuts' conclusion that 'the real work of peace will only begin after this treaty has been signed'.

A continuous narrative, covering the whole period from 1919 to 1940, might have made it easier to make sense of the two final and still somewhat bizarre episodes examined in the last two chapters of this book – Lloyd George's visit to Hitler in 1936, and his response to the fall of Poland in 1939, and the possibility of a compromise

peace when the war turned against Britain in the spring of 1940. It must, of course, be admitted that such a narrative would be difficult to construct, for in the years after the end of his premiership in 1922 Lloyd George's attention was understandably directed away from international affairs and towards the domestic problems of the British economy and the Liberal Party. That said, Lentin shows that Lloyd George was in no sense Hitler's dupe. All the same, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he misjudged his man. There were aspects of Hitler to which Lloyd George was instinctively drawn, not least because Hitler was enacting in Germany some of the social and economic policies which the Welshman had unsuccessfully urged upon the National Government in Britain. But to suggest that, had Lloyd George rather than Neville Chamberlain been in power in the late 1930s, some sort of Anglo-German understanding would have been arrived at, presupposes that Britain could, in anything other than the very short term, have lived in harmony with a Nazi Germany rampant and unrestrained in continental Europe.

There is plenty here to stimulate the reader, though at the end of the day he may still decide that Lloyd George will forever escape the conclusive grasp of historical comprehension. As his long-term secretary, A. J. Sylvester, once put it, 'his character is the most complex I have ever known'.

David Dutton is Reader in History at the University of Liverpool.

Keeper of the Liberal Flame

conctinued from page 25

John Davies is the eldest son of Ivor Davies, born in 1941 and educated at the universities of Oxford and Sheffield, recently retired from the Publishers Association where he was Director of the Educational Publishers Council, the Council of Academic and Professional Publishers, the Serial Publishers Executive, the Copyright Licensing Agency and the Publishers Licensing Society

1 Edinburgh University Personality Series No. 11 – Ivor R.M. Davies in *The Student*, 1 February 1938, p 161.
2 Reported in *The Bulletin* (Aberdeen) July 1937.
3 Election addresses: Oxford 1938, Central Aberdeenshire 1945, West Aberdeenshire 1950, Oxford 1955, 1959, 1964.
4 Profile of the Rev. Roderick G Davies in *The Christian World*, 16 May 1940, p. 3.
5 e.g. lead feature in *Glasgow Weekly Herald,* 5 December 1936: 'The Milk Muddle' by Ivor R.M. Davies, p. 8.
6 Ian Bradley – 'Oxford 1938 – the first 'War' vote' – *The Times*, 27 October 1978, p. 16.
7 Ivor R M Davies, *Trial By Ballot* (London, 1950), pp. 143–44.
8 Quoted by Tom Harrisson, co-founder of Mass Observation, in *Picture Post*, 5 November 1938.
9 'Recount Drama ends Darwen Contest' in *Northern Daily Telegraph*, 1943.
10 'Central Aberdeenshire – Result of Poll' in *Huntly Express* 27 July 1945 p. 3.
11 See article by Robert Ingham, 'Donald Johnson – the last Liberal Imperialist', *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* 25, Winter 1999–2000, p. 31.
12 Reviewed in *Times Literary Supplement* 23 June 1950 p. 383, *Truth* 18 August 1950 p. 167, *The Economist* 19 August 1950, *The Press and Journal* 13 May 1950, and elsewhere.
13 Ivor Davies: obituary in *The Bookseller* by John Davies, 5 December 1986, p. 2240.
14 'Mr Davies adopted for Oxford', *Oxford Mail*, 7 June 1952.
15 'City Tory majority slashed', *Oxford Times*, 16 October 1964 p. 28.
16 'Mr Ivor Davies to stand for Oxford City Council', *Oxford Mail* 28 February 1953.
17 Oxford City Council Liberal election address, Wolvercote Ward 1970.
18 *Our Olive* (Oxford 1989) p. 95.
19 Bernard Levin, writing as Taper in *The Spectator*, September 1961.
20 'Ivor Davies – the Man for Oxford', *Liberal News* General Election Campaign edition 1964, p. 1.
21 'A royal reward', *Oxford Mail*, 1 November 1984 p. 7.
22 'Man of influence for four decades', *Oxford Mail*, 3 December 1986 p. 2. There was no obituary in *Liberal News*.

Bibliographical Note: *At their deaths in the late 1980s, Ivor and Jean Davies left behind them a significant collection of press cuttings, election literature and other documents related to their political activities. These have been drawn upon for this article and, where attributed and relevant, some of them are cited in the footnotes. The content of the article, however, also owes much to eyewitness observation and conversations within the family and with friends of the subject over many years.*

'Let us open to them the door of the House of Commons'

continued from page 21

be displayed. Till we have done this, let us not presume to say that there is no genius among the countrymen of Isaiah, no heroism among the descendants of the Maccabees.

Sir, in supporting the motion of my honourable friend, I am, I firmly believe, supporting the honour and the interests of the Christian religion. I should think that I insulted that religion if I said that it cannot stand unaided by intolerant laws. Without such laws it was established, and without such laws it may be maintained. It triumphed over the superstitions of the most refined and of the most savage nations, over the graceful mythology of Greece and the bloody idolatry of the northern forests. It prevailed over the power and policy of the Roman Empire. It tamed the barbarians by whom that empire was overthrown. But all these victories were gained not by the help of intolerance, but in spite of the opposition of intolerance. The whole history of Christianity proves that she has little indeed to fear from persecution as a foe, but much to fear from persecution as an ally. May she long continue to bless our country with her benignant influence, strong in her sublime philosophy, strong in her spotless morality, strong in those internal and external evidences to which the most powerful and comprehensive of human intellects have yielded assent, the last solace of those who have outlived every earthly hope, the last restraint of those who are raised above every earthly fear! But let not us, mistaking her character and her interests, fight the battle of truth with the weapons of error, and endeavour to support by oppression that religion which first taught the human race the great lesson of universal charity.

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