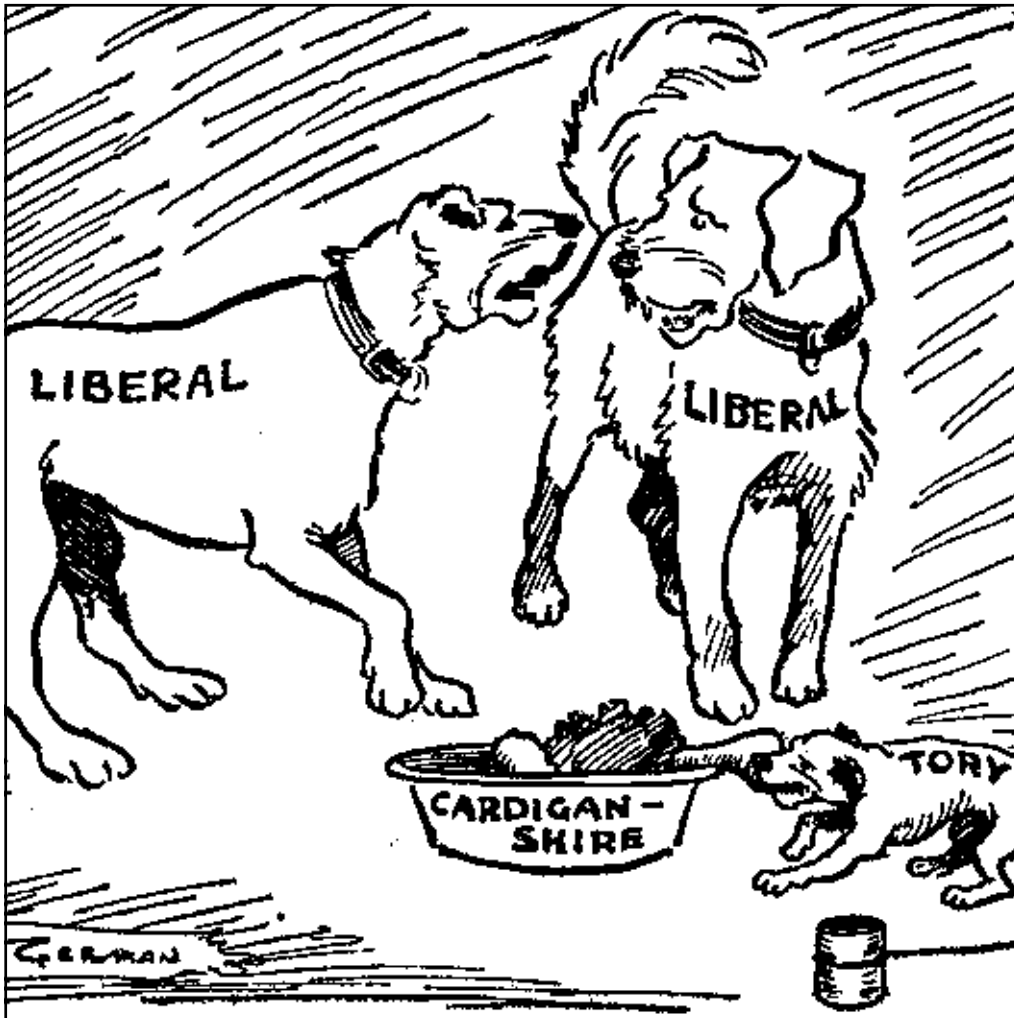


Liberal Democrat

HISTORY



Liberals divided

Dr J. Graham Jones

'Every vote for Llewelyn Williams is a vote against Lloyd George' Cardiganshire, 1921

Pamela Horn

The farm workers' champion Biography of Joseph Arch

Graham Davis

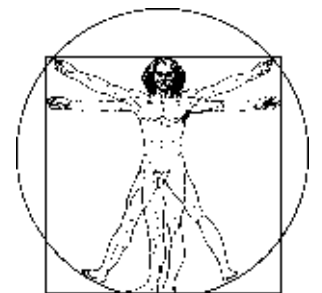
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Tony Little

Value for money Anthony Trollope's campaign for Beverley

Violet Bonham Carter

'Hold on, hold out; we are coming' Speech after the 1920 Paisley by-election



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Journal of Liberal Democrat History

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

ISSN 1463-6557

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

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38 Salford Road, London SW2 4BQ
email: journal@liberalhistory.org.uk

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An annual subscription to the *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* costs £10.00 (£5.00 unwaged rate). This includes membership of the History Group unless you inform us otherwise.

Overseas subscribers should add £5.00; or, a special three-year rate is available for £40.00 total.

Cheques (payable to 'Liberal Democrat History Group') should be sent to:

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6 Palfrey Place, London SW8 1PA;
email: subs@liberalhistory.org.uk

Cover design concept: **Lynne Featherstone**

Published by the Liberal Democrat History Group,
c/o 38 Salford Road, London SW2 4BQ

Printed by Kall-Kwik,
426 Chiswick High Road, London W4 5TF
December 2002

Liberals divided

Dr J. Graham Jones examines the February 1921 by-election in Cardiganshire, where Asquithian and Lloyd George Liberals engaged in bitter internecine warfare

'Every vote for Llewelyn Williams is a vote against Lloyd George'¹

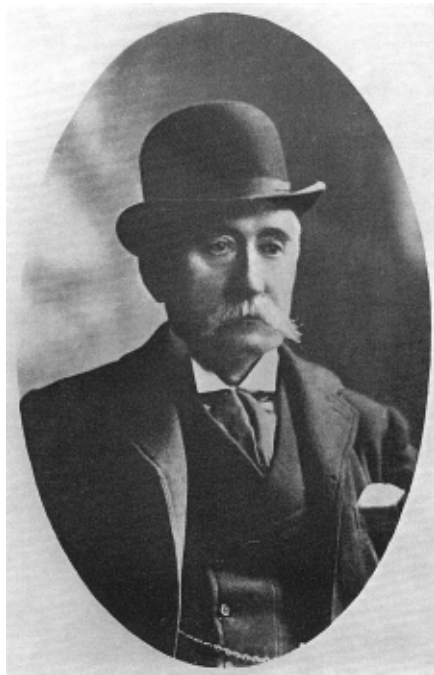
Llewelyn's opposed to national waste; So work for him with zeal and haste.'²

By the 1950s Welsh Liberals proudly referred to the Cardiganshire constituency as 'the safest seat held by a Liberal member'.³ This remote, predominantly rural division on the western seaboard of Wales, so far removed from the hub of political life at Westminster, and first captured by the Liberals in the 'breaking of the ice' general election of 1868, was held continuously by the party from 1880 until the defeat of Roderic Bowen in 1966.⁴ But this long tenure was not always characterised by political harmony, calm and tranquillity. During the early 1920s in particular, intensely bitter political controversy beset Cardiganshire. It was a deep-rooted conflict which left indelible scars for a whole generation and longer. The advent of 'total war' after 1914 had made a deep impression upon the life of the county. It inaugurated a period of redefinition and a crisis of deeply entrenched values caused by the pressures of world war, which undermined severely the traditional ethos embodied in nonconformist Liberalism.

The county's Liberal MP ever since 1895 had been Matthew Lewis Vaughan Davies, squire of Tanybwch mansion near Aberystwyth, justifiably dubbed 'the silent backbencher' whose long, undistinguished tenure of the constituency had caused 'the most enervating torpor' to 'seize' the local Liberal Party.⁵ During the later stages of the war persistent rumours circulated that the veteran MP was anxious to 'retire' to the upper house, and speculation ensued on the identity of his likely successor as Cardiganshire's representative in the House of Commons.

In October 1917 W. Llewelyn Williams, Liberal MP for the Carmarthen Boroughs since 1906, a former close associate of Lloyd George who had dramatically fallen out with him primarily over the need to introduce military conscription during 1916, wrote to Harry Rees, the secretary of the Cardiganshire Liberals. 'You will have seen that the Carmarthen Boros are going to be wiped out, & that I shall therefore be looking for a new seat either in Carm. or elsewhere. I should be glad to hear from you what are the prospects in Cardiganshire?'⁶ Williams wrote in the certain knowledge that his own seat was about to disappear in the impending redistribution of parliamentary constituencies. In the event no peerage materialised for Vaughan Davies, and no parliamentary vacancy arose for Llewelyn Williams. Williams' fate was effectively sealed by the course of the famous Maurice Debate in the House of Commons in May 1918 when he was one of the ninety-eight Liberal MPs to enter the opposition lobby. 'L.G. is now definitely at the head of a Tory Gov[ernment]', he wrote defiantly to Harry Rees, '... Of course the Liberal Party will be split up again, but I don't fear the result. I am prepared, if necessary, to make an alliance with the Labour Party.'⁷ As the war ran its course speculation persisted that Vaughan Davies, who had declared himself a supporter of Lloyd George in 1916, was likely to be awarded a peerage.

As it happened Vaughan Davies was returned to parliament unopposed in the 'coupon' general election held on the conclusion of hostilities, having received official endorsement from the coalition camp



Matthew Vaughan Davies (later Baron Ystwyth), MP for Cardiganshire 1895–1920

as early as the previous July.⁸ There was some disquiet in Cardiganshire as a result of the MP's apparent ready endorsement of the coalition government. Vaughan Davies attempted to assuage local opposition by declaring his unwillingness to continue to support the coalition after the signing of the peace treaties if the government violated Liberal principles.⁹ As the election loomed, Llewelyn Williams again doggedly staked his claim in the event of a vacancy:

There is a persistent rumour that Vaughan Davies will be raised to the peerage at the last moment, & a George man will be rushed in for Cardiganshire.

In such a case I want you to make it known that I should be willing to offer my services, as a Liberal, prepared to give loyal support to the Gov[ernment] until peace is declared, but prepared to fight them if they will try (as they declare) to play hanky-panky with Dis[establishment] & Imperial Preference, & try to perpetuate Conscription &c.

Should they run the thing very fine (they are capable of anything!) I could wire the £150 required to be deposited at nomination.¹⁰

In the event no vacancy arose and Vaughan Davies continued to represent the county in parliament for a little

over two years longer. In the autumn of 1919 H. H. Asquith was welcomed to Aberystwyth amidst scenes of great jubilation and enthusiasm.¹¹

At long last, in the early days of 1921, the peerage anticipated for several years finally materialised: M. L. Vaughan Davies became Baron Ystwyth in the New Year's Honours List.¹² Already eighty years of age, with nigh on twenty-six years of continuous service in the Commons and recently elected as chairman of the Welsh Parliamentary Party, he was hailed in some circles as the 'doyen of Welsh political life' whose 'promotion' was 'rather overdue'.¹³ The local Asquithian camp was less impressed. The Prime Minister was at once reminded that, as a reforming, radical Chancellor of the Exchequer back in 1909, intent on carrying his 'People's Budget', he had dismissed the upper chamber as 'purely a branch of the Tory organisation'. Now he stood accused of 'recklessly throw[ing] Cardiganshire into the turmoil and expense of an election'.¹⁴ It was indeed contended from the outset that a keenly observed by-election lay in prospect, and it was soon realised that Vaughan Davies's elevation was primarily a device engineered by the Prime Minister to bring into parliament his own private secretary, Captain Ernest Evans, himself a native of Aberystwyth, a Welsh speaker, a barrister by profession and an erudite public speaker with extensive local connections.

It was noted, too, that 'Wee Free' (Asquithian) support was substantial within the county. Indeed Asquith had himself been considered a possible Liberal candidate for Cardiganshire only a short time earlier, before his return for Paisley in 1920. Local passions ran high against the notion that Lloyd George should consider the county Liberal Association the mere 'handmaiden' of an administration comprising mainly Unionist MPs whose good name had been tainted beyond hope of recovery by the atrocities of the Black and Tans in Ireland.¹⁵

Resentment increased as it became ever more apparent that the course of events had long been manipulated by the Prime Minister. When his wife Mrs Margaret Lloyd George had visited the

county in 1919, she had been accompanied pointedly by Captain Ernest Evans. Evans had already avidly sought the Liberal nomination for the University of Wales constituency in 1918, but had been persuaded to withdraw his name (probably due to pressure from Lloyd George) in favour of veteran Welsh Liberal Sir John Herbert Lewis, a close political associate of the Prime Minister's for fully thirty years. The favour now needed to be repaid.

Evans had already addressed several political meetings in the county during the spring and summer of 1920. On the very day that Vaughan Davies's peerage was announced, Captain Evans arrived at Aberystwyth fresh from 10 Downing Street, and within four short days had already canvassed the electors of the key towns of Aberaeron, Aberystwyth and Tregaron. It was widely felt throughout Cardiganshire that such underhand tactics should not be allowed to go unchallenged. The coalition 'nominee' was certainly not to be granted a 'walk-over'. There was also a growing sentiment that some protest should be made against the increasingly lavish expenditure of the coalition government, and plans to put up an 'anti-waste' candidate were well received within the county boroughs of Aberystwyth, Lampeter and Cardigan.

It was widely felt that the fledgling county Labour Party, set up in December 1918, was not yet sufficiently well established to put up its own parliamentary candidate, but its supporters were strongly attracted by the prospect of an 'anti-waste', 'anti-coalition' aspirant.¹⁶ Some Labourites from the south of the county favoured a socialist candidate, but 'wiser counsels in the Aberystwyth district and the Labour men in the North were loath to spend time and energy on a fight which did not hold out a fair prospect of success'.¹⁷ It was considered that left-wing supporters were likely to vote for an independent Liberal candidate.

As the post-war coalition government ran its course, resentment had grown apace at the apparent betrayal of traditional Liberal principles, now allegedly 'sacrificed to the Moloch of political opportunity'. In some quarters outrage had followed the decision to

make a grant of £1,250,000 from the Treasury to the disestablished Welsh national church. Demands for devolutionary concessions to Wales – even the modest call for a Secretary of State for Wales – were heard no longer, it was argued, because Lloyd George now ‘held and always will hold his great Office on the servile tenure of subjection to Tory domination’.¹⁸

Speculation soon began to focus on the identity of likely Liberal candidates. Five names were mentioned, two of whom – local Aldermen J. M. Howell and D. C. Roberts – soon withdrew, mainly because they tended to support Lloyd George.¹⁹ Three names remained: Captain Ernest Evans, W. Llewelyn Williams and Sir Lewes Loveden Pryce. Interest and excitement increased throughout the county. There was much uncertainty concerning the political complexion of Cardiganshire as no contested parliamentary election had taken place in the county since January 1910. Women had never previously been able to cast their votes. An independent Liberal candidate was considered ‘essential to the essence of Welsh Liberalism. Otherwise we might as well admit at once that all Welsh seats are at the disposal of the Prime Minister to allocate to whom he will.’²⁰

The final selection meeting was to be held at the Victoria Hall, Lampeter on 25 January 1921. By this time Sir Lewes Loveden Pryce had withdrawn his name and local opinion crystallised and polarised sharply behind the two remaining candidates for the nomination. The two highly influential county newspapers – the *Cambrian News* and the *Welsh Gazette* – had very firm political allegiances. The former had come out stoutly in support of Captain Evans from the outset of the pre-election campaign at the beginning of January:

[He] comes to Cardiganshire as a Cardiganshire man knowing the county and its people, understanding its peculiar needs in agriculture and local government – a man reared in its atmosphere and yet broadened by contact with a wider sphere. It is unfair to describe Mr. Evans, as is being done, as ‘the Premier’s nominee’. As a

member of the secretariat at Downing-Street, Mr Evans came into contact and close contact with Mr Lloyd George, but he comes to the electors of Cardiganshire free from any bond, spoken or written. Even his enemies know the Premier too well to accuse him of attempting to curtail the freedom of another man. Mr Evans supports the Coalition and has as much right to that view as Mr Llewelyn Williams has to support Mr Asquith. He has not disguised his ambition to represent his native county in the legislative chamber, and he has made no secret of the fact that when a vacancy arose he would submit himself to the Association for their consideration.²¹

Equally predictably the *Welsh Gazette*, dismissing Evans as ‘an opportunist’ whose ‘sole ambition is not to serve Cardiganshire, but to get a seat in Parliament’, hailed Llewelyn Williams as ‘the man for Cardiganshire ... He is independent and will be free to criticise the wicked waste and extravagance of the Government; free to stand up for the small farmers and free to demand Temperance for Wales.’²² The ever-spiralling political enthusiasm and partisanship displayed throughout the county was paralleled by intense interest at Westminster, above all at Coalition Liberal headquarters. It was recognised from the outset that Lloyd George could not personally participate in the campaign, but it soon became known that his wife Margaret intended to speak widely on behalf of Captain Evans.

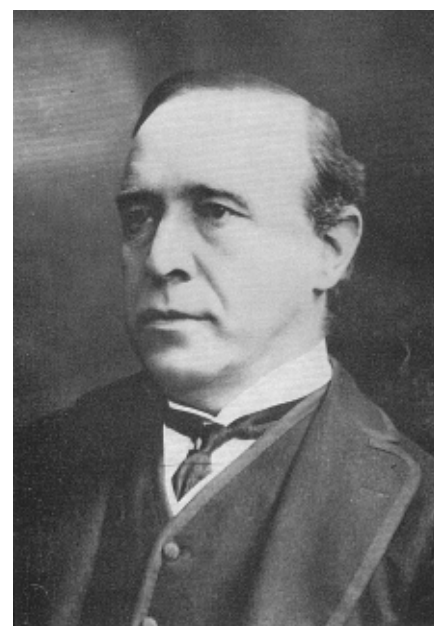
By the standards of the age strict security surrounded the 25 January selection meeting when no fewer than 347 delegates out of a possible 350 attended. In the graphic description of the ‘Special Correspondent’ of *The Times*, ‘The journey to the conference at Lampeter, thirty miles south of Aberystwyth, was reminiscent of a football cup-tie trip. There was the same excitement, the same animated discussion of chances and the same keen partisanship.’²³

Following a notably turbulent political meeting, where on occasion ‘pandemonium reigned supreme’, in the words of the *Cambrian News* correspondent, Llewelyn Williams polled 216

votes and Captain Ernest Evans 127.²⁴ On the day of the fateful selection meeting Williams had asserted, ‘I am coming out as a strong “anti-waste” candidate, because of the extravagance of the Government, which has squandered in Mesopotamia hundreds of millions which ought to have been used to build houses in this country’.²⁵ In response to the voting figures, in an evangelical speech he proclaimed to his followers that Lloyd George had ‘gone astray like a prodigal son’ by abandoning his Liberalism to assume the leadership of a Tory-dominated coalition. In the wake of the selection meeting, the coalitionists convened their own meeting at Lampeter town hall, unanimously selecting Captain Evans as their own candidate. The scene was set for a civil war by-election.

The rival candidates contrasted sharply. W. Llewelyn Williams had been born in Carmarthenshire’s Towy valley in 1867, the son of a tenant farmer, and educated at the celebrated Llandoverly College and Brasenose College, Oxford, where he had made the acquaintance of an array of patriotic Welshmen. He had spent his early career as a journalist and had played an important role in the *Cymru Fydd* (‘Young Wales’) movement of the late nineteenth century when he had formed some rapport with the youthful David Lloyd George. Closely associated with the New Liberal ethos of

W. Llewelyn Williams, independent Liberal candidate in the by-election



these years, he had been seriously considered as a possible party candidate for Cardiganshire in place of M. L. Vaughan Davies in 1895.

In January 1897 he had begun a second career when he was called to the bar from Lincoln's Inn. Each time a vacancy arose in a Welsh Liberal seat during subsequent years Williams's name was mentioned as a likely candidate. Eventually, strongly supported by Lloyd George (then the novice President of the Board of Trade), he had entered parliament as MP for the Carmarthen Boroughs in 1906. The two men then became bitter enemies over the conscription bills introduced in 1916, the rift deepened as the war ran its course, and Williams soon found himself politically isolated, refusing offers of non-political posts – 'My soul is not for sale' – and predictably failing to secure the Liberal nomination for a Welsh constituency in 1918.

Williams's relationship with Lloyd George came to the fore during the 1921 by-election campaign which coincided with the establishment of the Welsh Liberal Federation as an Asquithian power base within Wales. Llewelyn Williams (together with Ellis W. Davies, Rhys Hopkin Morris and Judge J. Bryn Roberts) was one of its founders, all of them taking the line that Lloyd George as premier had shamelessly betrayed Welsh interests over temperance, land legislation, administrative devolution and the terms of disendowment.²⁶ To some extent Williams's appeal tended to be nostalgic in the world of 1921, as his speeches concerned the 'betrayal' of the Welsh over the terms of disendowment, the failure to act over the 'Speaker's Conference' on devolution, and the decision to abandon the 1920 Welsh Licensing Bill. Yet early in the campaign, in a speech at Llandysul, he was at pains to refer to his erstwhile friendship with the Prime Minister:

The Prime Minister was a Welshman – the most noted Welshman ever born, the finest boy he (Mr Williams) had ever come in contact with. Further the Premier was an old friend of his. There never were no two brothers who loved each other so faithfully

than Mr Lloyd George and himself. Whenever either was in trouble they always helped each other. He did not hate Mr. Lloyd George. The most bitter hour in his history was when he had to part from him.

The only thing he had against Captain Ernest Evans was that he was tied to the Coalition. What was the good of sending a Prime Minister's Private Secretary to Parliament? He (Mr Williams) knew something about private secretaries – they dare not call their souls their own. (Laughter)²⁷

When he addressed a group of uproarious students at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, Williams faced constant heckling in support of Lloyd George, the candidate disclaiming 'any hostility to the Prime Minister whom, he said, he would be the first to welcome back to the Liberal ranks when he got rid of the Curzons, Carsons, Balfours, and Bonar Laws, who a few years ago tried to cut his throat over the Marconi case'.²⁸ In his election address he denounced the 'insensate extravagance of the most reckless and improvident Administration that has ever held office in a Democratic country'.²⁹

Captain Ernest Evans, born in 1885, was fully eighteen years Williams' junior. Like his rival, he too had been educated at Llandoverly College and had been called to the bar. He was well known in Cardiganshire where his father was clerk to the county council. During the previous few years he had remained at the hub of political life as a member of Lloyd George's 'Garden Suburb' in 10 Downing Street. As already noted, he had hoped to become the Liberal candidate for the University of Wales in 1918.

As the by-election campaign developed it became clear that support for the two candidates was fairly equally matched. At the height of the campaign *The Times*' correspondent wrote, 'In Aberystwyth I was assured this morning that friends who never quarrelled before are at daggers drawn over the present contest ... The fight is between Mr Lloyd George and Welsh Liberalism as represented by Mr. Llewelyn Williams. Every day brings fresh evidence of the bitterness with which the

struggle is being waged.³⁰ Political pundits were notably reluctant to indulge in prophecy. Quite apart from the uncertainty created by the lack of a parliamentary election in the county for fully eleven years, and the unknown impact of the women's vote for the first time, the physical diversity of Cardiganshire made prediction difficult. Its coastal rim extended fifty miles, and at its widest point inland it ran to fully thirty-five miles. With the exception of the small towns, most of the populace was engaged in agriculture, many residing twelve miles away from the nearest polling station. At the height of the campaign as many as 100 coalition organisers were at work at strategic points in the constituency, desperately anxious to poll every possible vote for Captain Evans. The county electoral register for 1920–21 contained 16,840 men and 14,332 women. Many of the latter were thought to be diehard Lloyd George devotees, but others, alarmed by repeated reports of governmental extravagance and waste, had resolved to cast their votes for Llewelyn Williams. A further consideration was the solid phalanx of between 8,000 and 9,000 true blue Tory supporters in the division, most (but not all) of whom were sure to support Captain Evans.

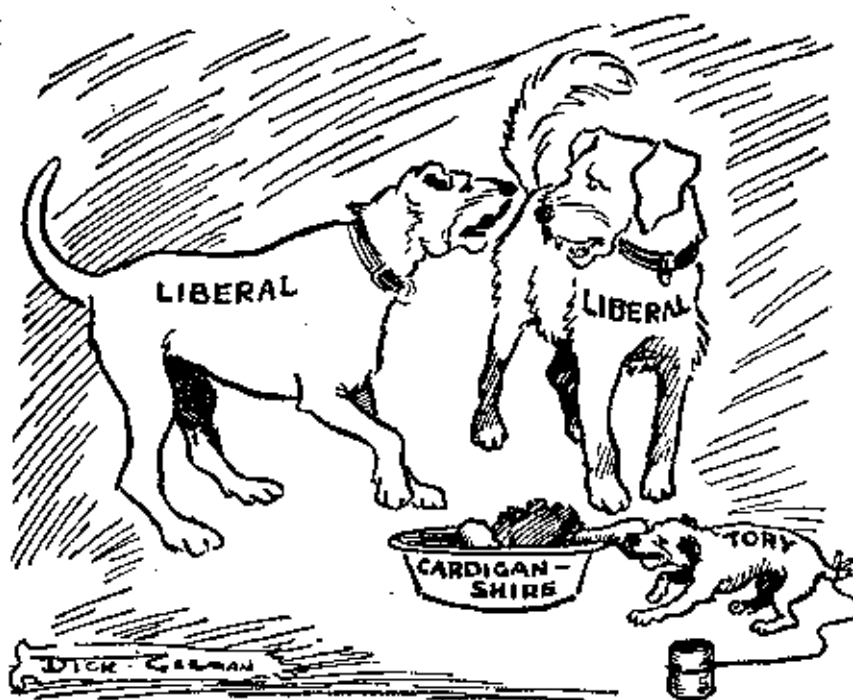
Yet another crucial factor was the religious complexion of the Cardiganshire electorate. It was notable from the beginning of the campaign that the Welsh church question, finally settled the previous year, was an electoral damp squib. At Aberystwyth on 15 February Asquith's daughter Lady Violet Bonham-Carter, who addressed no fewer than eleven campaign meetings, told her audience, 'He [Lloyd George] re-endowed the Church with taxpayers' money', but her impassioned words made little impression.³¹ Yet the campaign more generally was coloured by denominational cross-currents; Lloyd George was well known as a Campbellite Baptist, Captain Ernest Evans as a Calvinistic Methodist and Llewelyn Williams as a Congregationalist. The sizeable body of Unitarians within Cardiganshire inclined to Williams. Veteran Liberal Sir John Herbert Lewis, who had addressed

packed meetings at Aberystwyth, Cardigan and Lampeter in support of Captain Evans, recorded in his diary, 'The coast towns are strong for the Coalition, the Upland districts against; Unitarians against, Methodists & Independents said to be against; Baptists & Church for'.³² Some chapels indeed experienced a deep-rooted split which had long-lasting repercussions. The pastor and elders powerfully supported Lloyd George, while the rank and file of their congregations flocked in droves behind the banner of Llewelyn Williams, who, it was expected, would also win the votes of some 4,000 Labourites in the county.³³

The acrimony intensified as the campaign ran its course. Many prominent politicians from both sides spoke in the election meetings when messages of support were read out to large, enthusiastic audiences. Strong, impassioned language was employed on both sides. Lady Violet told the county's Wee Free Liberals that they were 'fighting not merely for a man, but for a creed, a faith', urging them to remain true to their 'fathers' sacrifices in 1868'.³⁴

Mrs Lloyd George was equally compelling on behalf of the coalition camp. Urged by her husband, 'They are very bitter outside Wales & if we lost, all their speakers & newspapers would say, "Lloyd George spurned & rejected by his own countrymen"', (he then went on, 'I am overwhelmed with great world affairs'),³⁵ she had spared no effort in support of Captain Evans, addressing no fewer than sixty election meetings. She was at pains to assure the county's farmers that the Prime Minister fully comprehended their difficulties, proclaiming at Cardigan that defeat for the coalition at the by-election would be nothing less than 'stabbing [Lloyd George] in the back'.³⁶

Her perorations were a potent fillip to the coalition campaign and undoubtedly helped to woo the new women's vote, sometimes by stressing the drink question. On the eve of the poll Sir J. Herbert Lewis noted in his diary that Margaret Lloyd George 'had addressed about fifteen or twenty meetings, but she looked perfectly fresh & was as placid & serene as usual.



How the press saw the Liberal fight over Cardiganshire

Whatever the result of the election, she will have made an immense contribution to the forces of the Coalition'.³⁷ Shortly before, *The Times*' Special Correspondent concluded that Mrs Lloyd George had indeed 'exercised a far more potent influence upon the contest than any other individual on either side'.³⁸

Although some observers ventured the belief that Llewelyn Williams stood an outside chance of success if he polled solidly in the rural areas, where dissatisfaction with the tenor of coalition politics was highest, and where stories and memories (more especially folk memories) of 1868 remained very much alive, most commentators predicted victory for Captain Evans. Interest was stimulated by the fact that two Liberals were vying for victory in a straight fight without the distraction of a Labour or other candidate. The by-election was also viewed as 'the first organised and sustained attack delivered by the Independent Liberals upon the great political influence wielded by the Prime Minister in Wales. The "Wee Frees" – the "Wee" may soon be inaccurate – are waging in Cardiganshire the strongest fight in which they have engaged since Mr Asquith was returned for Paisley'.³⁹

More than 78 per cent of the Cardiganshire electorate, a record high, turned out to vote. Captain Ernest Evans polled 14,111 votes and Llewelyn Williams 10,521. The majority of just over 3,500 votes exceeded expectations somewhat and led exuberant coalition supporters to light beacons on the hill-tops from Aberystwyth to Cardigan.

Lloyd George was positively overjoyed at the outcome. Before the poll he had proclaimed that he would 'rather lose a whole general election than one seat in Wales. The Cardiganshire people are the cutest in the world. It would not do for me to go down there'.⁴⁰ Hence his unrestrained exuberance when the result was announced to him at Chequers on 19 February; as Lord Riddell noted in his diary:

19th Feb. – To Chequers. Long talk with L. G.. Much excited over the Cardigan election. Result expected every minute when I arrived. Mrs. L. G. has been working like a Trojan in the constituency, delivering 58 speeches in a fortnight. While L. G. and I were walking in the park she came running out breathless to tell him that Evans had won by a majority of 3,590. He was delighted and said that if the result had been the

other way it would have been a serious setback. He warmly embraced Mrs. L. G. bestowing several hearty kisses upon her and telling her that she had won the election ... For some time he spoke of little else but the election.⁴¹

But in many ways the result was a Pyrrhic victory for the ailing coalition machine. It was clear that Williams had polled more Liberal votes and that Evans's success could be attributed primarily to Tory transport and Tory support. Indeed, as many as 250 coalition vehicles were in evidence in the county on polling day, commandeered from as far afield as Cardiff, Swansea, London, Manchester and Stockport, to convey voters to the sixty scattered polling stations. The Wee Free camp mustered no more than fifty. 'Beaten by Tory votes' was the justifiable catch-phrase of the defeated Asquithians, while Llewelyn Williams himself interpreted the verdict of the poll as 'the first Tory victory since 1874' in Cardiganshire.

On reflection, in response to a message of congratulations, he wrote, 'N.B. (1) We polled 2 to 1 of the Liberals. (2) 9000 Tories (not 6000) polled. (3) The clergy canvassed for L.G. egged on by the Bishop of St. D[avid]. (4) The Calvin[istic Methodist]s were splendidly loyal. Only a few in Aber[ystwyth] voted for Ernest. I got practically all the Noncon[formist] vote *except the Baptists*. (5) L.G. is no longer, even seemingly, the national leader. He is the chief of a faction, mainly Tory.'⁴² He evidently interpreted the voting figures as a significant chink in the armour of the coalition government machine.

It was indeed possible to interpret the substantial poll achieved by Williams as firm evidence of dissatisfaction in Wales with the tenor of coalition government. The same sentiments were voiced by *Welsh Gazette* columnist Miss Lilian Winstanley, an Aberystwyth university lecturer and local Liberal organiser, who saw Captain Evans's success as simply 'a temporary victory since it was a *victory for material power over spiritual power*. The coalition had on their side the immense wealth of this Government for profiteers; money was

poured out like water in organising victory; Cardiganshire has never seen such lavishness. A whole fleet of motor cars came on polling day to bring voters to the polling booths, wealthy men's motor cars which they lent because they wished to keep in power the coalition, and the coalition candidate was not likely to do anything to disturb their reign.'⁴³ Lloyd George had won through, agreed her newspaper, 'but at a terrible loss to his political prestige'.⁴⁴

On all sides it was agreed that some 7,000 Conservative votes had clinched victory for Captain Evans who, when he took his seat in the House of Commons the following week, had Lloyd George as one of his two sponsors, a privilege not bestowed upon a new member since Lady Astor, the first woman MP, in 1919.⁴⁵ Within Cardiganshire profound feelings of tension and dissension persisted alongside a conviction that further battles lay ahead. As the president of the county Liberal Association wrote a few days after the by-election, 'The present position of parties even in the Houses of Parliament is undergoing disintegration ... Even in this little town of Cardigan the Tories say and say rightly that they put Capt. Evans in for the County'.⁴⁶ In spite of its success in Cardiganshire, the strength of the coalition was ebbing fast. At the beginning of March it lost to Labour in three crucial by-elections – at Dudley, Kirkcaldy and Penistone – and had by then chalked up a net loss of fourteen seats since the coupon general election.

At his speech following the count Llewelyn Williams announced his intention to stand again in Cardiganshire at the next general election. His solid 10,000 votes represented 'the heart and soul of Liberalism' in the county.⁴⁷ Rather ironically, however, he was not given the opportunity to contest another election, as he fell victim to double pneumonia and died prematurely at the age of fifty-five on 22 April 1922. During his last days he was preoccupied with thoughts of securing a reconciliation with Lloyd George for whose friendship he still yearned.

In the general election which fol-

lowed the collapse of the coalition government in the autumn Captain Evans was challenged by an independent Liberal, Rhys Hopkin Morris, a barrister from Maesteg in south Wales, and saw his majority slashed to 515 votes. For the coalitionists the writing really was on the wall. When yet another general election ensued in December 1923, Liberal reunion, so flamboyantly trumpeted throughout the country, failed to reach Cardiganshire which was one of only two constituencies nationwide where the Liberal civil war persisted (the other was Camborne in Cornwall). Now the intervention of a Conservative contender in the person of Lord Lisburne proved decisive, dramatically unseating Captain Evans and bringing Morris to Westminster. In 1924 he was returned unopposed, and in fact sat as the county's MP until his appointment as a metropolitan magistrate in 1932. Yet the schism in the ranks of the county's Liberals remained.

The experiences of the years 1921–23 were critical in the history of Cardiganshire Liberalism. The party's traditional ascendancy had been somehow revitalised, underlining a powerful political continuity and creating a homespun dynamism which helped to postpone the local Labour Party's full coming of age – demonstrated by the fact that it did not nominate a parliamentary candidate until the 'doctor's mandate' general election of October 1931 was held swiftly upon the heels of the formation of the so-called National Government. The deep-rooted, enduring cleavage was neatly symbolised by the setting up of two rival Liberal clubs at opposite ends of the main street in Aberystwyth. (Today the Asquithian club remains functional and flourishing; the Lloyd Georgian premises have been converted, perhaps fittingly enough, into an auction room.) When Roderic Bowen became Liberal MP for Cardiganshire in July 1945 he considered that one of his most pressing tasks was to attempt to heal the rift in his followers' ranks which had lasted for a full quarter-century.⁴⁸

In the wake of the 1921 by-election Alderman J. M. Howell, a prominent coalitionist who had refused to allow his name to be considered for the va-

cancy, wrote on reflection:

It was a civil war between group and group.

And more still it was a tug of war between the chief antagonists in London. Left to ourselves, as in all previous elections, we could never have worked up the fire that burned.

It was not an unmixed evil, as some think.

It is a salutary discipline that which compels an individual to choose and to act for himself.

It is good for time; it is good for eternity.

An election oftener than once in ten years is something to be wished for.⁴⁹

His comments were uncommonly prophetic.

The course and outcome of the by-election have a wider significance. The 10,500 votes polled by Llewelyn Williams, a sworn enemy of the prime minister in a predominantly Welsh-speaking, Methodist-dominated constituency in the very heartland of Lloyd George's own personal patrimony, was eloquent testimony to the groundswell of popular feeling against the coalition government. Even within Wales, it seemed, free churchmen, notably the Independents, 'the most political and republican of the sects', were in open rebellion against the government.⁵⁰ Were it not for the urban voters, Williams might even have won the day. In industrial constituencies generally, many Anglicans and free churchmen were beginning to voice support for the Labour Party in an attempt to exert their spiritual authority to retain working class men and women within the church. Generally the influence of nonconformists in the press and in by-elections was being eroded by the schism in the ranks of the Liberal Party.

There had been only one Asquithian victory in a by-election during 1920; there were to be none at all during 1921. As the year ran its course, it became increasingly apparent that the Independent Liberals were suffering at the hands of Labour. Penistone in Yorkshire was lost in March 1921. Generally, too, the prospects of the Coalition Liberals looked distinctly gloomy. In March,

Lloyd George was warned by the female organiser of the North Wales Coalition Liberals that 'Ireland is being run for all it's worth against you'.⁵¹

The Welsh Liberal Council, established in 1921 by Llewelyn Williams and others as an Asquithian powerhouse within Wales, proved something of a damp squib, as it called, rather half-heartedly, for a re-negotiation of the disendowment clauses of the Welsh Church Act, 1920, for further temperance legislation and for the setting up of an elected council for Wales. Demoralised by the result in Cardiganshire in 1921, Watkin Davies (Lloyd George's early biographer) wrote in his diary, 'We must look to England and Scotland to deliver us from autocracy. Poor Wales!'⁵² Once again the electoral weakness of Asquithian Liberalism had been underlined. No longer could it pose an effective challenge to the coalition government.

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1 *Cambrian News*, 15 February 1921.

2 *Welsh Gazette*, 3 February 1921.

3 The phrase is that used in the National Library of Wales (NLW), Cardiganshire Liberal Association Records, file 56, J. Ellis Jones, hon. secretary of the South Wales Liberal Federation, to Eben Jones, 11 February 1959.

4 On Cardiganshire politics, see Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Cardiganshire Politics: the Liberal ascendancy, 1885-1923', *Ceredigion*, Vol. V, no. 4 (1967), 311-46; and J. Graham Jones, 'Cardiganshire Politics, 1885-1974' in Geraint H. Jenkins and Ieuan Gwynedd Jones (eds.), *Cardiganshire County History, Vol. 3, Cardiganshire in Modern Times* (Cardiff, 1998), pp. 407-29. There is also some material of value in P. J. Madgwick et al (eds.), *The Politics of Rural Wales: a Study of Cardiganshire* (London, 1973).

5 Morgan, *loc. cit.*, p. 328; *Cambrian News*, 19 October 1900.

6 NLW, Cardiganshire Liberal Association Records 144/8, W. Llewelyn Williams to Harry Rees, 14 October 1917 ('Confidential'). On Williams the fullest account is now J. Graham Jones, 'The Journalist as Politician: W. Llewelyn Williams MP (1867-1922)', *Carmarthenshire Antiquary*, Vol. XXXVII (2001), 79-98.

7 NLW, Cardiganshire Liberal Association Records 144/49, Williams to Rees, 12 May 1918.

8 Parliamentary Archive, House of Lords Record Office, Lloyd George Papers F/21/2/56, F. E. Guest to D. Lloyd George, 20 July 1918; *Cambrian News*, 29 November 1918.

9 *South Wales Daily News*, 23 November 1918.

10 NLW MS 22,016E, (Cardiganshire Liberal Association Papers), f. 4, Williams to Harry Rees, 27 November 1918 ('Private').

11 NLW, J. M. Howell Papers 28/1, Asquith to Howell, 4 November 1919.

12 *Cambrian News*, 7 January 1921.

13 *Ibid.*

14 *Welsh Gazette*, 6 January 1921.

15 NLW, J. M. Howell Papers 27/49, J. Puleston Jones to Howell, 3 February 1921.

16 See Howard C. Jones, 'The Labour Party in Cardiganshire', *Ceredigion*, Vol. IX, no. 2 (1981), 150-61.

17 Cited *ibid.*, p. 154.

18 *Welsh Gazette*, 13 January 1921.

19 NLW MS 22,016E, ff. 7 and 9, telegrams from D. C. Roberts, 7 January 1921, and J. M. Howell, 8 January 1921, to Harry Rees.

20 *Welsh Gazette*, 13 January 1921.

21 *Cambrian News*, 7 January 1921.

22 *Welsh Gazette*, 20 January 1921.

23 *The Times*, 26 January 1921, p. 10, col. e.

24 *Cambrian News*, 28 January 1921.

25 *The Times*, 25 January 1921, p. 12, col. c.

26 *South Wales Daily News*, 10 January 1921.

27 *Cambrian News*, 4 February 1921.

28 *The Times*, 31 January 1921, p. 11, col. d.

29 Election address of W. Llewelyn Williams, February 1921.

30 *The Times*, 11 February 1921, p. 10, col. e.

31 Lady Violet Bonham-Carter, speech at Aberystwyth, 19 February 1921: *ibid.*, 20 February 1921, p. 12, col. b.

32 NLW, Sir John Herbert Lewis Papers B35, diary entry for 18 February 1921.

33 See NLW, E. Morgan Humphreys Papers A2033, T. Gwynn Jones, Aberystwyth, to Humphreys, 26 January 1921.

34 See the *South Wales Daily News*, 16 February 1921.

35 NLW MS 22,823C, ff. 74-75, D. Lloyd George to Margaret Lloyd George, 9 February 1921.

36 *Cardigan and Tivy-Side Advertiser*, 11 February 1921.

37 NLW, Sir John Herbert Lewis Papers B35, diary entry for 18 February 1921.

38 *The Times*, 16 February 1921, p. 11.

39 *Ibid.*

40 Keith Middlemas (ed.), *Thomas Jones Whitehall Diary*, Vol. 1 (Oxford, 1969), pp. 129-30.

41 NLW MS 19,483E, unlabelled press cutting.

42 *Cambrian News*, 25 February 1921; NLW, E. Morgan Humphreys Papers A3712, Williams to Humphreys, 22 February 1921.

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45 Lady Astor's two sponsors had been D. Lloyd George and former Conservative leader A. J. Balfour.

46 NLW MS 22,016E, f. 17, D. Davies, Cardigan, to Harry Rees, 25 February 1921 (incomplete).

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49 *Cambrian News*, 4 March 1921.

50 Kenneth O. Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity: the Lloyd George Coalition Government, 1918-1922*, revised edition (Oxford, 1986), p. 162.

51 Parliamentary Archive, House of Lords Record Office, Lloyd George Papers F/96/1/15, Mrs Price White to Mrs Winifred Coombe Tennant.

52 NLW, W. Watkin Davies Papers, diary entry for 19 February 1921.

The farm workers' champion

Joseph Arch (1826–1919) was both a pioneering agricultural trade union leader and one of the first working men to be elected to Parliament, when he served as Liberal MP for North-West Norfolk from 1885 to 1886 and again from 1892 until his retirement from political life in 1900.

Arch was born on 10 November 1826, in the south Warwickshire village of Barford. He was the fourth child and only surviving son of John Arch, a local farm worker, and his redoubtable wife, Hannah. Hannah was ten years older than her husband and this was her second marriage, her first husband having died in 1816. It was from his mother that Arch inherited his early interest in religious nonconformity and his independent attitude. He later claimed she was the most important influence on his life.

After briefly attending the village school between the ages of six and nine, Arch began work as a bird scarer in the mid-1830s. Other land work followed and by the 1850s he had become a prize-winning hedger and ditcher, taking contract jobs as far afield as Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Wales. As early as the 1840s he had become a Primitive Methodist local preacher, thereby serving an apprenticeship in the difficult art of public speaking. In the middle of that decade he spent precious pennies earned running errands and doing odd jobs on the purchase of newspapers, so that he could read the speeches of William Gladstone and John Bright. From these he formed his lifelong political opinions.

By the early 1870s Arch's strong and determined character was recognised by his fellow land workers, at a time when pressure was growing for an improvement in their living conditions. These were years of rising food prices and of trade union agitation among many workers, including those in the building and engineering industries who were

demanding a reduction in the length of their working day. A new Trade Union Act passed in 1871, which explicitly legalised registered unions and provided security for their funds, also gave added impetus to the labour movement. Yet, despite sporadic attempts at organisation among farm workers in Herefordshire, Leicestershire and a few other areas, the agricultural labourers – the largest single sector of the work force – seemed unable to combine effectively. In April 1872 the *Illustrated London News* commented dismissively that they had been 'hitherto looked upon as the lowermost stratum of the industrial classes'.

It was in these circumstances that early in February 1872 some local labourers went to Arch's Barford home to ask him to hold a meeting in nearby Wellesbourne to highlight their grievances and to press for the formation of a trade union for land workers. The vigour and self-confidence of Arch's speech on that occasion, demanding higher pay and a reduction in the length of the working day, won the support of those present and led to the holding of many meetings elsewhere. Night after night Arch tramped to neighbouring villages addressing enthusiastic audiences. Soon the message was taken up in other parts of the country, aided by the support of a sympathetic newspaper proprietor, J. E. Matthew Vincent. He not only publicised the movement in his *Royal Leamington Chronicle* but thereby alerted the national press to the agitation. Later in the year he established the *Labourers' Union Chronicle*, to act as a link for members throughout the country. It continued publication, with some changes in name, until 1894.

Years later the novelist Thomas Hardy paid tribute to Arch's skill as a leader and effective public speaker. Hardy listened to him in Dorset, and wrote that:

Nobody who saw and heard Mr. Arch in his early tours through Dorsetshire will ever forget him and the influence his presence exercised over the crowds he drew ... The picture he drew of a comfortable cottage life as it should be was so cosy, so well within the grasp of his listeners' imagination, that an old labourer in the crowd held up a coin between his finger and thumb exclaiming, 'Here's sixpence towards that, please God!' 'Towards what?' said a bystander. 'Faith, I don't know that I can spak the name o't, but I know 'tis a good thing.'

Arch's efforts and the activities of other, less prominent, leaders, led in late March 1872 to the formation of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union, with himself as president. The initiative won the enthusiastic backing of a number of sympathetic outsiders, especially Liberal Party members from Birmingham. They included Jesse Collings, a close political ally and friend of Joseph Chamberlain. Within a year membership had reached about 72,000, concentrated particularly in the mid-land counties and in East Anglia.

The fledgling movement soon encountered bitter opposition from farmers and landowners, not only to its demands for higher pay but over the fundamental issue of workers' right to combine. Lock-outs and strikes followed, culminating in a major dispute early in 1874, affecting 4,000 – 5,000 unionists, mainly in East Anglia, one of the Union's strongholds. Arch was at the forefront of the resistance to the employers, addressing meetings in the affected areas and also undertaking fund-raising tours to the North of England to win support from urban trade unionists and others.

Arch realised that if the bargaining position of the workers vis-à-vis the farmers was to be strengthened they must encourage some members to emigrate. At the same time there was a growing demand for labour in New Zealand, Australia and Canada. Indeed, in 1873 Arch had directly involved himself in the emigration movement by visiting Canada in order to investigate conditions for himself. Yet, despite

emigration and attempts at mediation, in the end the 1874 lock-out was a defeat for the Union.

This led not only to disillusion within the membership but to splits and divisions among the leaders, some of whom resented Arch's autocratic style of leadership. They favoured a federal structure with more autonomy for individual union districts, rather than the centralised approach favoured by Arch. In the long run most of these regional bodies faded away. Only the Kent and Sussex Union carried on into the 1890s, placing particular emphasis on emigration to solve labour disputes.¹ Overall, however, these events seriously weakened the National Union and its membership fell from the 86,000 it achieved in 1874 to 59,000 a year later. The onset of agricultural depression, as cheap food imports combined with bad harvests in Britain undermined the prosperity of most agriculturists, further stiffened employers' resistance to the Union and its president. Cash wages on the land fell from the peak achieved in 1872–74, although living standards were still rising because of the cheaper food and manufactured goods now coming on the market.

Arch himself, meanwhile, continued to spearhead the struggle to maintain and improve workers' employment conditions. In the political sphere he pressed for the vote to be given to rural householders, to match rights given to male householders in towns in 1867. He also gave unstinting support to his hero, William Gladstone, and to the Liberal Party. That included an endorsement of Gladstone's powerful campaign against Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria in 1876–77. Arch also took up the cause of international peace, attending a Workmen's Peace Association conference in Paris during 1875. He adopted this pacifist stance despite the fact that his eldest son, John, was a sergeant in the Royal Welch Fusiliers.

In 1884 the franchise was finally extended to country householders. The next year, despite stiff opposition from the Conservative candidate, Lord Henry Bentinck, Arch was elected Liberal MP for North-West Norfolk.²

Some Liberal leaders, rather patronisingly, saw him as a valuable instrument for mobilising the newly-enfranchised rural voters in favour of their party in the vital county constituencies. Under the Union's aegis, for example, in the weeks leading up to the election, mock ballots were held to instruct the labourers in the basic mechanics of voting. Significantly, too, Chamberlain and Collings promoted a so-called 'unauthorised' political programme designed to appeal to rural workers, a key element of this being land reform to give the labourer 'a stake in the soil'. It was caricatured by opponents under the slogan of 'three acres and a cow', but it proved popular with many labourers. The success of these joint efforts was such that for the only time in their history the Conservatives did worse in rural constituencies than in urban areas. It was doubtless in recognition of Arch's contribution to this that the National Liberal Club organised a banquet in his honour in January 1886. Joseph Chamberlain presided.

Arch's electoral triumph proved short-lived. When the Liberal Government split over the issue of Home Rule for Ireland, he lost his seat at the 1886 general election. This was despite a letter from William Gladstone urging voters in the constituency to continue to support him. The next few years were ones of considerable difficulty. The Union was very weak, with membership standing at just over 5,000 by the end of 1887. In addition there were allegations of corruption from opponents within the movement, as well as hostility to his authoritarian leadership. As regards the former charge, surviving accounts make clear that there was no financial malpractice. The latter complaint had more validity in that he often failed to listen to the views of critics or to make concessions to them.

At the end of the decade two events revived Arch's fortunes. The first was his election to Warwickshire County Council in 1889. The second was an upsurge in trade unionism among many unskilled or poorly-paid workers as a result of the successful London dock strike of August 1889 and an



found the late hours and the rituals and routine of the Commons uncongenial, especially as he was now well into his sixties. There is no evidence that Liberal Party leaders tried to keep him in his place or discouraged him from speaking in the Chamber. Indeed in 1893–94 he was asked to serve on the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor. One of his fellow Commissioners was the Prince of Wales and Arch was proud of this link and of the fact that Sandringham lay within his constituency. In 1898 his autobiography was published, edited by the Countess of Warwick, who in a new-found enthusiasm for left-wing politics began to take an interest in the old trade unionist who lived so near to Warwick Castle, and whose grandparents and mother had been Castle servants.

Arch was married twice. His first wife, Mary Ann, was a domestic servant and the daughter of Isaac Mills, a carpenter from Wellesbourne Mountford. The marriage took place on 3 February 1847, and the couple returned to live in the cottage where Arch had been born. It had been purchased by his maternal grandfather and it was to be his home for the rest of his long life. The Arches had seven children, four boys and three girls, of whom only the youngest girl, Elizabeth, failed to reach adulthood. Mrs Arch was a good mother and an efficient manager of the household but she played little part in her husband's trade union and political career. Somewhat unfairly he blamed her for her limited education, rather than blaming the society in which she had grown up, declaring she 'was not the woman my mother was ... She ... was no companion in my aspirations'. Nevertheless, if she had no intellectual ambitions of her own, she certainly encouraged him to add to his knowledge and his stock of books, and she gave solid unobtrusive support to him in his later parliamentary career. Mary Ann died after a long illness on 15 March 1896, aged 69.

On 27 December 1899, Arch married again, his bride being Miriam Blomfield, the daughter of a Norfolk sadler, about fifteen years his junior. She had been his housekeeper for some time before his wedding.

accompanying brief general improvement in trade and employment prospects. This movement, usually labelled 'new unionism', was largely socialist-led, however, and Arch had little sympathy with such political views or with those promoting them. He remained committed to old-style Lib-Lab policies, like many other established union leaders. He was wary of urban unionists, fearing they wanted to influence 'his' organisation for their own ends.

Nevertheless, the revival came at an opportune time for him, and in the general election of 1892 he was returned once more as MP for North-West Norfolk. Membership of the National Union, too, had risen again, reaching

around 15,000 by late 1891, of whom over 12,000 had been recruited in Norfolk. But the revival quickly faded and the end came in October 1896 when the Union was finally dissolved. Its demise placed Arch in financial difficulty and shortly before the dissolution Liberal Party friends organised a fund to provide him with an annuity. About £1,200 was collected, and an annuity of £157 purchased; among the contributors was the former Liberal Prime Minister, Lord Rosebery.

Arch remained an MP until 1900, when he retired to his cottage at Barford. He added little to his reputation during this second parliamentary stint, rarely contributing to debates. He

After his retirement from Parliament, Arch played little part in politics, although he did apparently make an unsuccessful attempt to set up a small-scale co-operative society. Neither did he take any further role in agricultural trade unionism, even when a new organisation was set up in Norfolk in 1906. As he sadly commented to one of the leaders who visited him in 1909, his work was 'all done now'. He was simply too old. Even his support for Primitive Methodism had faded away.

Yet, when he died on 12 February 1919, his important contribution to the emancipation of farm workers was recognised. His funeral service was conducted at Barford by the Bishop of Coventry, and a message from David Lloyd George, then Prime Minister, was read at the graveside by the Liberal candidate for the Rugby constituency. The press, too, paid tribute. The *Birmingham Daily Post* in a 'Special Memoir' declared that as a union activist 'he was a more commanding figure than any industrial agitator of recent times'. The *Manchester Guardian* of 13 February 1919 called him 'one of the most remarkable leaders that the English village labourers ever produced'.

At a time when class divisions were strong and agricultural workers were despised and disregarded, Joseph Arch gave them a sense of hope and self-confidence. His leadership embodied that spirit of social protest and, by his focus on workers'

ills, he achieved a clear improvement in their conditions. If this proved less sweeping and less permanent than he desired, nonetheless it meant they were never again dismissed as mere 'clodhoppers' or 'Johnny Raws' as they had been before his advent and that of the 1872 'Revolt of the Field' which he led.

Pamela Horn lectured at Oxford Polytechnic (now Oxford Brookes University) in economic and social history between 1967 and 1991. She has since been a freelance lecturer. She has also written a number of books on British social history from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, including a biography of Joseph Arch in 1971. Her most recent books are Pleasures and Pastimes in Victorian Britain (1999) and Life Below Stairs in the 20th Century (2001).

- 1 The Kent and Sussex Union was led by Alfred Simmons, editor of the radical *Kent Messenger and Maidstone Telegraph*. It was founded as a direct result of news of Arch's movement in Warwickshire. It continued to be a strong union during the 1880s, changing its name to become the London and Southern Counties Labour League and entering the next decade as one of the country's nine major unions. It was dissolved in 1895 with a membership of 13,000 but it was always sympathetic to urban unionists in a way that Arch never was. See Rollo Arnold, 'The "Revolt of the Field" in Kent 1872-1879' in *Past and Present*, No. 64 (1974), 71, 75 and 92-93
- 2 Arch unsuccessfully contested the Wilton constituency as a Liberal candidate in 1880. During the late 1870s he addressed many Liberal Party meetings as well as Union gatherings. Pamela Horn, *Joseph Arch (1826-1919). The Farm Workers' Leader* (Kineton, 1971) pp. 122-126 and 152-156.

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liberator

Liberator is the only independent magazine published for radical liberals. It acts as a forum for debate for radicals in the Liberal Democrats and includes a mixture of opinion, news, gossip, book reviews and readers' letters, not forgetting the legendary 'Lord Bonkers' Diary'. Founded in 1970 and run by a voluntary editorial collective, it is published eight times a year.

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Sir Jerom Murch and the 'civic gospel' in Victorian Bath

The defeat of the Conservative Party Chairman and Member of Parliament for Bath, Chris Patten, in the 1992 general election was a surprise to many people in the country at the time. The victory of the Liberal Democrat, Don Foster, was, in addition to being a personal triumph over a formidable opponent, a reaffirmation of Liberal strength in the city. While the Conservatives held sway in Bath for most of the twentieth century, the Liberal Party was dominant there for the greater part of the Victorian period. From the time of the Great Reform Act in 1832 and of municipal reform in 1835, Bath increased its constituency from thirty to 3,000 voters, with a quarter drawn from the working class. The city had two MPs, often one Conservative and one Liberal, and forty-two councillors, six in each of the seven wards. Liberal domination of the Town Council was sustained not merely through a majority of council seats, but also through partisan use of the aldermanic system.

By the 1830s, Bath was no longer the resort of the fashionable elite who had departed to Brighton and Biarritz, and the city was cultivating a new genteel image to attract middle-class visitors and residents in a bid to restore its fortunes. Bath had grown remarkably during the eighteenth century, from 3,000 to 33,000 inhabitants, when it became the premier resort in Europe. By 1841, the city had 54,000 people and shared with other Victorian cities a host of social problems: poverty, crime and, most embarrassing for a health resort, epidemic diseases such as cholera and typhoid in 1832 and 1849. An obvious tension existed between the urge to lay on amenities to attract visitors and the urgent need to address such problems as the inadequate sanitary provision in the city.¹

Enter Jerom Murch (1807–95), a descendant of a Huguenot family that settled in England in the seventeenth century and of one of 2,000 nonconformist ministers ejected from the Church of England in 1662.

Murch was educated at University College London. He spent his early career as a Unitarian minister in Norfolk before settling in Bath in 1833, where he was appointed minister of Trim Street Chapel in a poor part of the city. He became a supporter of the Radical MP J.A. Roebuck, but lacked his enthusiasm for invective, and on Roebuck's defeat by the Tory Lord Ashley in 1847, was singled out as chief amongst his betrayers. He combined a preacher's oratorical skills with a politician's ability to reach agreement in smoke-filled rooms.

Murch took a great interest in educational and philanthropic institutions and established a political presence through assiduous networking. His marriage to Anne Meadows brought him in due course £80,000, which enabled him to sustain a political career that extended over sixty years in Bath. He had a long association with the Bath Board of Guardians, the Bath Literary and Philosophical Association, the Bath Mineral Water Hospital, the Theatre Royal Company and the Grand Pump Room Hotel Company, and was involved in improvements to Victoria Park and the restoration of Bath Abbey. In total, these organisations had the merit of extending across class, political and religious allegiances. Murch built a broad political base through personal contacts.

He became a member of the Town Council in 1862 and was elected Mayor of Bath in 1863 and again in 1864. In all he was mayor on seven occasions,

twice in successive years, stood for Parliament unsuccessfully as a Gladstonian Liberal in 1873, and at the end of a distinguished career he was knighted. He was the author of several works of religious history and wrote about Bath's role in relation to art, science, literature and education.² If there was one man who could be said to be the leading figure of Victorian Bath, it was assuredly Jerom Murch.

For all his successful ventures, Murch's political philosophy in action was best represented by one major failure in his municipal career – his personal defeat over the Corporation Water question. Murch's politics were grounded in that dissenting tradition that held a moral mission to be the impelling force of politics. Like fellow dissenters George Dawson, and later Joseph Chamberlain in Birmingham, Murch saw the potential for local councils to raise the moral conditions of the people. It was certainly a paternalistic philosophy. Enlightened leaders proclaimed that what was good for the people was equally good for the commercial interests of the city. The rhetoric of what became known as the 'civic gospel' sought to cut across class lines and vested and parochial interests, and to unite all citizens in a common purpose, so that they would all gain from the increased prosperity of the city.

The civic gospel was founded on a belief in a common moral purpose that incorporated the responsibilities of the social elite and the needs of the poorest in society, and reconciled them through the agency of municipal government. Yet in Bath, a city seen as a place where social harmony characterised class relationships, the civic gospel failed to override the fragmented social structure that so often thwarted proposed improvement measures during the 1860s. One of the obstacles to achieving support for improvement measures, such as in the city's water supply, was the continuation of old powers for each of the city parishes. This state of affairs perpetuated a narrow, parochial mentality at the expense of schemes for the improvement of the whole city.

A fear of adding a burden to the rates limited the progress of public health



Sir Jerom Murch: bronze bust by Sir Thomas Brock RA, presented by the citizens of Bath to the corporation in 1895.

provision. The city's response to the Public Health Act promised more than was delivered when the Bath City Act was passed in 1851. The corporation became the local board of health, establishing its own powerful subcommittee, the City Act Committee, but most of its powers, such as the right to appoint a Medical Officer of Health (MOH), and to register slaughterhouses, were not invoked directly. It was not until 1864, under the leadership of Murch, that the city began a civic programme of improvement that prompted the revival of the city's prosperity but also provided a comprehensive corporation water supply, the appointment of a qualified MOH, extensive street improvements, the building of the Grand Pump Room Hotel, and the acquisition of the Royal Victoria Park. Over the next fifteen years, the civic gospel was increasingly in evidence in Bath, with the corporation endeavouring to provide a unity of purpose, investing in greater amenities to achieve prosperity for all its citizens.

But beneath the lofty tone of moral improvement, sectional, class and parochial interests set limits on what the corporation could achieve.³

By the 1860s, the increased demand for water once more raised the issue of improving the supply. Between 1835 and 1861, the number of water tenants had risen from 2,381 to 4,073 and average supply per head per day had risen from six gallons to thirteen, although a sufficiency was reckoned to be twenty-five gallons. Additional sources of supply were needed to meet the growing demand for water. Amidst widespread dissatisfaction at the shortage of water, especially in the dry summers of 1864 and 1865, the council prepared a major scheme to extend the municipal water supply. The visit of the British Association to Bath added a new sense of urgency. The authorities were clearly anxious that nothing should impair Bath's reputation as a health resort. A letter from 'Civis' to the *Bath Chronicle* poked fun at the council's past neglect:



Bath: the eighteenth-century Guildhall with late Victorian extension, one of the monuments to the work of Jerom Murch.

It is quite delightful to see the state of trepidation into which our complacent Corporation has been thrown by the thoughts of the approaching visit of the British Association. It reminds one strongly of boys at school who have been idle, and are at last frightened at the near prospect of a sound whipping ... Let us look at the Bath Railway Station, the public flies and carriages, the pavements, the botched Market, and many other things, and ask ourselves how these will look in the eyes of travelled men – whether they are as they ought to be in 1864. Let us no longer live upon a reputation made for us sixty or eighty years ago, and almost if not quite worn out, but let us set about in right earnest to earn one for ourselves worthy of the present day.⁴

As pressure for public health improvements grew, investigation revealed new evidence of inadequate sanitary provision and a deficient water supply. An improvement scheme was duly prepared by Murch and submitted to the council. The proposal failed to secure a majority and was sent for approval to a public meeting in the Guildhall in April 1866. In a stormy confrontation the divisions within the council and amongst the public were all too evident. Murch and his colleagues were defeated.

The central objection was the scheme's estimated cost of £85,000,

which alarmed both the wealthy residents of Lansdown and the petty shopkeepers of the city. Lansdown had its own private water supply and its residents were unwilling to pay additional rates without receiving any benefit themselves. The shopkeepers feared that an increase in rates would threaten their business interests. The poor, identified as the main beneficiaries of the scheme in receiving a water supply for the first time, were largely unrepresented in the council.

After the defeat of the Water Bill in 1866 Murch acknowledged the strength of opposition but still proclaimed his faith in a civic gospel of improvement:

With all my heart, sir, I trust that future efforts may be made, and that in every respect they may succeed. For I do not abate one jot of the principle with which I started – that no greater duty devolves on those in power than that of seeing the city well supplied with water. And of this who can doubt, that, although Bath may, for reasons seeming good to her, delay the great work, she will ere long do it? She will not let heathen cities in ancient times put her to shame; she will remember what her neighbour Bristol is doing, how Glasgow has gone to Loch Katrine for water, and how London will probably go to the mountains of Wales; she will grumble

a little more, and then trusting that her debts will be diminished, and her coffers replenished, she will enable some future Mayor to boast that every house in the beautiful city over which he reigns – every house, even the poorest – has its stream of pure and healthy water.⁵

Despite the ratepayers' rejection of the scheme, the impetus for reform was maintained. Murch withdrew from the campaign but a new champion arose in the figure of Samuel Sneade Brown, the self-styled scourge of the council on sanitary matters. In a series of blistering pamphlets written in 1867, Brown denounced the neglect of public health provision in Bath.⁶ His impact on public opinion was strengthened with the appointment of Bath's first MOH, Dr. C. S. Barter in 1866, who investigated and reported on the sanitary condition of the city in 1867 and 1868. His findings, published in 1869, confirmed Brown's previous indictment of past neglect. He naturally supported the campaign to increase the water supply, making the telling point that every individual in Manchester had 'more than ten times the quantity of water' than the citizens of Bath.⁷

In 1870, after a decade of discussions, a fairly comprehensive municipal water supply was established in Bath. Following the 1870 Act, virtually all the citizens of Bath enjoyed the benefits of a good water supply. By 1878, 7,712 houses and 50,128 inhabitants were supplied with a daily average approaching thirty gallons per head. A major advance had been accomplished in both the quantity and quality of water.

The key point about the events and debates on the water question is the unpredictability of the situation. Council policy was not frustrated merely by the permanent opposition of a few vested interests. Instead, events were influenced by chance happenings, by individual personalities, and by the volatility of the public mood. It was the shifting alliances among the elected councillors, and the changing perception of the voters in Bath that dictated the defeat of the council water scheme in 1866 and the passing of the Bath Waterworks Act in 1870. The

latter was a compromise reached as a result of the conflicts of the 1860s. Local landowner Mr. Gore-Langton, of Newton St. Loe, had demanded £10,000 in 1866 for seven acres of land on which the vital spring water needed to supply Bath was located. This level of compensation was seen as outrageous by the citizens of Bath and stoked up class resentment against the scheme itself.

The hostile mood against the council was compounded by a spirited campaign for extending the parliamentary franchise which chose as its target Liberal leaders, such as Murch, who were seen as unwilling to include working men within the party organisation. In the different climate of opinion after Murch's departure and Sneade Brown's campaign, Gore-Langton had to settle for £2,500 compensation. Brown's investigations found that the private water supplied to Lansdown was suspect and in 1870 he was able to turn the support of the wealthy Lansdown lobby, who had successfully opposed the 1866 plans, in favour of the Corporation scheme. Ironically, suburban Lansdown was the least well-served part of the city for some time to come.⁸

Murch came back for several more stints as mayor and his last political act was to steer through council the extensions to the Guildhall in the 1890s. There were many fine obituary notices following his death in 1895. In 1896 the *Bath Year Book* observed that 'almost every local institution which could claim to exist for the public good had to place on record its grateful recognition of services which he had rendered'.⁹ He also left a legacy to build a municipal art gallery, a cause he had advocated for many years prior to his death.

Proposals for a gallery revived an ongoing debate over the question of a municipal lending library. The acquisition of cultural amenities such as libraries gave expression to civic pride, but also encompassed the wider issue of the city's economic prosperity. Some councillors argued that they were a sound investment, pulling in potential visitors and new residents. Others believed that any rise in the

rates would only antagonise existing ratepayers and deter prospective incomers. The art gallery was eventually commissioned as a memorial to Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, in conjunction with a reference library which would house the Guildhall collection of local books. The total cost was met by the legacies of Murch and Mrs. Roxborough, supplemented by additional subscriptions from prominent citizens and residents. This 'municipal charity' saved on the rates and provided an opportunity to demonstrate a commitment to the civic good through publicly acknowledged donations.

The spirit of civic union was popularised by leading citizens and clergymen such as the rector of Bath, who asserted in a speech of 1890: 'We are learning to set aside our differences, to throw away the scum of religious dislike and partisan jealousy and hatred ... valuing our fellow citizens only as they live together in amity and peace, and are fellow labourers in the cause of the civic good.'¹⁰

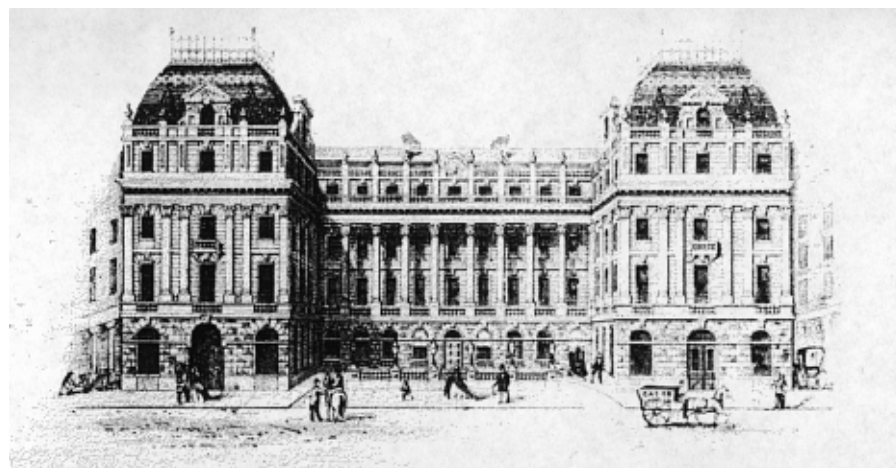
The concept of the civic good in the 1890s was the successor to the civic gospel of the 1860s. That this kind of politics endured was testimony to the need to overcome the protracted wrangles in the council chamber and to attempt to reconcile the conflicting interests of all sections of society beyond the Guildhall. Beneath the veneer of social harmony in genteel Bath, class and sectional interests competed with the moral purpose of Jerom Murch and the civic gospel. Today, local authorities

are heavily dependent on the financial support and political direction of central government, which limits the entrepreneurial activity of civic leaders. Yet the civic gospel, stripped of its moral earnestness, has certain echoes of modern 'third way' politics, combining business enterprise with social amelioration. While the state of public services dominates national politics, in the regeneration of cities such as Birmingham and Manchester there is an historical continuity with the ideas of Jerom Murch and Victorian Bath.

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- 1 For a more detailed view, see G.P. Davis, 'Image and Reality in a Victorian provincial city: a working class area of Bath, 1830-1900', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Bath (1981), ch. 8, pp. 503-92.
- 2 *Liberal Leaders of Somerset*, A. M. Press (1890), pp. 125-28.
- 3 Alex Kolaczowski, 'Jerom Murch and Bath Politics, 1833-1879', in *Bath History*, vol VI (1996), pp. 155-73.
- 4 *Bath Chronicle*, 11 August 1864.
- 5 Letter from J. Murch, *Bath Chronicle*, 26 April 1866.
- 6 S. Sneade Brown, *The Wants of Bath* (1867); *How We are Governed* (1867); *What can be done* (1867).
- 7 C. S. Barter, *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the City and Borough of Bath during the years 1867 and 1868* (1869), p. 14.
- 8 Rev. CM. Shickle, authorship attributed, *History of the Bath Waterworks*, published by order of the Council, Bath (1878).
- 9 *Bath Yearbook*, 1896.
- 10 *Bath Chronicle*, 13 December 1890.

Bath: Bathforum House, the original design for the Grand Pump Room Hotel by Wilson and Willcox, 1865.



Value for money

‘When the time came I went down to canvass, and spent, I think, the most wretched fortnight of my manhood.’ As an unsuccessful candidate myself, I sympathise with this heartfelt epitaph passed by Anthony Trollope on his 1868 attempt to win a Parliamentary seat, but what went wrong and why did it scar his subsequent writing?

After an unsure start in life, Anthony Trollope had built a successful career in the Post Office – he claimed responsibility for the invention of the post box. For a while, he combined the civil service with writing, but success as an author allowed him to retire from official life. His first novel made only £48, but in 1862 he was paid more than £3,000 for *Orley Farm* and continued to make substantial sums for his regular output of one to two novels a year throughout the 1860s. His most famous works, the *Barssetshire Chronicles*, were published in the period 1855–67, and the *Palliser* series, which capture so much of the atmosphere of mid-Victorian politics, was published between 1864 and 1880.

From his youth Trollope had nurtured a dream – ‘I have always thought that to sit in the British Parliament should be the highest object of ambition to every educated Englishman’. Political authors are no novelty, as Disraeli’s well-known success illustrates, but fewer realise that Thackeray stood unsuccessfully for the Liberals in Oxford (City) and that Dickens was tempted by an invitation to stand for the party. Trollope’s ambitions were not unusual.

Trollope had hoped for a safe Liberal seat in Essex but, beaten at the selection stage, he went on a mission to the US for the Post Office. While he was away, Disraeli secured a dissolution for the first election on the franchise recently broadened by the second Reform Act, through which he hoped to ‘dish the Whigs’. As might be expected, by the time Trollope returned, his choice of constituency was limited. He settled on Beverley, a two-member borough in Yorkshire, which had grown rapidly in the Industrial Revolution. Between 1801 and 1861, its population had increased from 5,401 to 10,808, while its electorate increased from 1,011 in 1832 to 2,672 in 1868. Beverley was one of only eight constituencies in the

country where artisans were a majority of the electorate. Trollope was joined by the Hon. Marmaduke Maxwell, the eldest son of Lord Herries, a Scottish peer with a recently restored title who was a substantial Yorkshire landowner. His Conservative opponents were Sir Henry Edwards, a local businessman and MP since 1857, and Captain Edward Kennard, ‘a young man of fortune in quest of a seat’.

‘My political ideas were leather and prunella’

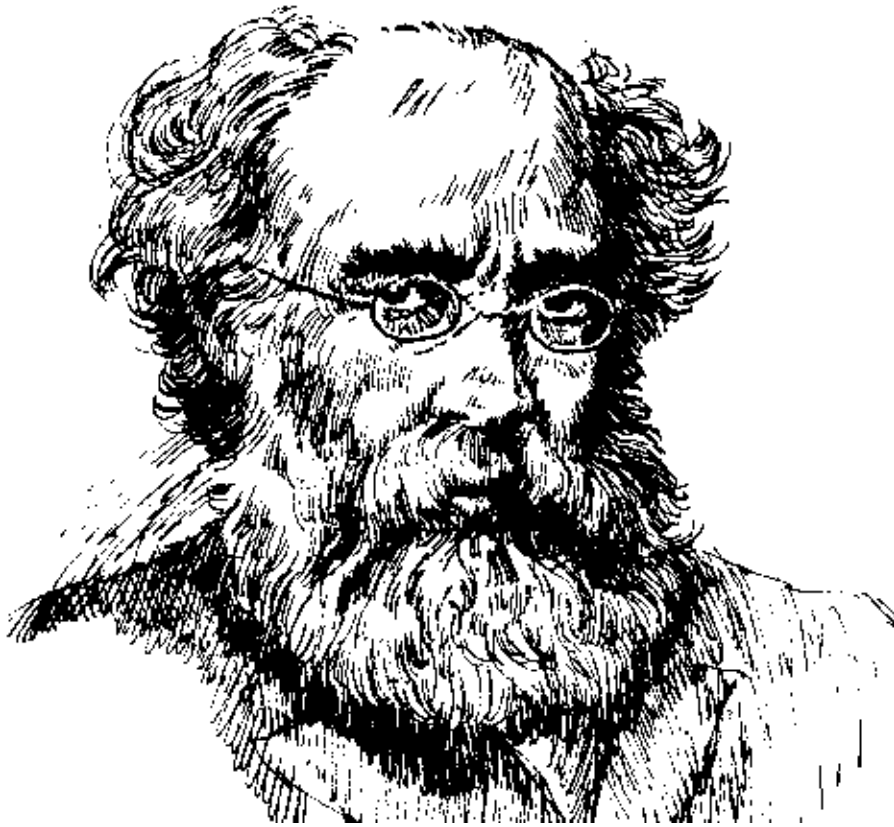
When Trollope arrived on 30 October, his agent cheerfully greeted him, ‘You don’t expect to get in!’ An optimist, like all candidates, Trollope responded that while not ‘sanguine,’ nevertheless he was ‘disposed to hope for the best’. The campaign began in earnest. As Trollope recalls in *An Autobiography*, ‘In the first place, I was subject to a bitter tyranny from grinding vulgar tyrants. They were doing what they could, or said that they were doing so, to secure me a seat in Parliament, and I was to be in their hands for at any rate the period of my candidature.’ Well, that is one way to describe your campaign team.

From morning to evening every day I was taken round the lanes and byeways of that uninteresting town, canvassing every voter, exposed to the rain, up to my knees in slush, and utterly unable to assume that air of triumphant joy with which a jolly, successful candidate should be invested ... At night, every night, I had to speak somewhere, – which was bad; and to listen to the speaking of others, – which was much worse.

His disdain was not universally shared and campaign meetings collected audiences of up to 4,000 in an area with a population of around 11,000 and an electorate of 2,672.

Trollope’s election address, dated 28 October 1868, was published in the *Beverley Recorder* on 14 November. It contained three key pledges:

- Loyalty to the leader, Gladstone. (Liberal disunity had put a minority Tory government into power in 1866.)



- Disestablishment of the Church of Ireland. (This was the issue Gladstone had used to reunite the party. As Trollope said, 'The Protestant Church as it now stands established in Ireland means the ascendancy of the rich over the poor, of the great over the little, of the high over the low'.)
- Free universal education. 'I am of opinion that every poor man should have brought within his reach the means of educating his children, and that those means should be provided by the State.' This more radical proposal took many years to achieve, but a start was made with the 1870 Education Act.

Trollope feared that his messages were unpalatable to local Liberals. 'But perhaps my strongest sense of discomfort arose from the conviction that my political ideas were leather and prunella to the men whose votes I was soliciting.' In particular, the local working men wanted the secret ballot, which Trollope rejected as 'unworthy of a great people' while the nonconformists wanted more control over the sale of alcohol; Trollope preferred 'moral teaching and education'. He was probably

unduly modest about his oratory, as the local paper recorded the cheers that greeted his attack on an Irish Church that 'looks upon the state as its support'. Certainly the Conservatives offered only weak opposition on the platform, with Sir Henry Edwards reduced to calling Gladstone not just a Roman Catholic but, worse, a Jesuit – accusations so heinous (and so erroneous) that he was still embarrassed by them months later. The Conservatives offered the Liberals a deal. If they withdrew Trollope's candidacy, the Conservatives would ask Kennard to step down, guaranteeing each party a seat and saving both sides' election expenses. Trollope's supporters refused.

'They haven't won fair'

Under the law, fully supported by Trollope, voters discharged 'their duty openly' at the hustings. Open voting had many advantages for party workers – there were no modern inconveniences such as inaccurate box sampling at the count and waiting for the outcome, while 'knocking up' could be correctly targeted and canvassing records properly maintained. For voters, the picture was more mixed. Voting for

the wrong side might bring brickbats from the crowd and tended to lay the voter open to intimidation, either immediate and physical or more subtle (as when an employer later gave an employee notice). Voting for the right side could, and frequently did, bring immediate financial benefit with the scale of the bribery adjusted to the closeness of the anticipated result. For those requiring extra courage or anaesthetic, drink was frequently and plentifully available at the candidates' expense.

At the final public meeting, the straw poll had favoured the Liberals. This was a strong indicator of popular sentiment, but was not always reliable since nothing prevented non-electors from participating. The local newspaper records that at 9 a.m. on 17 November (election day) the Liberals led, but by 11 a.m. the parties were neck and neck. By noon the Conservatives had begun to pull ahead. The final results were:

Sir Henry Edwards (Con)	1,132
<i>Elected</i>	
Captain Edward Kennard (Con)	986
<i>Elected</i>	
Hon. Marmaduke Maxwell (Lib)	895
Mr. Anthony Trollope (Lib)	740

The mayor's attempts to declare the results were drowned out by cries of 'bribery' and 'They haven't won fair' from the 5,000 strong crowd while 'half bricks and other missiles were thrown with great force towards the Conservative side of the hustings'. Protective barricades were pulled down and an attempt was made to destroy the hustings. According to the *Hull News*, Liberal sympathisers 'forced an entrance into [the] Tory committee room and took possession of a money bag and some documents.' As Dickens' description of the Eatanswill election in *Pickwick Papers* suggests, Beverley's was not unusual for an early nineteenth century election and positively tame by contemporary Irish standards. However by 1868 customs were changing and a bribery petition was instigated.

'They meant to carry both events'

Trollope's *Autobiography* draws a discreet veil over the proceedings at this point



At the rear of the hustings, the candidate arrives. Gladstone at Greenwich.

but what had happened? Reports in *The Times* suggest, that, while corruption preceded the arrival of Sir Henry Edwards and tainted both parties, Sir Henry's team, led by Mr Wreghitt, a draper, introduced both system and efficiency. Naturally, as Chairman of the Beverley Waggon Company, Sir Henry expected loyalty from his staff. The other senior managers were Conservative councillors and were accused of 'having actively intervened in promoting the system of bribery which prevailed'. Three workmen were dismissed for voting Liberal.

Secondly, the Conservatives set out to capture all the borough's major sources of patronage. Even the election of churchwardens was perverted for party purposes to control the dispersion of their funds. Sir Henry was a member of the United Ancient Order of Druids, though his subscription was paid by Mr. Wreghitt. He enjoyed a reputation for generosity to local charities, though that was commonplace when MPs were drawn from among the wealthy and there was little or no state welfare.

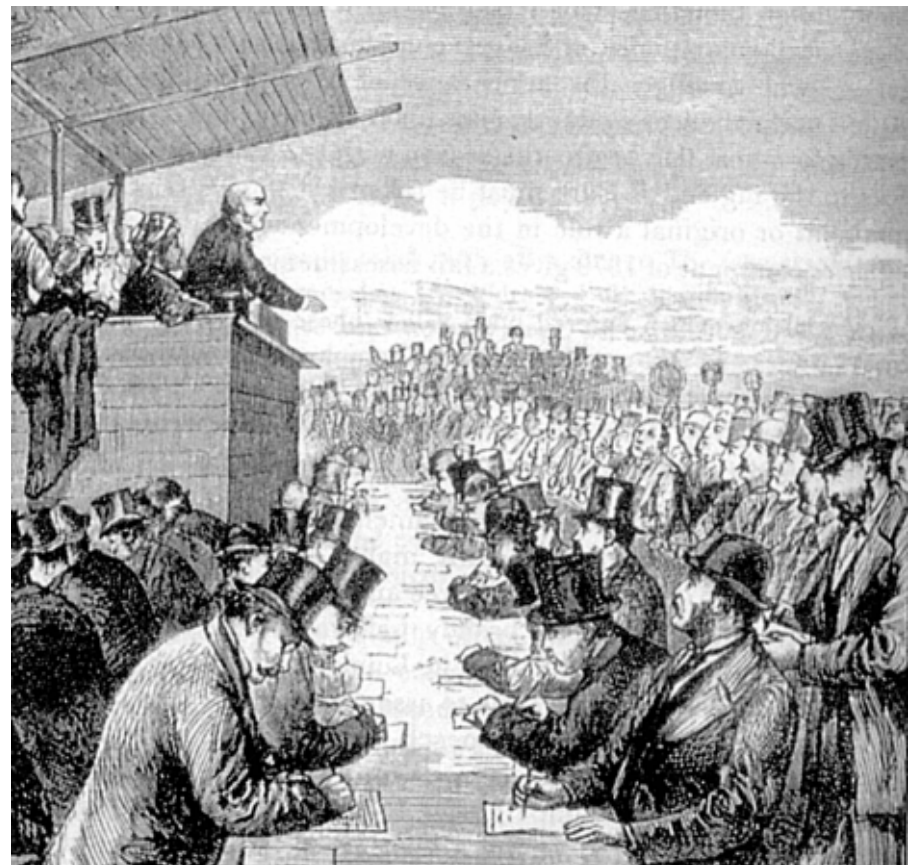
More important, from its prominence in the petitioner's case, was the patronage arising from an 1836 Act regulating Beverley's pastures. Initially, the twelve 'pasture masters' elected by 'pasture freemen' were divided between the parties, but through Wreghitt's ministrations the masterships all came under Conservative sway. Freemen were entitled to vote at parliamentary elections without other property qualifications and

claim on the charitable funds administered by the masters. Consequently, there was little surprise that that loyal Conservatives had their freemen fees paid from party funds and received money from a charity established in 1854 under the will of a Mr. Walker. Walker's bounty was to compensate poor freemen for the death of their sheep or pigs but to freemen voting the right way money was paid without evidence of the loss of livestock while

little compensation was paid to freemen known to back the 'Yellows'. There was even less surprise that the thirty-one tradesmen and twenty-two workers supplying the pasture masters overwhelmingly backed the Tories.

Finally, there was the town council. Recognising the changing climate, it appears that the Conservatives did not bribe directly during the general election but concentrated on the earlier municipal election fought on 2 November. Wreghitt set up base in the *Golden Ball* using Mr Watson, an auctioneer, as paymaster. Their plan was to pay twice the going rate in the expectation that the venal voters supported them at both elections. In the face of such Conservative generosity, the Liberals withdrew from the council contest. As an example, the inquiry heard that Mr. Vernon, a Conservative canvasser, promised Thomas Duffill, a worker at the Grove Hill Manure Works, 15 shillings (75p) despite the fact that the Tories were already 200–300 votes ahead, because they 'meant to carry 'both events' on that day'. Duffill rushed off to the *Golden Ball*, as he feared 'all the money would be gone'.

Gladstone speaks to the crowd at Greenwich. Note the table of pressmen at the front.



Other voters were offered as little as 10 shillings (50p) or as much as 17s 6d (87p). Ten shillings could easily represent a week's wage or more at that time. In total the Conservatives had £800 available on 2 November. Evidence given to the judge and reported in *The Times* suggested that a normal council election cost around £130 and that the most previously paid for a contested election had been £300.

'A great success'

The judge found that, in total, around 1,000 men had been bribed. This justified voiding the election. Subsequently a parliamentary commission was established in 1869 which took up the long history of bribery in the seat. Beverley had an unusual record of being contested in all but five elections between 1722 and 1831. All the elections between 1832 and 1868 were contested, but Beverley never returned the same pair of MPs twice running. It is suggested that this was because of the cost of the inducements, which were paid by both sides according to a well-established tariff. Between 1807 and 1857, there had

been five legal petitions seeking to overturn the election results. One of these even alleged impropriety by a returning officer and another succeeded in unseating E. A. Glover, who stood as a Liberal Conservative (usually called a free trade Conservative or Peelite). It was the subsequent by-election in 1857 that brought Captain Edwards to the constituency. As was inevitable, once all the facts were widely known, the constituency was disenfranchised.

But 'no corrupt practices had been proved to have been committed with the knowledge' of the Conservative candidates, who, of course, remained gentlemen. Sir Henry Edwards returned to Halifax to resume the chairmanship of the bench of magistrates and, in 1874, Kennard, by then Lieutenant Colonel, won Lymington for the Conservatives. In October, Trollope's jovial agent had concluded his initial conversation by saying 'Oh no! You won't get in. I don't suppose you really expect it. But there is a fine career open to you. You will spend £1,000, and lose the election. Then you will petition, and spend another £1,000. You will throw out the elected

members. There will be a commission, and the borough will be disenfranchised. For a beginner such as you are, that will be a great success.'

Trollope only paid £400; he did not fund the petition, but drew little satisfaction from the prophesied success. He never put himself forward again but took his revenge in his barely disguised descriptions of Beverley and its electoral process in two subsequent novels, *Ralph the Heir* and *Phineas Redux*.

Tony Little is Chair of the Liberal Democrat History Group and stood for Hayes and Harlington in the general elections of 1992 and 1997.

Further reading:

J. Halperin, *Trollope and Politics* (Macmillan, 1977).

H. J. Hanham, *Elections and Party Management, Politics in the Time of Disraeli and Gladstone* (Longmans, 1959).

The Times, 10–12 March 1869.

A. Trollope *An Autobiography* (1883; available as an Oxford Paperback).

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery ...

We all know that all political parties indulge in stealing each other's policies from time to time – indeed, the party's opponents might allege that Liberal Democrats have become quite accomplished at it over the years! But now it's the Conservatives' turn. So impressed have the Tories apparently been by the activities of the LDHG that they are forming a Conservative History Group.

Its aims are the same as those of the LDHG – to promote discussion and knowledge about the history of the party. In addition to holding speaker meetings and debates, the CHG will also be publishing a Conservative History Journal, initially twice a year.

There may also be proposals to hold joint events with the Liberal Democrat History Group, and indeed, the Labour History Group, which has also recently been formed. The first of these is expected to be in May 2003, on the subject of 'The Fall of the Lloyd George Coalition'.

The driving force behind the CHG is Iain Dale, the owner of Politico's, who has just been added to the Conservatives' approved list of Parliamentary candidates. He says: 'Politico's has had a long association with the LDHG and I have admired its activities, albeit from over the political fence. It is odd that a Tory equivalent has never been formed, so I wanted to

right an historical wrong! The reaction so far has been highly encouraging and if current recruitment is any guide, we expect to have well over 100 members by the end of the year. I am delighted that Keith Simpson MP has agreed to be the inaugural chairman. We have lots of ideas for exciting events over the next twelve months and I hope to welcome many friends from the LDHG to them.'

If you are interested in joining the Conservative History Group, please email:

register@conservativehistory.org.uk
or visit:

www.conservativehistory.org.uk

Ian Hunter introduces the speech made by Violet Bonham Carter on her father's return to Parliament in 1920.

'Hold on, hold out; we are coming'

Violet Bonham Carter was born in London on 15 April 1887, the daughter of Herbert Henry Asquith and his first wife Helen Melland. Despite a lack of formal education, she possessed a formidable intellect, and used it on behalf of the Liberal Party and her father. She was devoted to Asquith – Churchill described her as his ‘champion redoubtable’ – and to defending his reputation and beliefs. Through her efforts, she kept the standard of Asquithian Liberalism flying well into the second half of the twentieth century.

Bonham Carter was an active and effective public speaker for Liberalism, making her first political speech in 1909 at the age of twenty-two and her last in January 1969 in the House of Lords at the age of eighty-one, just a few weeks before her death. She inherited her father's gift for public speaking; articulate and forceful, she projected her strong personality through her deep melodious voice and quick pace. She could dominate any meeting with her rhetorical skills, and, especially in later life, was much in demand as a speaker on both radio and television.

In *Great Liberal Speeches*, we included one of her last speeches, against the 1968 Commonwealth Immigration Act introduced by the Labour Government to stem the influx of Kenyan Asians fleeing Kenya as result of President Kenyatta's discriminatory ‘Africanisation’ policy.

Here we reprint a much earlier speech, given to the National Liberal Club on 10 March 1920 following her father's return to the House of Commons at the Paisley by-election the month before. Defeated along with most of the Liberal leadership at the ‘coupon election’ of 1918, Asquith's victory at Paisley marked a major setback for the Lloyd George Coalition. At the age of sixty-six, Asquith resumed his post of Liberal Leader in the Commons (taking over from Donald MacLean), a position he was to hold for a further five and half years. Despite a long

political career, his daughter Violet was never herself to win a seat in the Commons, but was created a life peer in 1964, entering the Lords as Baroness Asquith of Yarnbury.

The message of Paisley

I don't know how to thank you for this wonderful reception, nor to tell you what a great honour, what a tremendous privilege I feel it is, to be the very first woman who has ever addressed a fortnightly lunch. The only shadow on my happiness is the haunting fear that I may be not only the first but, owing to the poor quality of my performance here this afternoon, the last also. But I don't mean to let these misgivings spoil what is, after all, my treat. I'm determined to enjoy myself, even at the expense of my poor hosts: in fact, I've begun already.

If anything could have added to my pride and pleasure in being your guest here to-day, it is the fact that I have been introduced to you by Sir Donald Maclean. Sir Donald Maclean has held our standard high and held it steady all through these, the darkest days that Liberalism has ever known. But for him, there could have been no Paisley, and but for him the Liberal Party, as a Party, to-day might not exist.

Bewildering popularity

Sir Donald has said far too kind and far too generous things about me. I hope you will discount them. In fact, I want to begin by asking you to discount most of the things you have heard about me lately. I have been the victim, the happy victim, the lucky victim, at the hands of the Press, of a process which I believe is known in financial circles as ‘inflation’. It's a thing which happens to the currency sometimes. But whether it is applied to money or whether it is applied to reputations, its aim

and its result are the same: that is, to make things appear to be worth a great deal more than they actually are. Well, that's what has happened to me. Don't imagine that I didn't enjoy it. Of course I did. It was a curious and bewildering experience for a child of the Old Gang to find herself honourably mentioned in the *Weekly Dispatch*; and when I read that my father was a great statesman, and even a great patriot, I felt just like *Alice in Wonderland* and *Alice Through the Looking Glass* rolled into one.

A glorious theme

I have chosen as my subject here this afternoon 'Paisley', partly because I know that it is due to the fact that I was one of the troupers of the Paisley stage that I owe my invitation here to-day; partly because it is the only subject in the world on which I could trust myself to address you for twenty-five minutes, which, I understand, is the prescribed time, without getting hopelessly out of my depth; and partly because it is a theme so glorious that it needs no help from me – it plays itself.

I don't know where to begin – I could talk to you about it for ever. I don't know whether to tell you about its little incidents, intimate and subtle; whether to dwell on the vast issues we felt to be at stake, the immense results that we feel have been achieved for Liberalism – for this country and for the world; or whether to describe to you the drama of our own hearts – the doubt, the hope, the fear, the nightmare of uncertainty, the ecstasy of fulfillment. There's not an inch of Paisley that isn't hallowed ground to me.

First, I would like you to realise, and to put to my father's credit, the fact that it was a very gallant adventure. It was an enterprise, undertaken at the eleventh hour, in unknown territory, in a constituency which was held by a bare hundred at the last general election, undertaken in response to an invitation secured by a narrow majority of twenty-five in a divided Association – half of which were, or thought they were, Coalition Liberals. Within a week of his arrival, there wasn't a Coalition Liberal left in Paisley. Coalition Liberalism collapsed like a house of cards. It proved to have

been a mirage – a hallucination – which perished at the first contact with reality. Within a week we were standing on firm ground with the loyal, solid backing of the finest fighting force of Liberals you could find in this or any other country.

Labour reinforcements

We were fighting on two fronts. We had on our left a strong Labour candidate – strong because he was so moderate, a clean fighter, backed by a magnificent organisation, a man who knew every crease in the ground – for he had been over the course a year ago. He was helped – I'm not sure whether helped is quite the right word – by various manifestos and demonstrations from outside. There was one manifesto signed by certain members of the Club.¹ It didn't do us any harm; on the contrary, I think it drove some birds over our guns. There were demonstrations in the distance from Comrade Haldane and Comrade Warwick. We poor Liberals had nothing as gaudy to show as their red flags and their blue blood; but there again we noticed no ugly rush, no stampede to the standard of Revolution when their manifestos appeared. I think, perhaps, that between them they have made the barricade almost too safe for democracy. So much for our left.

The half coupon

On our right we had a particularly crude manifestation of Coalition Toryism, armed with half a coupon and a few handfuls of mud.² Was the other half of that coupon withheld from a genuine desire for our success? Or was it withheld because the Prime Minister is no willing godfather to forlorn hopes? He is rarely to be found on

the burning deck,

Whence all but he had fled.

The part of Casabianca – that noble but ungrateful role – was left on this occasion, as it has been on others, to Mr. Bonar Law.

The coalition case

After reading Mr. McKean's speeches there were only two courses open to

me – either to laugh, or to feel very sick. As you may have heard, at one moment there was a desperate attempt to make my father's ties the real issue of the election. This caused me great alarm, because he wore during the contest a series of ties that would easily have lost him the safest seat in Scotland; and I had to explain that he had never used this ties as vehicles of his political opinions – having (thank Heaven for it) other ways of expressing himself.

Then there was my 'German husband'. I was accused, not, I must say, by Mr. McKean himself, but by his canvassers, of having a German husband, and this put me in rather a hole as I was never throughout the contest able to produce the one and only bit of concrete evidence I possessed to the contrary. No doubt you will say all this was broad farce – but it was not intended to be. There was a very disgraceful and a very carefully organised campaign of calumny on foot. Mr. McKean accused my father of pampering German prisoners at home, whilst our prisoners abroad were tortured; of wringing with congratulatory fervour the blood-stained hands of Sinn Feiners; and a Mr. Lane Mitchell, speaking for Mr. McKean and in his presence, said in so many words that my father was a friend of Germany.

These were not only the main, but the only planks in the Coalition platform. If you examine them you will find that they are a *reductio ad absurdum* of the Government programme at the last general election. They swept the country with it then. They pay the 'freak' fine for it now. The reason I quote them, at what may seem to you such unnecessary and tiresome length, is that I was amazed to read in Mr. Bonar Law's recent speech at Glasgow that 'he had followed the contest closely, and that as far as he could see, Mr. McKean had put up a plucky fight for which he deserved the congratulations of all Conservatives'. I can only hope Mr. Bonar Law is inaccurate in saying that he followed the contest closely. If I were a Conservative I should feel undying shame that the great and historic party to which I belonged should, on a great and historic occasion like that of the Paisley by-election, have had a representative who fought with



Violet Bonham Carter in later life

such contemptible and such ridiculous weapons.

But, ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Bonar Law, who begins by saying that Mr. McKean deserves the congratulations of every Conservative, goes on to say that there is no doubt that in the end Mr. Asquith was returned by Conservative votes. So, it appears, the Conservatives who voted for my father are to congratulate Mr. McKean! All I can say is that if Paisley is in reality a Tory victory, a few more Tory victories like it would make the leader of the Tory Party look rather out of place in his present position. They might reduce him, as well as his political godchildren, to the status of a freak. And what about the Government of which he is one of the two accredited leaders? What does it now pretend to represent? Not Labour, and not Liberalism – that we know. Apparently not even Toryism – if the Tory vote has just returned to power its most avowed, its most determined, and its most formidable opponent. No, the totally unrepresentative character of the present Coalition – the fact that it expresses neither the principles of any party, nor the will of the nation, the fact that it expresses nothing but the passionate instinct for self-preservation of its own authors, is one of the plainest messages of the Paisley result.

The women's vote

May I say just one word here about the women electors of Paisley, to whom I feel we owe our victory in so large a measure. 'How did your father get the

women's vote?' is a question I am asked over and over again, and I think there is no doubt whatever that we did get it. Our opponents would be the first to admit that. I think my father got the women's vote largely by treating the women voters with intellectual respect. I was amused to see some of the London papers holding up to derision what they described as his 'Treasury Bench manner with the mill girls'. It is the greatest mistake to imagine that the best way of reaching women is by bad sentiment and worse jokes. How often have I seen them approached on these lines, poor things! It is called the 'human touch'.

Woman's place in politics

There is another more ambitious but equally offensive line of attack. This is to relegate them entirely to what a man imagines to be 'women's subjects'. I remember once, at a Committee on which I was working, seeing written down on the agenda paper, 'Women's Subjects – Vice and Drink'. Well, ladies and gentlemen, I don't wish to appear to speak with levity or disrespect of either of these subjects – I am fully aware of their gravity and of their importance, but I can't help rather resenting the suggestion that I and my sex generally should specialise in them. Women should share with men the limitless horizon which is open to us all alike. This is the only way to sanity, to breadth of vision, to a right balance of social and political forces. I think women, once aroused, are natural Liberals. Everyone is a Tory before he wakes up. Women are certainly individualists; and they are certainly Parliamentarians, as against Direct Actionists. They believe in settlement by discussion rather than by any arbitrament of violence – whether it takes the form of war or of general strikes.

One more thing. Women are said – and this is sometimes used as an argument against them, and as a demonstration of the danger of the women's vote – women are said to be very much influenced by personality. I think this is true; but if it is true that they are very much influenced by personality, it is also true that they are very good judges of character. As one of our Paisley women said, in recommending my father to her fellow-electors, 'We

women have been at this business of sizing up men for many thousands of years; and is it likely that now we won't know the right one out of three?'

Brightening skies

Ladies and gentlemen, do forgive me for keeping you so long. There is more ground than I can possibly cover. You don't know how wonderful it was to see my father – and all that I felt he stood for – daily gaining ground; you don't know what it was to see the little spark we had kindled in Paisley spreading far and wide like a heath-fire, till the whole country was alight, so that if we looked north or south or east or west, everywhere those skies that have been dark above us for so long were reddened by the glow of Liberalism – alive again, awake, aflame. We know we were fighting for more than Paisley. We were fighting for the soul of Liberalism itself. That soul has been saved; and with it the great message of hope which I believe Liberalism, alone of all political creeds, can bring – not to this country alone, but to Ireland, to Europe, to a distracted and suffering world.

A great wrong righted

May I add one personal word, and that is that I feel that Paisley has righted a great wrong. I was with my father in December 1918, when he saw the party, to whose service he had given his life, shattered before his eyes, not by a frontal attack from without – that it could never have been – but by a betrayal from within. He saw himself deserted by men who owed him their political existence, by men whom he had never failed, by men whom he had led from victory to victory. He saw – and this was the hardest thing of all for him to bear – he saw those who stood by him go under. The choice of Paisley, the welcome of the whole nation – for it is nothing less – has made some amends to a heart which was too great to be broken.

Sounds of victory

One last scene – the closing scene of the drama of Paisley. Let us remember it together, for you have shared it with me. It will always be indelibly graven on my

mind: the sight of those great cheering crowds that thronged Whitehall and Parliament Square the day that he took his seat. When I went in out of the noise, into the silence of the House – the House in which I had seen him lead great armies to great triumphs; when I saw that little gallant handful of men which is all his following now, and heard their thin cheer raised, for a moment I felt – is this all, are these all he has behind

him? But then I remembered the great voice of the crowd – it rang in my ears; and I knew that this, *this* was the voice of England – not the drilled cheers of those conscript ranks on the Coalition benches. And I knew that our small force that day was like the little gallant garrison of a beleaguered city that hears for the first time the great shout of the relieving forces – ‘Hold on, hold out; we are coming’. *And they are.*

- 1 Labour's candidate, J. M. Biggar, was endorsed by nine former Liberal MPs: A. V. Rutherford, Joseph King, R. C. Lambert, Hastings Lees-Smith, Charles Trevelyan, Charles Roden Buxton, Colonel Josiah Wedgwood, Arthur Ponsonby and R. S. Outhwaite signed a letter appearing in the *Daily Herald* on 27 January, urging ex-Liberals to vote against Asquith.
- 2 The Conservative candidate, J. A. D. MacKean, was described by Asquith as a 'foul-mouthed Tory'.

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 letters of Richard Cobden (1804–65). Knowledge of the whereabouts of any letters written by Cobden in private hands, autograph collections, and obscure locations in the UK and abroad for a complete edition of his letters. *Dr A. Howe, Department of International History, London School of Economics, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE; a.howe@lse.ac.uk.* (For further details of the Cobden Letters Project, see www.lse.ac.uk/collections/cobdenLetters/)

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.*

Cornish Methodism and Cornish political identity, 1918–1960s. Researching the relationship through oral history. *Kayleigh Milden, Institute of Cornish Studies, Hayne Corfe Centre, Sunningdale, Truro TR1 3ND; KMSMilden@aol.com.*

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.*

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

Old Liberals, New Liberals and Social Democrats: the Liberal Democrats' political heritage

Evening meeting, July 2002, with Earl (Conrad) Russell, Baroness (Shirley) Williams and Professor Michael Freeden
Report by Ian Hunter

Conrad Russell opened the meeting by stressing the party's commitment to pluralism. He observed that both the Social Democratic and Liberal wings of the party had significant philosophical roots in common and that as many good Liberal ideas came into the party from the SDP as from its traditional Liberal roots.

The seventeenth-century roots of Liberalism had been built around a common tradition of giant-killing. During 1679–88 and the attempt to exclude James II and VII from the throne, the forebears of the Liberal Party had been motivated by a commitment to an ascending theory of power. This asserted that power comes up from the people to those they elect, rather than coming down, like an avalanche, the other way. Although this was a seventeenth-century idea it remained a vital one. With it came a commitment to intellectual pluralism and the theories of Locke. Locke distinguished between religion, which he thought was not the state's business, and the enforcement of a common code of morality, which he thought was exactly the state's business.

In Russell's opinion it was not until J. S. Mill that political thought went beyond that. And it was not until Roy Jenkins became Home Secretary in the mid-1960s that the country had a Home Secretary who was fully committed to Mill's principles. Russell

argued that the party's commitment to Mill's principles was not complete until the policy paper on civil liberties at the Liberal Democrat conference in spring 2001 closed the circle by incorporating the far-reaching idea that the only reason for which a state may interfere with the liberty of one of its number was to prevent harm to others. Concern about what would be best for the individual's own physical or moral good was not sufficient justification. 'Now with the Liberal Democrats' commitment to pluralism goes a long-standing commitment to the rule of law, and the 1689 commitment to the security of judges and the independence of the judiciary remain among our key beliefs.'

Russell went on to argue that the Liberal Democrats are most regularly misunderstood or misrepresented by their political opponents as being a party that believes in a singular *laissez faire* approach to the economy. He quoted Mill's statement that 'trade is a social act; whoever undertakes to sell any description of goods to the public does but affect the interest of other persons and of society in general, and thus his conduct in principle comes within the jurisdiction of society. Accordingly, it was once held to be the duty of governments in all cases considered to be of importance to fix prices and regulate the process of manufacture. But it is now recognised, though not

until after a long struggle, that the cheapness and good quality of commodities are most effectively provided for by leaving the producers and sellers perfectly free, under the sole check of equal freedom for the buyers to supply themselves elsewhere.' By this statement Mill showed that his commitment to liberty and free trade were not logically interdependent, and that his commitment to free trade only went as far as was practical. This distinction opened the door to the rise of New Liberalism at the start of the twentieth century. Russell stressed that it is the party's commitment to ensuring the level playing field in economic policy between buyers and sellers that separates it from its political competitors.

Professor Michael Freeden, who spoke next, began with Hobhouse, one of the principal philosophers of New Liberalism. In 1911 Hobhouse argued in *Liberalism* that freedom was only one side of social life, and that mutual aid was not less important than mutual forbearance. Freeden argued that there is no such thing as Liberalism; rather, that there were many liberalisms – variations on a set of themes that may contain family resemblances but which can mutate over time and space into different patterns. Individuality, liberty, progress, well-being and reason may be contained within any liberal text, but not necessarily in the same order in each one. The core of Liberalism is constantly reinterpreted and reapplied to changing circumstances.

Freeden views the New Liberalism as part of a seismic shift in Western European thought from the eighteenth century onwards, which occurred as freedom came to mean removing the barriers to natural growth and the opening up of individual choice. Individuals came to be seen as not being solely responsible for obstacles such as ill health and poverty and it was recognised that people would need help from friends and strangers to overcome such obstacles to growth.

Freeden argued that the New Liberalism was a response to the sudden shock of the discovery of the human costs of the industrial revolution. It was also a response to the emerging perception that capitalism

had not sufficiently delivered the good life to the majority of people. Liberals such as Hobhouse and Hobson argued that the increasing human interdependence of people generated a new need for an enlightened society. Social justice became a goal in itself, as the whole could not survive unless all its constituent parts were looked after.

Freeden summarised the philosophical heritage which contemporary Liberals can draw on as stemming from two main areas. First, a set of principles and policies developed in the first two decades of the twentieth century that can be called the pursuit of welfare. Second, the inevitable drawing in of the state to the Liberal orbit. Freeden argued that these two trends met in the ideology of the welfare state and its construct that the concept of modern citizenship entitles individuals to a share of the goods of that society. The emergence of these concepts of mutual support and mutual vulnerability remain important to liberal thinking today.

The state's accrual of the roles of overseeing and executing central economic functions and of providing emotional and physical sustenance for its citizens in the early part of the twentieth century enabled Liberals to play a key role in humanising the state. The New Liberals believed in the benevolent agency of the state supported by democratic procedures. Liberals worked to harness the state as a major partner in social activity, working alongside individuals and employers.

Shirley Williams spoke on the philosophical underpinnings of the SDP and what its common threads were with the Liberal Party. The SDP saw itself originally as the new Labour Party. Since the Second World War the predominance of Keynesian thinking had made people believe that the state could match demand to supply and therefore assist in the maintenance of full employment. This ability to 'manage' capitalism and free markets seriously undermined the attractions of Marxism to many on the left by making capitalism manageable.

In the 1950s the German Social Democratic Party buried its Marxist

tradition and practice and opened the door for European social democracy to move away from centralisation and nationalisation towards more progressive views, similar in many ways to those of Grimond's Liberal Party. It was the desire to create a non-Marxist Labour Party, similar to the German example, that motivated at least some of the figures who formed the SDP in 1981.

The central influence on the formation of the SDP was the figure of Tawney and his approach to equality and open education. John Stuart Mill was also an iconic figure to the SDP founders and his influence can be seen in the joint Alliance manifesto written in 1983, with its emphasis on constitutional reform, devolution for Wales and Scotland, devolution of power to regional assemblies, human rights legislation and freedom of information. The principles behind these proposals highlighted the areas where both traditions could come together in total amity.

Williams went on to argue that the huge constitutional reform agenda that has been achieved since the early 1980s reflects great credit on the Liberal Democrats and compares favourably with the historic peaks of Gladstone's Home Rule and disestablishment agenda and with Lord Russell's mid-nineteenth century Reform Act. Further common ground between the Liberal and Social Democratic wings of the party could also be found in the common commitment to the principles of a decentralised welfare state.

In considering economic power and the tradition of the free market which stemmed from the work of Adam Smith, Williams reminded the audience that the author of the *Wealth of Nations* had been writing from within Edinburgh's small, extremely moral and well-educated society. Smith was able to make assumptions about relationships between people in society being based on fundamental trust. It was impossible to make such assumptions today. The outcome of exporting free market principles to societies where a sufficient degree of trust did not exist were apparent in the chaos to be found in much of modern Russia,

where the basic rules and regulations upon which an efficient free market depended failed to exist. The SDP had come from a tradition that was concerned with how a society adapted and regulated the free market so that it worked efficiently. This was not a tradition that Williams felt had often troubled the Liberal Party prior to 1981. However, this had not hindered the relationship between the two parties, as Liberalism had made the 'managerialism' of the SDP look much more humane and attractive.

Williams said that the key challenge facing the Social Democratic and Liberal philosophies was the phenomenon of different kinds of fundamentalism, which spoke to deep emotions created by concern about inequality, and was not satisfied by traditional political processes, which were increasingly seen as remote and meaningless. Williams also found it curious that historically neither Social Democracy nor Liberalism had fully taken on board the significance of the women's movement or the rise of inter-racialism. The Liberal Democrats had been very slow to recognise the power of these two movements, which had made huge changes to society without being very visible.

In summing up the dilemmas that Liberal Democracy faces Williams emphasised three main challenges:

- How can Liberal Democrats think through philosophically what a decentralised welfare state might look like?
- How far do we ensure that, without a structure of law and regulation, the powerful in a society do not continue to determine the economy, shape and colour of that society?
- How far do we believe we should take regulation, which at a certain point can shrivel the soul, but without which fair chances cannot be guaranteed to the less privileged parts of society?

The meeting spent some time discussing the distinction between Liberalism and libertarianism. Professor Freeden argued strongly that liberty is a part of Liberalism but is not the only part. The presence of the notion of liberty in a political philosophy does not mean that

it is a Liberal philosophy. Liberalism is an enormously complex philosophy of which liberty is just one element. In libertarianism, liberty has been exaggerated and blown up to eclipse the other core components, such as a belief in the power of progress.

There was also a question concerning to what extent the panel thought that the current government was a social democratic one? 'Decreasingly' was the simple answer. Shirley Williams

argued that Blair's government had no determination to narrow the gaps in society, and could not be considered a Liberal government either, as it had no commitment to liberty, as demonstrated by its profound centralising tendencies. Conrad Russell reminded the meeting that the Liberal Democrats' commitment to creating a level playing field was also a powerful tool to help deliver equality and to preserve liberty and should not be undervalued.

transferred from the Scottish Record Office form a separate and coherent group, consisting of papers of 1923–37 relating to the Scottish Office, the Scottish Board of Health and Thurso's period as Secretary of State for Scotland. The papers in the first box of Section I are also particularly noteworthy as they include Thurso's correspondence with Winston Churchill from 1915 to 1920.

The papers came into Churchill Archives Centre through the good offices of the 2nd Viscount, in several batches between April 1972 and September 1973. The collection had incurred two major misfortunes before its transfer to Cambridge. During the war, the bulk of the Thurso papers that were being stored in Liberal Party headquarters in London were destroyed by an incendiary bomb. After the war, a large portion of the remaining papers were destroyed in a fire that broke out at Thurso East Mains where they were being kept in a room above the laundry. Most of the papers that were rescued from this second blaze were severely damaged both by the flames and by water from the firemen's hoses. Section VI of the collection contains the charred remains of this accident which are too fragile to handle, whilst those damaged files which have already been repaired by the Conservator have been placed in their appropriate places within the collection.

Archive sources

The Thurso papers at the Churchill Archives Centre

by Katharine Thomson

The papers of Archibald Henry Macdonald Sinclair, 1st Viscount Thurso of Ulbster (1890–1970) broadly consist of 214 boxes of constituency, parliamentary and Liberal Party correspondence of the 1920s and 1930s. Overall the papers date from 1908 to 1951.

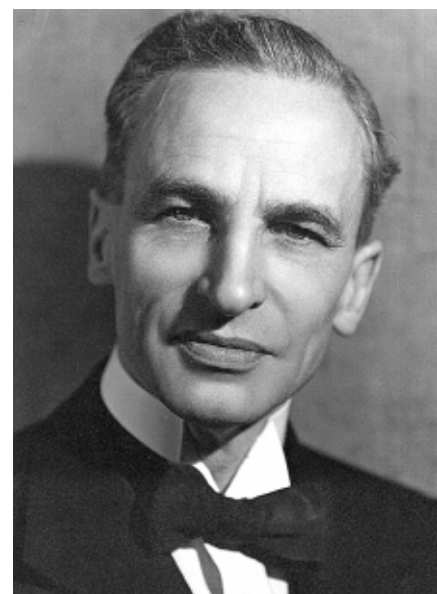
Lord Thurso, or Archie Sinclair, as he was generally known, was born on 22 October 1890, the son of Clarence Granville Sinclair. After being educated at Eton and Sandhurst, he entered the Army in 1910, but began his political career in 1919, when he became Personal Military Secretary to Winston Churchill, the Secretary of State for War. When Churchill moved to the Colonial Office as Secretary of State for the Colonies, Thurso went with him, as his Private Secretary, from 1921–22, and in 1922 became the Liberal MP for Caithness and Sutherland, a seat which he was to hold until 1945. Later in the 1920s Thurso held the post of Temporary Chairman of Committees, House of Commons (1925–30) and also worked as a

member of the Empire Marketing Board (1927–30).

Thurso's growing standing in the Liberal Party was shown when he was made Liberal Chief Whip in 1930, and in 1931 he received his first ministerial position when he became Secretary of State for Scotland, a post which he held for just over a year. By 1935, Thurso had become Leader of the Liberal Parliamentary Party, and was to remain so for the next ten years until the end of the war. During the war years, he also returned to government, serving as Secretary of State for Air from 1940–1945. Lord Thurso died on 15 June 1970.

Within the Thurso Papers, there is a considerable amount of official, political and constituency correspondence, also some speeches, and roughly twenty boxes of material on the Liberal Party and Scottish Liberal organisation. There is virtually no wartime material, but Section IV of the papers does contain correspondence (arranged alphabetically by correspondents' names) and press cuttings from 1945 on into the 1950s. A section of papers

Archie Sinclair (Lord Thurso)



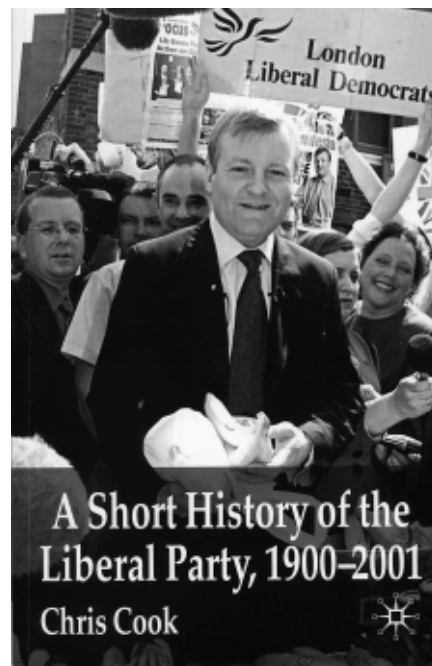
In Viscount Thurso's own lifetime, he was asked by the Scottish Record Office (in 1966) if he would deposit there the papers relating to his tenure of the office of Secretary of State and these papers were consequently deposited in Edinburgh early in 1972. At the same time, Viscount Thurso's son began the transfer of the residue of his late father's papers (the 1st Viscount had died in June 1970) to Churchill College. These papers are now Sections I and II.

In January 1973 the Scottish Record Office agreed to transfer their Thurso papers, relating to his time as Secretary of State for Scotland, to Churchill College, having first xeroxed them. This collection was catalogued in the National Register of Archives (Scotland) Survey 189 (Additional) and comprises Section V of the Thurso collection.

By the spring of 1973, Viscount Thurso's secretary, Miss Cynthia

Metcalf, was sorting and listing the papers that were to be deposited at Churchill College in May and September that year as Sections III and IV.

An online catalogue to the Thurso Papers is available on the A2A web-site at www.a2a.pro.gov.uk/. The collection itself is open for consultation by researchers using Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge: individual closures of files are indicated in the catalogue. Churchill Archives Centre is open from Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm. A prior appointment and two forms of identification are required. Please see our website at www.chu.cam.ac.uk/archives/ for further details, including a list of further collections relating to the Liberal Party, such as the papers of the Dilke family, Sir Dingle Foot, Lord Gladwyn, Reginald McKenna and Sir Edward Spears.



election achievements. If it had covered all the other elements as thoroughly as this, it would be an excellent source – and also, of course, a good deal longer. As it is, it is really quite unbalanced, lacking, in particular, any real consideration of Liberal policy and ideology (although this is rectified a little in its material on recent years).

The choice of the book's starting date is puzzling, as 1900 is in no way a significant date in Liberal history. In fact, this is rather misleading, as the first two and a bit chapters (out of twenty) cover the events of the nineteenth century, mainly starting in June 1859 with the famous meeting in Willis' Rooms which saw Whigs, Radicals and Peelites combining to bring down Derby's Government. That date is normally held to mark the origin of the modern party. In fact, although it is rather short on what Liberals stood for and what Liberal governments actually did, this part of the book provides a pretty decent summary of pre-twentieth century Liberal history.

But as the book gets more detailed, more and more errors and irritations creep in. Events and people are mentioned without any explanation of what or who they were – for example, the Lloyd George Fund is referred to several times without us being told where it originated (the sale of political honours); Violet Bonham Carter

Reviews

Too short a history

Chris Cook: *A Short History of the Liberal Party 1900 – 2001* (Palgrave, 2002, 288 pp.)

Reviewed by **Duncan Brack**

The best thing one can say about the latest edition – the sixth – of Chris Cook's *A Short History of the Liberal Party* is that it exists. There is no other up-to-date history of the Liberal Democrats and its predecessors (despite the title, the book actually covers Liberals, SDP and Liberal Democrats) apart from John Stevenson's rather thin, frequently inaccurate and now dated *Third Party Politics Since 1945* (Blackwell, 1993). Chris Cook and his publishers are to be congratulated on bringing out successive editions at increasingly frequent intervals (three editions in the last ten years).

But I can't help wishing it was rather better. A good party history, it seems to me, ought to include a description of the party's leading personalities, its internal structures and ways of functioning, key elements of its strategy (or lack of one) at crucial moments, and party philosophy and policy. It should show how it related to the outside world (i.e. what difference it made), its underlying bases of support in the electorate, and, of course, its electoral record.

This book really only scores well on the last point, Liberal psephology, where it provides a comprehensive record of local, by- and general

makes an appearance without us being told she was Asquith's daughter; in 1976 (though from the context you'd think it was 1975), we are told that Cyril Smith seemed about to resign, but not what post he was thinking of resigning from (actually, Chief Whip); and so on. One paragraph of the analysis of the October 1974 election results is written in the present tense, having presumably remained uncorrected since the book's first edition in 1976. Peter Knowlson, a member of the Liberal negotiating team over merger with the SDP, has strangely morphed into someone called Andy Millson. And the post-merger name of the party is given wrongly (it was Social and Liberal Democrats, never Social and Liberal Democratic Party), though it has to be said that Cook joins legions of journalists in that particular error.

More seriously, Liberal *thought* is continuously sidelined. The chapter on Jo Grimond's period as leader refers to his important policy innovations, such as Liberal support for UK entry to Europe, and industrial democracy, in less than half a sentence, whereas the party's opinion poll and electoral record is examined in painstaking detail. The 1986 defence debate at the Eastbourne Assembly – the occasion when the Liberal-SDP Alliance began to fall apart – is referred to with no

explanation of the background whatsoever, while, once again, the same chapter looks at the Alliance's electoral record in impressive detail. Pleasingly, however, the 1986 vote at Eastbourne is *not* represented as Liberal adoption of unilateral nuclear disarmament (another common mistake), though the 1981 vote at Llandudno against Cruise missiles (on a motion moved by a certain P. Ashdown), wrongly, is.

Palgrave, Chris Cook's publishers, have done the book no favours. It suffers from several typos, poor punctuation, blurry typography, erratic paragraph spacing and excessively narrow inside margins. There are no pictures except on the cover, and the index is too skimpy and frequently wrong.

If you want a thorough and comprehensive examination of Liberal, SDP and Liberal Democrat psephology, this book is for you. If you want a fairly concise run-through of the key events in party history, it's not at all bad. But if you want a more in-depth look at Liberal thinking, Liberal policies, Liberal people, and what difference they all made, I'm afraid to say that this book is a disappointment. Now how about a seventh – completely revised – edition?

A shorter version of this review originally appeared in Liberal Democrat News.

Council; reading a reminder about a tax return from the Inland Revenue; compiling Government Funding Council time sheets; carrying out Research Assessment Exercise administration in the University; dealing with Home Office statistics of numbers of anti-social behaviour orders granted; and with Criminal Cases Review Commission figures for the numbers of convictions quashed by the Court of Appeal. Numbers and compiling numbers dominate all of our lives in the first years of the 21st Century. David Boyle's book is an antidote to this.

Just because we all know something does not remove the benefit we gain from someone setting it out and telling us what has actually happened and how we got here. We all know that cost or accountant's reporting is not the only or the most important way to measure what is valuable to us or in society. Even though we all know this, it is still important that someone actually sets out the state we are in and how we got here. David Boyle has done that, and in doing so has produced a very valuable piece of research.

David makes his critique of the over-reliance on statistics and accounting by telling a story. The story is largely historical, with most of the chapters dealing with historical matters. It includes chapters on Bentham and Mill and on Keynes. The link between Bentham, Mill, Bertrand Russell and our very own Conrad Russell are well known. I never knew before that there was a connection between Keynes and the environmental economist E. F. Schumacher. The author is critical at times of the utilitarians but is always reasonably sympathetic to our political heroes. He is fair throughout. His chapter on 'the Feelgood Factor' is even fair to politicians and manufacturers, suggesting that they can't (always) be held responsible for people not being happy (see pp. 89 – 92).

Other chapters which have a political edge are on the origins of the census, and on the growing modern acceptance of sustainable investment strategies (chapter 7). The chapter on the census is about the 18th and 19th centuries, Chadwick and the development of the

Too many numbers

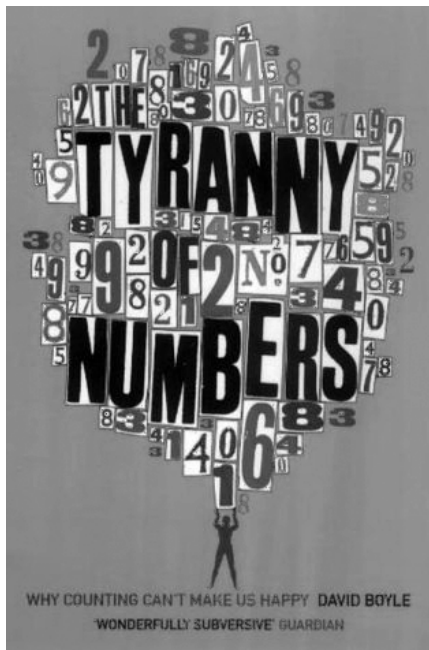
David Boyle: *The Tyranny of Numbers: Why counting can't make us happy* (Harper Collins, 2001, 236 pp.)

Reviewed by Kiron Reid

I can't make up my mind whether David Boyle is being revolutionary or whether he is just saying something that we all know already. His latest book denounces the dominance of accounting and lambasts the obsession with statistics in modern times.

In everything that we do counting plays a major role. For example, I spent

today at a seminar by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary about the capital costs in a Best Value Review of Cleaning; discussing the budget at a consultation meeting with NCIS and the National Crime Squad; learning the cost of domiciliary care being considered in a report by the 'Cabinet' (or Executive Board) of Liverpool City



Poor Law, and therefore doesn't include the Young Liberal objections to the census of the 1960s. It does include lots of interesting pictures of the times and highlights the messianic and rather illiberal zeal of some of the utilitarians. The chapter on Charles Booth contains more background on the early Fabian movement and the Liberal critique of their approach is visible here.

Like David's previous book,¹ his Liberal political background is apparent throughout the text but is nowhere explicit. This presumably comes of getting a book contract from a major international publisher about a topic which is still fairly alternative. Presumably, pointing out that he was formerly editor of *Liberal Democrat News* and a policy-maker on a Federal committee might make the author seem a little bit too eccentric. He does mention the Liberal Democrats' famous 'penny on income tax for education' of the 1992 general election (pp. 42 – 43). The very topical critique of economic growth in Chapter 9 mirrors the approach of Liberal Party figures like Lord Beaumont and Felix Dodds in the 1980s and 1990s. It is stated that economic growth was only introduced as an idea in British politics at the Conservative Party Conference in 1954. That sounds surprising. The Liberal Party Assembly of course rejected the conventional adherence to growth in 1979.

The counting paradoxes set out by Boyle at pp. 45 – 55 are excellent. 'Counting paradox 7: the more we count, the less we can compare the figures.' Illustrated by reference to crime statistics, this shows in a couple of pages the same lesson of the works on the law and order debate by Pearson, Chibnall and Cohen.² The coincidence of ideas is shown by the fact that leading Professor David Garland, in his newest book, is writing about the fashions in law and order of the last thirty years and telling us how we got here.³

David Boyle's book is scholarly but it may infuriate academics due to the lack of referencing and sources for many points. In my review of his first book I said: 'Boyle has carried off an impressive feat, getting a big international mainstream publisher to publish a book on alternative economics' (*Liberator*, October 2000). Two in a row is very impressive; his very readable story-telling style contains highly intellectual content but, presumably in order not to put off the generalist, referencing is left to two pages of further reading. The index is fine but not very comprehensive.

A great quote from Keynes would encourage any young political activist to challenge the establishment:

Over against us, standing in the path, there is nothing but a few old gentlemen tightly buttoned-up in their frock coats, who only need to be treated with a little friendly disrespect and bowled over like ninepins. Quite likely, they will enjoy it themselves, once they have got over the shock. (p. 162.)

Very reminiscent of Bob Dylan and 'the times they are a-changing', I think.

At Bristol University in the late 1980s the ambition of most of the brightest students appeared to be to become accountants. Accountants and statisticians are no doubt as much concerned about many of the issues highlighted as everybody else. While reading the book I twice sat next to female postgraduate mathematicians on planes (one Indian/English woman on the way back from Bosnia, one

German on the way from Los Angeles to New Zealand). Both were automatically interested in the argument in Boyle's work.

David Boyle is political and in his humorous style he puts across political points. The historical accounts leading to the present day are used to make those political points. This second book should confirm him as a writer and as an influential contributor to policy debate. For the Liberal Democrats it illustrates that we are in fortunate times. Conrad Russell is undoubtedly the greatest Liberal party political philosopher of a generation. To have a thinking leader, and people like Boyle around as well, all of whom understand the importance of historical context to modern ideas, is a great asset to our ability to get our policy ideas put into practice.

- 1 Boyle D., *Funny Money: In Search of Alternative Cash*, Harper Collins (2000)
- 2 Pearson G., *Hooligan: A history of respectable fears*, Macmillan, London (1983); Chibnall S., *Law and Order News*, Tavistock, London (1977): an analysis of crime reporting in the British press; and Cohen S., *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, 3rd ed, Blackwell, Oxford (1987).
- 3 Garland D., *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society*, OUP, 2001.

Young Liberal history

Liberal Democrat Youth and Students (LDYS) are aiming to produce a book to celebrate A Century of Young Liberals / Ten Years of LDYS (working title!).

If anyone has any anecdotes, information and/or literature relating to the Young Liberals/LDYS or any of its predecessors, over the last 100 years (especially from the early part of the twentieth century), LDYS would like to hear from you.

They would also like to hear from anyone who would like to get involved with a working group which will be putting together the book and other events throughout 2003.

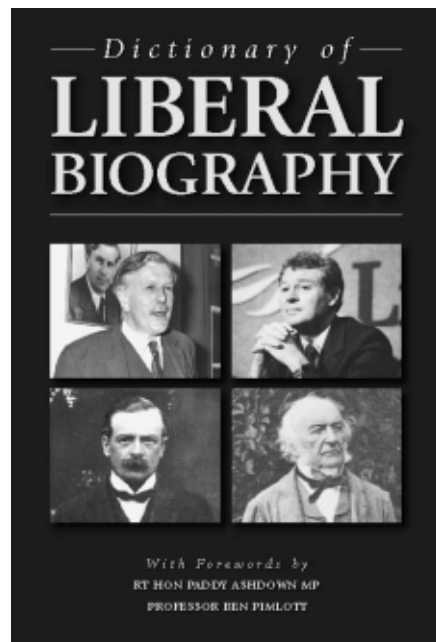
Please contact the LDYS Office: tel: 020 7227 1387 / 7227 1388; email: ldysadmin@libdems.org.uk.

Liberal history books for Christmas!

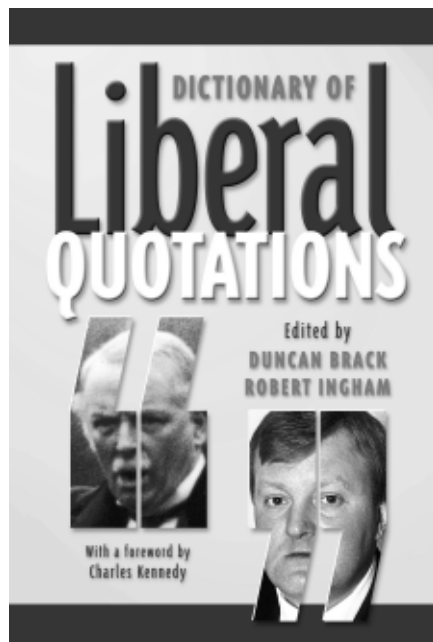
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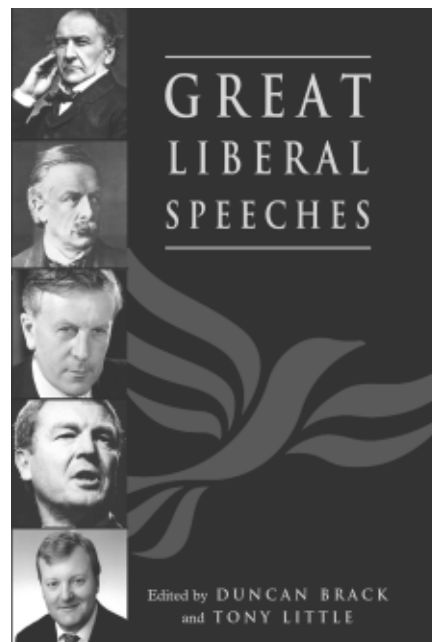
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Meeting

The next LDHG discussion meeting will take place at 7.00pm on **Monday 3 February 2003**, in the National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, London SW1.

Speakers will include the well-known psephologist David Butler; other speakers, and the topic of the meeting, is still being finalised and will be notified to all LDHG members in the New Year.

The meeting will be preceded by the AGM of the History Group, at 6.30pm.

Email mailing list

The History Group has started a new email mailing list, which we will use to send out details of forthcoming meetings and new publications to anyone who wishes to sign up (whether or not they are a member of the Group). This will be your fastest way of finding out about meeting dates and details.

If you would like to join the list, log on to our website at www.liberalhistory.org.uk and click on 'want to join our mailing list?' in the navigation bar.