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Liberals and the land

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Land taxing and the Liberals, 1879–1914

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Dundee's grand old man Biography of Edmund Robertson MP

Ian Ivatt
Frances Stevenson, Lloyd George and the Surrey–Sussex dimension

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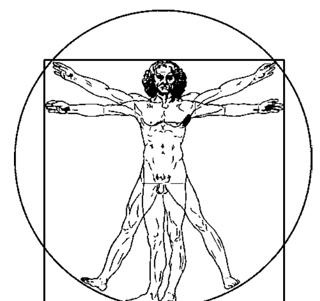

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Liberal Democrat History Group

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

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LAND TAXING AN

Why were Liberals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries so excited about 'the land question' in general, and land value taxation in particular? And is that excitement a matter merely for academic interest, or is it relevant to problems of the twenty-first century? **Roy Douglas** traces the steps by which an understanding of its significance developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. He contends that the pre-1914 Liberal government got closer than any other administration, before or since, to an effective attack on a perennial problem.

'Hands Off!' Liberal leaflet, December 1909 – published at the height of the crisis caused by the House of Lords' rejection of the People's Budget, with its provisions for land taxes.

D THE LIBERALS 1879–1914

Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 was followed by rapid advances towards general free trade, culminating in Gladstone's Budgets of 1860 and 1861. The 1850s, 1860s and most of the 1870s witnessed general improvements in living standards in nearly all classes, and, by common consent, free trade had played a major part in that development. Even agriculture, for which many protectionists had predicted disaster, was prospering.

Yet some Liberal Free Traders soon came to feel that more was required. In 1864 the last great speech of Richard Cobden contained a remarkable passage in which he declared that, if he were younger:

> I would take Adam Smith in hand … and I would have a League for free trade in Land just as we had a League for free trade in Corn … If you can apply free trade to land and labour too … then, I say, the men who do that will have done for England probably more than we have been able to do by making free trade in corn.[1]

This was far from being a developed land policy; but it did signal a recognition that land reform was an essential element of free trade.

To many people, then as now, the word 'land' had a specifically agricultural connotation. Liberal concern with 'the land question' was eventually directed at all kinds of land, urban as well as rural, but it was events in rural areas that began to focus attention on the wider problem.

In the late 1870s, things began to go wrong. The appalling wet summer of 1879 produced rotten grain in England and rotten potatoes in Ireland, threatening a recurrence of the terrible 'Hungry Forties'. Fortunately, free trade enabled the United Kingdom to import food from elsewhere, particularly the United States, and people's worst fears were not realised; though it was a very close thing, particularly in Ireland. Privations caused by crop failures, on top of long-standing agrarian grievances, sparked off the violent Irish 'Land War', which attracted enormous attention throughout the British Isles.

Tenant farmers were particularly aggrieved, and Prime Minister Gladstone eventually decided that it was imperative to concede what seemed to be their principal demands. This led to the Irish Land Act of 1881, whose main provisions were the establishment of tribunals to adjust rents; an assurance that tenants who had fulfilled the covenants of existing tenancies should be entitled to renewal if they wished; and provisions requiring that improvements made by tenants should be credited to the improver at the end of a tenancy.

'I would have a League for free trade in Land just as we had a League for free trade in Corn.'

The bill caused considerable trouble in the government, and caused the Duke of Argyll to depart from the Cabinet, and effectively from the Liberal Party. The Duke was not only a great, and very influential, Scottish landowner; he was also a man of considerable intellect, and an important force of stability in the administration. The bill was nevertheless impelled through the Commons largely by Gladstone's own personality. More surprisingly, it also got past the House of Lords. In the view of the 15th Earl of Derby, son of a Conservative Prime Minister, though currently in the Liberal phase of his rather mixed career, the commonest judgement was, 'We were bound to try something, and, on the whole, there seemed nothing else to try.'[2]

The aftermath is as famous as the measure itself. There were initial difficulties in applying the Act. The principal agitators, including Parnell, were arrested, and then released after the 'Treaty of Kilmainham'. Then the tenants were persuaded to test the workings of the Act, but soon falling commodity prices made the 'judicial rents' unrealistic, and in 1886 a new land agitation, the 'Plan of Campaign', commenced.

Attempts were also made to tackle the problem from a different angle. When the Liberal government disestablished the Irish Church in 1869, provision was made under which many Church

tenants were enabled to purchase their holdings. Further provisions for tenant land purchase were made under the Irish Land Act of 1870, and the brief Conservative government of 1885 also took up the idea with 'Lord Ashbourne's Act'. Other Irish land purchase Acts followed, culminating in George Wyndham's Act of 1903. These various Acts, Liberal and Conservative, were all based on the principle that tenants should be able to acquire their holdings, when the landlord was willing to sell, through a sort of long-term mortgage advanced by the government. By the early twentieth century, a very large part of Irish land was already under a kind of peasant proprietorship. The arrangements pleased the former landowners, for whom Irish land was a wasting asset. It pleased their former tenants, whose overriding concern had been to own the land they cultivated. It also satisfied the British government, which no longer needed so many military and police to maintain order in Ireland. The people who gained nothing from the arrangement were the urban population, and others who had no direct interest in agriculture.

The various episodes of Irish land agitation, and the measures undertaken to rectify or mollify Irish grievances in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the very beginning of the twentieth, all attracted a great deal of public attention throughout the British Isles. People everywhere began to wonder whether developments in Ireland were somehow relevant to their own troubles.

Radicalisation of the Liberals

In 1879, almost at the same moment as the crops failed and the 'Land War' began, a remarkable book written by the American economist and political philosopher Henry George, entitled *Progress and Poverty*, was published, at first in the United States, but soon in many other countries, including in Britain. George noted the paradox that the great technological improvements of the preceding century had not been accompanied by a significant relief of poverty, which in many places was as dire as it had been before industrialisation began. He argued that the root of poverty, urban as well as rural, lay in the existing character of land ownership. If the land system were changed, then poverty could be eradicated.

The impact of Henry George's ideas during the 1880s was enormous. He made several lecture tours in Britain,[3] and produced a number of other influential books, including *Protection or Free Trade,* a widely read defence of the free trade position. Sir Robert Ensor has noted at some length the enormous influence which George exerted on early Socialists;[4] his influence on Liberals, more particularly the younger and more radical members of the party, was just as great.

George and his followers argued that a remarkably simple remedy was available, which would not require any sort of political earthquake. Let land remain in its present private hands, but the owner of a piece of land should be required to pay a tax related to the value of that land. The valuation should refer to the site alone, and not to any improvements, such as buildings or crops, which human effort had brought on to the land. Thus the value of the land would pass to the community as a whole. At a time when the burden of taxation in all countries was vastly lighter than it is today, George was able to contend with much force that a 'single tax' on land values could replace all other kinds of taxation. This view was widely argued by his British followers from the late 1880s onwards.

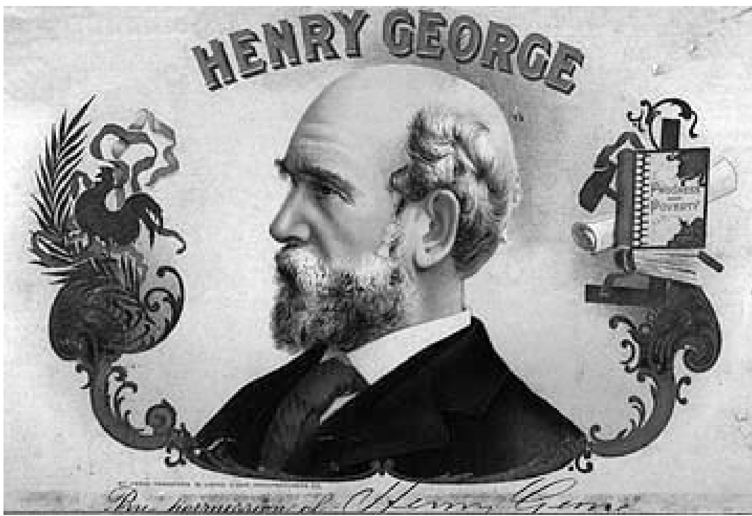
Many Liberals became land taxers, and many people whose initial interest had been in land taxing decided that the Liberal Party was the best vehicle through which to operate. This was bound to frighten off many of the Whig landowners who had formed a very important element in the Liberal Party a few decades earlier. The Duke of Argyll was not the first of their number to depart, and as time went on many more followed. The issue of Irish Home Rule was the occasion rather than the cause of the mass departure of Whigs in 1886. At the same time, the relative importance of the radical land reformers grew.

Many Liberals became land taxers, and many people whose initial interest had been in land taxing decided that the Liberal Party was the best vehicle through which to operate.

Even before the 'Liberal Unionist' departure of 1886, the Irish 'Land War' had been linked with a parallel 'Land War' in the Hebrides, with which Henry George and his policies were closely associated. The agitation began in Skye, and rapidly spread to a considerable number of other islands and parts of the mainland. There were no killings, but there were rent strikes and land seizures, which occasioned a number of fights between crofters and police. Marines were also involved, and for a large part of the 1880s a gunboat plied the Hebrides. George himself spoke in Skye in the course of one of his British lecture tours.

The new 'Land War' attracted great attention in Scotland, where many working-class people were of recent Hebridean extraction, and no doubt some of them had personal memories of the evictions of crofters to make way for sheep earlier in the century. The Glasgow and Edinburgh press of the 1880s gave frequent, and prominent, attention to events in the Isles, which were largely ignored by their English counterparts. Might these struggles in remote places perhaps have some relevance to the problems of urban workers? The Scottish Land Restoration League was set up in Glasgow in February 1884, and in November of the same year the Liberal 'Six Hundred' – effectively, the local Liberal Association – of the town carried with a large majority a resolution calling for a tax on site values.[5]

By the 1880s, advanced Liberals were seeing more and more parallels between events in Ireland and Scotland on the one hand, and the problems of English agriculture, and most particularly



Henry George (1839–97), author of *Progress and Poverty* (on left, from the lid of a cigar box)

those of the farm workers, on the other. In the first half of the decade, a series of articles, codified by Joseph Chamberlain as the Radical Programme, attracted much attention. Chamberlain's friend and admirer Jesse Collings saw the way forward in the establishment of rural smallholdings – 'three acres and a cow'. Other Liberals were coming to lay emphasis on the more fundamental policy of land value taxation. These policies were not necessarily incompatible, but they were very different.

The general election of 1885 was a particularly important one. For the first time, the great majority of householders, rural as well as urban, received the vote. George's proposal for a tax on land values was widely argued. 'Three acres' was a very effective Liberal battle-cry, and many people have attributed the unexpected Liberal victory in many rural constituencies to its influence on the newly enfranchised farm labourers.

Among the Liberal victors was Joseph Arch. He had left school at nine to become a farm worker. Thereafter he had played a leading part in founding the Agricultural Labourers' Union, and was now returned as the MP for North-West Norfolk. In the Scottish crofting areas, proposals similar to those which had been enacted for Ireland in 1881 were popular. Four of the Highland MPs are sometimes listed as Liberals, but are sometimes regarded as members of a distinct 'Crofters' Party'. Alfred Russel Wallace's Land Nationalisation Society proposed land reform of yet another kind.

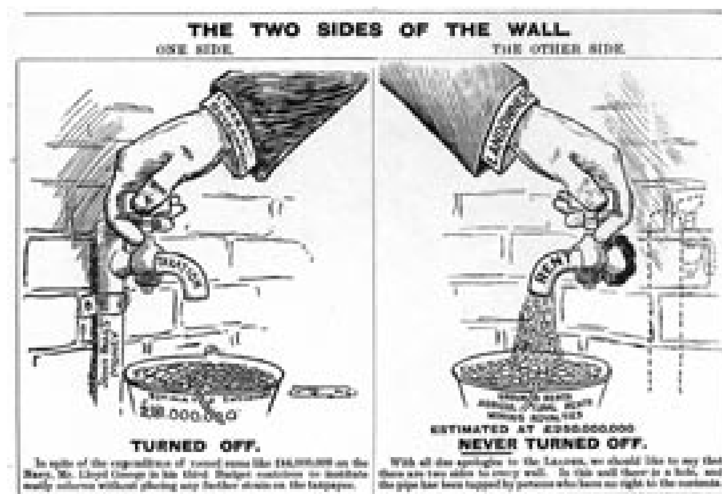
These various land reformers were certainly thinking on different lines, but they had vital points in common. All agreed that the exclusive possession of land by relatively small numbers of landowners was not only inherently unjust but generated poverty and privation; and that it was both desirable and possible to rectify the current situation. Some reformers laid more emphasis on other factors as causes of poverty, but few confuted the view that the existing system of land ownership played an important part.

The Irish and Hebridean 'Land Wars' had some weaker parallels in England. In Wales, what started off as a rather similar movement soon became more deeply concerned with a struggle against tithes paid to the established Church. In this mixed contest, a young Welshman, David Lloyd George – still several years off becoming an MP – first attracted attention.[6] In the extraordinary career which followed, the memory of events and ideas of his youth never quite left him.

In the 1880s and early 1890s, 'Land Wars' were by no means the only troubles to beset agriculture. The great influx of foreign food that had saved many working people from starvation in the beginning of the period did not abate. Many tenant farmers went out of business, and agricultural landlords were compelled greatly to reduce rents. Very soon landowners, who had once seemed to be the munificent leaders of local society, began to be perceived as no more than rentiers, drawing money from their tenants and giving little in return. At the same time, industry encountered troubles of its own, and there was a period of massive unemployment, which produced profound privations for working-class people.

Many different ideas, ranging from land reform to socialism, from imperialism to temperance, were being discussed in Liberal circles as possible ways of dealing with these various problems. Gladstone was campaigning actively for Irish Home Rule, but it was plain that neither the Grand Old Man nor the cause of Home Rule would remain at the centre of politics forever.

Liberals at the lower levels of the party, operating through the National Liberal Federation, were thinking actively about the policies that would be required in the next phase.[7] At the NLF meeting in Manchester in 1889, and again at Newcastle in 1891, long lists of policies were drawn up. The 'Newcastle Programme' was exceptionally comprehensive, and is particularly famous. Two and a half thousand delegates from 800 Liberal Associations attended. Several kinds of land reform were proposed, including – in a thinly veiled but unmistakeable form – the taxation of land values. Nobody claimed that the 'Newcastle Programme' was an election manifesto which would



The land tax campaign as the cartoonists saw it; from *Land Values* August 1907 (top) and June 1911 (middle); and a Liberal Party leaflet, December 1909 (bottom).

bind a future Liberal government, but it gave a clear idea of what the party's rank and file was thinking.

In 1892, Gladstone formed his last government, and in the following year made his second unsuccessful attempt to secure Home Rule. When he at last retired in March 1894, Rosebery took the premiership, but there was not much sense of purpose. Sir William Harcourt's 1894 Finance Act was the most notable achievement, but Harcourt and Rosebery were on notoriously bad terms, both personally and politically. The government more or less fell to pieces in the following year, and a long period elapsed before the various quarrelling politicians who sought to lead the Liberal Party acquired any sense of consistent purpose. What eventually brought them together was opposition to Joseph Chamberlain's 'Tariff Reform' campaign of 1903, and a sturdy defence of free trade.

Turn of the century

At lower levels of the party, however, new ideas were developing rapidly, and among them land value taxation (LVT) was acquiring particular popularity. This was related partly to the special needs of local government, at a time when public interest in local administration, particularly in the towns, was much stronger than it is today. Local administration was financed largely through a system of rates on real property, and there was a growing demand that this rating system should be based exclusively on the value of sites, discounting the value of buildings or other improvements which had been put upon them. This proposal for site value rating (SVR) was simply LVT applied for local purposes.

The idea was particularly popular among Liberals, but it was by no means exclusive to them. By 1897, more than 200 assessing bodies had declared in favour of SVR.[8] Early in 1906, no fewer than 518 local authorities were reported to have petitioned for

the right to levy rates on the basis of site values.[9] Even councils in overwhelmingly Conservative areas like Liverpool and Croydon gave support.[10] The proposal was promoted actively by Liberal MPs. Private Members' bills in favour of the right of local authorities to levy rates on the basis of site values were introduced by Liberal MPs, including C. P. Trevelyan and Dr T. Macnamara. In 1904, and again in 1905, majorities were recorded for such bills, which secured the support of a number of Conservatives.[11] These bills were not allowed time to proceed to their later stages, but the widespread support they attracted was undeniable.

Liberals in office

When the Liberals won their huge victory at the general election of 1906, early action in the direction of land reform could reasonably be anticipated. There was still some pressure for 'Three Acres', even though Collings, like Chamberlain, had long been a Conservative for all practical purposes. A Rural Smallholdings Act was passed in 1907 as a step in that direction. It proved only a very limited success,[12] and the main attention of land reformers was centred on land value taxation. As Winston Churchill put it, land reform – and under that term he laid special emphasis on land value taxation – was 'the most important and certainly the most fundamental part of constructive Liberal social policy'.[13]

Many of the MPs were eager land taxers. Nowhere was the cause more popular than in Scotland. So why not use Scotland as a test case, certainly for SVR and perhaps for LVT? The natural way of doing this was first to value all land, and then, when the valuation was complete, to impose a tax on that basis, whether for local or for national purposes. Twice the Liberal government introduced legislation to value Scottish land, and on each occasion the bill was wrecked in the House of Lords. At that time it was widely thought that the Lords would not interfere with actual taxation proposals in a Finance Bill (although the contrary was proved in 1909), but nobody seriously disputed their legal right to dispute a valuation bill.

Lloyd George's 1909 proposals were not designed – as many have suggested – as a device for forcing an issue with the House of Lords, but as a means of bringing land valuation and small elements of land taxation into the current year's legislation.

In November 1908, 250 MPs signed a Memorial urging that the taxation of land values should appear in the next Budget, and in the following year Chancellor of the Exchequer Lloyd George did what he could to comply with their request. The 1909 Budget was bound to be important in any event, for a good deal more money was required in taxation. Old age pensions had just come into operation, and the country was engaged in an expensive naval arms race with Germany. Lloyd George perceived this as a good occasion for inserting the thin end of the wedge. The Scottish experience had shown that it was useless to introduce a separate valuation bill first, and the idea of introducing valuation proposals which would relate not to the current year but to a future year's taxation into the Finance Bill 'would probably be regarded as being outside the proper limits of a Finance Bill by the Speaker of the House of Commons'.[14]

Lloyd George's 1909 Budget proposed some small land taxes. There should be a tax of one (old) penny in the pound on the capital value of land, which – for the first two years at any rate – would only be levied on mining royalties, ground rents and vacant land; and there should be a tax on the value of the increment when land was later sold at a profit. These taxes provided a decent pretext for a general valuation. As the annual Finance Bill wended its way through the House of Commons, the proposed capital value tax was halved, and a new lease reversion duty was introduced. The anticipated yield of the new land taxes was tiny, even in 1909 values: the Chancellor estimated it at a mere half-million pounds.[15]

Thus Lloyd George's 1909 proposals were not designed – as many have suggested – as a device for forcing an issue with the House of Lords, but as a means of bringing land valuation and small elements of land taxation into the current year's legislation, in spite of the Lords' certain dislike for them. There were precedents for slipping measures which the Lords would be sure to dislike into a Finance Bill – notably Gladstone's repeal of the paper duties in 1861, and Harcourt's changes to the succession duties in 1894. On both occasions, the Lords had decided that it was wise to allow the distasteful proposals to pass. In 1909, Lloyd George also had a powerful argument for the new measures which should appeal even to people who were not wholly convinced of their merits. Most of the new taxes he proposed would fall on other items, such as increases in legacy duties, income tax and taxes on liquor and tobacco. If all of these things were to claim more tax money in order to meet a perceived national need, why should land be exempt?

At first it looked as if the Lords would swallow the bitter pill; but, as time went on, there were signs that they might refuse. Lloyd George, always the opportunist, perceived the political advantages which might appear if they did so. For a variety of reasons, the government had been faring badly in by-elections; then, in July 1909, the Liberal candidate in the highly marginal constituency of High Peak, who centred his campaign on the Budget, emerged victorious. There were other signs which suggested that the Budget was proving popular. Lloyd George made a succession of speeches, notably at Limehouse at the end of July and at Newcastle in early October, which caused great fury in Conservative circles, and helped goad the Lords into rejecting the Budget.

That forced the general election of January 1910, where the Liberals again won a majority – albeit a composite one on this occasion, dependent on support from the Irish Nationalists and Labour. Although the Liberals

had lost ground, the fact that they won at all was truly remarkable. The Opposition had little doubt about the reason. A group of leading Unionists who carried out an inquest into the election all decided that 'in the English towns we were beaten by the land taxes of the Budget'.[16] One of the members added that defeat of the Moderates – that is, the Conservatives – in the recent London County Council election 'was due to the same cause and … unless we are prepared to indicate an intention of dealing with this question we have no chance of winning the towns back'. Such observations bring out very sharply the importance of the land question as a political issue in urban areas. When Lloyd George's Finance Bill passed the new House of Commons, the Lords let it through. So, to the delight of land taxers, valuation commenced.

After the Budget

After the great Budget controversy, LVT, together with its local government variant SVR, was the variety of land reform that attracted by far the most attention. Other measures, notably legislation to encourage the provision of Scottish smallholdings, were advanced, but these were small beer by comparison. And yet the land valuation which had been the most vital feature of the Budget took an inordinately long time. A compelling argument was advanced much later[17] which showed that the valuation procedure adopted was vastly more complex than was necessary, and that the valuation could have been conducted in much shorter time – and, indeed, more accurately – if procedures used by professional valuers had been followed.

Eager land taxers began to become restive. In May 1911, a delegation of leading backbenchers met Asquith and Lloyd George, to whom they presented a Memorial signed by 183 MPs, calling for speedier land taxing. All but one of the forty-two Labour MPs, and a substantial majority of those Liberal MPs who were not members of the administration, were signatories. The Prime Minister and the Chancellor were welcoming enough; but Lloyd George explained to the Memorialists that the valuation was expected to be complete 'within five years from the passing of the Budget'. Five whole years! On that estimate, the earliest moment for the introduction of LVT would be the 1915 Budget.

'The Prime Minister's speech last night was I think the best I ever heard him make. "Land" went like hot cakes at the delegates' meeting.'

In 1912, Liberal land taxers provided considerable evidence to show that their policy was popular in different kinds of places. The agricultural constituency of North-West Norfolk was Liberal, but hardly looked safe. E. G. Hemmerde, who laid particular emphasis on land reform, retained it in the by-election of May that year. The industrial constituency of Holmfirth looked safer, but there was a strong challenge from Labour. Sydney Arnold, another strong land taxer, held it for the Liberals in June. More spectacular was the Liberal victory at Hanley, another industrial constituency, in the following month. The seat had been held by one of the 'Lib-Lab' miners who had defected to the Labour Party, and had held it in a straight fight with the Conservatives in both 1910 general elections. A Liberal candidate, R. L. Outhwaite, appeared at the by-election. Outhwaite was a particularly enthusiastic land taxer, and centred his campaign on that issue. Many observers expected the Conservative to win on a split vote, but Outhwaite was triumphant, and the Labour defender finished a bad third.

In the teeth of such demonstrations of the popularity of land taxing, the process of valuation proceeded in its leisurely way, and was still not complete when war came in 1914. Public attention was drawn largely to the question of Irish Home Rule, but late in 1913 the Liberal government commenced a new land campaign. The response was most eager. 'I have rarely addressed such an enthusiastic audience', wrote Lloyd George to the Chief Whip, Percy Illingworth, discussing a meeting in Swindon.

> The land has caught on. Winston found the same thing in Manchester. But we must not flag. The Tory press have evidently received instructions from headquarters to talk Ulster to the exclusion of land. If they succeed we are 'beat', and beat by superior generalship.[18]

Reporting on the National Liberal Federation meeting in Leeds which Asquith addressed a month later, Illingworth declared that 'the Prime Minister's speech last night was I think the best I ever heard him make. "Land" went like hot cakes at the delegates' meeting.'[19]

At the end of 1913, there was reason for thinking that the government was limbering up for a much broader land campaign, which might culminate in a land-taxing Budget in 1915, followed by a general election at which the land question in general, and land taxing in particular, would be the dominant issue.

War and after

In 1914, however, the government was forced to give its closest attention first to problems associated with Irish Home Rule – for there was much reason to fear that Ulster would irrupt in civil violence – and eventually to the war which Britain entered on 4th August. With the arrival of war, land valuation, and the controversial legislation which was in the pipeline, were suspended in the putative interest of national unity.

By the end of the war, everything had changed. A few Liberals, including the ardent land taxers Trevelyan and Outhwaite, had opposed the war entirely. The bulk of the party was split to a growing extent between what were loosely called 'Asquithians' and 'Lloyd Georgeites'. The Labour Party began to set its sights on eventually becoming the government. Lloyd George was heading a coalition government, in which Conservatives formed the major

element. Such are the ironies of politics that it was this coalition which finally and formally abandoned the minuscule land taxes, and the valuation as well.

The real reason for the abandonment is obvious enough. The Conservative majority in the coalition, among whom landed interests were still very powerful, feared that valuation would eventually form the basis for the taxation of land values. There were, however, some 'respectable' arguments as well. Land values (and, indeed, money values as well) had changed greatly since 1914. The yield of the existing taxes was so small that it did not justify the cost of collecting them. In a sense, Lloyd George had been hoist with his own petard, for he had never viewed those taxes as of much use in themselves, but only as a small step towards something much bigger.

Land taxers were scattered in every political direction. Some were Asquithians, some were Lloyd Georgeites. Some joined the Labour Party. At least one tried to set up a land taxing party of his own. One very important land taxer, Winston Churchill, eventually migrated to the Conservatives. Even if the land taxers had stayed together, they could hardly have changed things much. For all but three of the inter-war years, Conservatives and their allies dominated the scene. At one point in 1931, Labour's Philip Snowden did manage to get the valuation of land on to the statute book; but almost immediately the Labour government fell, and was replaced by the National Government, which soon came under Conservative control. First the valuation was put in a state of suspended animation; but when the land taxers, Liberal and Labour, first withdrew from the government and eventually went into formal opposition, the legislation was expunged altogether.

Unfinished business

When war broke out in 1914, preparations were being made for a new and more radical land campaign, which would probably have led to land value taxation being adopted as a major element of the British fiscal system. So did the 1914 war kill the land question? In the most fundamental sense, neither that war nor any other event could possibly kill the land question. 'Land', in the classical economists' sense of 'natural resources', is essential for all human activity, and the quantity of land is limited. The allocation of land (or, more strictly, of rights over land) is a vital and permanent problem for all governments. But what did die was the particular form that the land question took in 1914.[20] In most of the country, including most rural areas, powerful landowners – whether 'the Dukes' whom Lloyd George lampooned or village squires – were no longer perceived as the great enemy. There were a few exceptions to this, but generally the economic, social and political power of rural landowners declined dramatically. In urban areas, where the provision of suitable housing was a running problem throughout the twentieth century, the point of blockage during the interwar years was not usually the exorbitant price of building land.

More generally, the great villain was widely perceived by working people as being the 'capitalist' employer. Until the 1939 war, and to a considerable extent in more recent times, unemployment was the deepest worry. Liberal land taxers contended, and they still contend, that the root cause of these troubles can be traced to the land question, and that the taxation of land values would be of major importance in the solution of many problems which, on their face, do not appear to be related to it at all. These problems include unemployment, the alternation of booms and slumps, the continued prevalence of real poverty, rocketing house prices, transport and communications and even many environmental issues. This is not the place to argue whether that view is correct or not; but the fact that it is held explains why many Liberals continue to see events of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as highly relevant to contemporary politics, and to the mission of Liberalism in the present and the future.

Land taxers were scattered in every political direction.

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SIR EDWARD GREY'S

A little over a hundred years ago, on the small German island of Borkum in the North Sea off Emden, a boarding house was built. Some years later it was given the name 'Constance'. The name was one result of an unusual family story, only recently uncovered following extensive research in Germany and England. It brings together a leading British Liberal statesman, his brother, his sister, a surveyor's daughter, her mother, her governess and her piano teacher. **Hans-Joachim Heller** tells the story of Sir Edward Grey's German love-child.

The 'Constance' boarding house, Borkum, in 1914.

When the Liberals came to office in 1892, thirty-year-old Sir Edward Grey (later the 1st Viscount Grey of Fallodon, born on 25 April 1862) became a junior minister at the Foreign Office in London. Already well known as a talented politician in his home county of Northumberland, Grey had become MP for Berwick-upon-Tweed in 1885. Gladstone, the grand old man of the Liberal Party, predicted a great future for a young man with aristocratic connections who had been educated at Winchester and Balliol College, Oxford.

Grey's wife Dorothy was a proud and hard woman who cared little for politics and disliked London society. She remained in their little cottage on the River Itchen near Winchester during the greater part of Sir Edward's time as a government minister. Dorothy did not like children and did not wish to have any of her own. Although married, Dorothy refused to have a sexual relationship with her husband, and has been described as 'ultra-virginal' before her marriage. The union of Dorothy and Grey appears to have been founded on a common love of nature which expressed itself in observation and conversation about the natural world. They kept a diary devoted to these observations. Edward Grey also wrote a book on fly-fishing.

GERMAN LOVE-CHILD

Grey was not only a lover of nature but also a jolly, sociable and sporting man and so it is hardly surprising that he was not satisfied by this 'marriage blanc' (to use the French term for such an arrangement). It was rumoured that he had had love affairs in London. His absences from the Foreign Office were noted at the time. Thus he became acquainted with Florence Annie Slee, seven years his junior. She was the daughter of a respectable auctioneer and surveyor, Charles Edward Slee, who lived at Streatham on the southern borders of London. His estate agency, Slee, Son & Carden, was in Hatton Garden in the City. Founded in 1858, it is still there today.

A love-child is born

Sir Edward and Florence's relationship soon blossomed into love, and after about a year she became pregnant. What were they to do? Should Edward Grey abandon his political career and his good reputation? Would Florence and their illegitimate child be thrown out by her family?

The pregnancy and the birth must be kept quiet; they would not want their love-child to grow up with the shame of bastardy hanging over his or her future. The two seem to have conceived a carefully considered plan, shared with few people inside their families. The arrangement was carried out with the help of two German ladies employed by the Slee family for many years as governess and piano teacher. Their names were Miss Dorothea Thomas and Miss Sophie List. At that time they were both about thirty-five years old.

First, a secret marriage ceremony was held in an unlicensed chapel in London. At the time it was not too difficult to find a man in holy orders with no benefice who would be pleased to augment his income with a 'marriage fee'. Charles Grey, the youngest brother of Edward, was to be the sham husband of Florence. He was twenty years old – four years younger than Florence – and not yet of age. Charles was probably already planning to go to Africa once he had completed his education, joining another Grey – Edward's brother George – who was a successful colonial administrator. George must have been idolised by Charles. In 1891, when he was then twenty-four years old, George had visited Fallodon Hall and told tales of big game hunting and African exploration.

Witnesses to the marriage were Florence's mother Ellen Slee, whose husband had recently died, and probably Miss Thomas. The marriage was not legal because the chapel was not licensed; it is not in the General Register Office indexes. Soon afterwards Florence went to Germany for several months so that family friends and relations should not observe her developing pregnancy. She was accompanied by Miss Thomas, a familiar figure from her parents' home. She had known Florence from childhood and was her confidante. If the birth took place in Germany there was little chance that news of it would reach England.

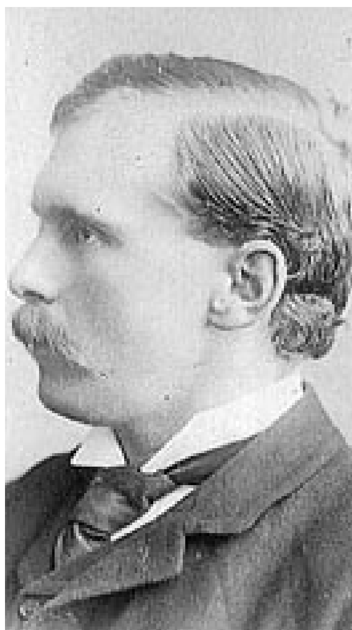
Charles Grey, the youngest brother of Edward, was to be the sham husband of Florence.

Florence's child, named Dorcas Winifred Grey, was born on 1 March 1894 in Bremen, home town of Miss Sophie List, where she knew a midwife. On the German birth certificate of a girl known as Winifred Grey, her parents are described as 'The British Officer Charles Grey and his wife Florence Annie Slee, both of London'. It is interesting that Florence Slee's child was registered as a Grey and this may be evidence of the intensity of Edward Grey's love for Florence. This registration also meant that there was no documentary evidence that Florence had had a child out of wedlock.

A few weeks after the delivery Florence returned to London. The little girl remained with Miss Thomas and Miss List in Germany.

Winifred Grey grows up

It must have been hard for Florence to abandon her newborn daughter to guardians in a foreign country. She may have thought that this would be a temporary arrangement. Why did



Far left, from top: Sir Edward Grey in 1894; his sister, Constance Grey, in 1890; his brother, Charles, in 1900.
Left, from top: Florence Slee, in about 1893; Dorcas Winifred Grey, in 1913; Hans-Joachim Heller, in 1989 (note the Edward Grey nose!)

they choose the small island of Borkum as a place to bring her up? Borkum is situated nearest to England and the same waves lap against English and German shores. Why was the child called Dorcas, which means 'gazelle' in Greek? Perhaps it might mean 'Winifred, the little gazelle, jumped away from the large English island to the tiny island of Borkum and surely will return'. This sad separation was almost inevitable, given the double standards of the day.

The next year, in 1895, the two 'aunts' – which is what Winifred called Miss Thomas and Miss List for the whole of her life – took lodgings on Borkum, a well-known seaside resort. They were able to live there, and to educate Winifred Grey, thanks to a good pension provided by her parents in England.

Ten years later, in 1904, Florence must have become convinced that she was never going to get her child back. Edward Grey may also have been interested in closing the door on his old love affair. Winifred's two guardians on Borkum now received a single sum of several thousand gold marks from the Greys, enabling them to buy a boarding house built in about 1900. They renamed the house 'Constance'. The name honoured Constance Mary Grey, the sister of Sir Edward. She had helped to bring about a satisfactory solution to the problem of Edward and Florence's child. Constance was then thirty-two years old; in later life she was a Justice of the Peace in Shropshire.

The story of the true descent of Winifred and the financing of the house in Borkum remained a secret. Beyond her birth and baptism certificates there is no further documentary evidence. Several hints are dropped in old letters from friends and relatives in Germany, but the two 'aunts' never gave anything away. They had promised to keep quiet, and they did. They let it be known that Winifred was the child of a young British officer who had gone to

Africa with his wife. As a result the parents could not bring up their own child and they later died after contracting a tropical disease.

Charles Grey, Winifred's 'official' father, spent his adult life, like his elder brother George, largely in Africa as an explorer and administrator. He became well known as a big game hunter. About 1920 he lost his left arm after being attacked by a lion. Fearless and daring, he did not give up hunting and in 1928 was killed by a wounded buffalo. George had already been killed – by a lion – in 1911. Both were unmarried and without children.

Miss Thomas and Miss List had managed the boarding house 'Constance' since 1905. They brought up little Winifred as their own child – severely, but with loving hearts. She was treated as if she had come from one of the best families. Until Winifred went to school they only spoke English to her. Once a year, in wintertime, they visited London and the homes of Florence Slee and other friends, so Florence could see her child growing up in her early years.

A good education

Thanks to money from England, Winifred got a good middle-class education. She went to the recently established private school in Borkum until she was seventeen and had piano, violin and singing lessons. She went in for sports at the Borkum Sports Club. After that she was trained as a kindergarten teacher and leader at the Froebel College in Magdeburg. Following her final examinations she took a post as a governess in the family of a dispensing chemist.

When Winifred was twenty years old she went to London with Miss List, but on her return all her friends were astonished that she did not report anything of her experiences there. What had happened? It seems most likely that she had been told the truth about her unmarried English parents, their liaison and the sham marriage with a substitute. The news must have been an extraordinary shock for a young woman.

Winifred never talked about this journey and her English descent as long as she lived – hence my speculation as to what really happened. Nor was she ever again in contact with her relatives in London. When the First World War began she was engaged as a children's nurse by the Bethanien Christian Institution. Borkum had become a fortress out of bounds to an Englishwoman, an enemy. For that reason, and because she had other troubles with the police over her nationality, in 1916 Miss Thomas adopted her.

Winifred was of age and now able to decide things for herself. The adoption by her 'aunt' was an opportunity to break finally with her disgraceful origins and the false statements on her birth and baptism certificates. She became Winifred Thomas, a real German. In November 1918 it became obvious that there would be no seaside visitors for quite a while and, as many women were now working, Winifred founded her own kindergarten at 'Constance'. In 1927 she became part-owner of the house which she later inherited from the 'aunts'. Miss List died in 1934, Miss Thomas in 1936. The house was sold in 1939 and the proceeds from its sale were eaten up by devaluation at the end of the Second World War.

The 'aunts' were keen to secure a husband for Winifred who was of noble birth or, at the very least, from a wealthy bourgeois background. They had no success in this endeavour. In their opinion, no one on Borkum was suitable as a husband for Winifred; indeed, they weren't fit to tie her bootlaces. As a result, Winifred married late, in 1930. Her groom was Captain Rudolf Heller, head of the military recreation home on Borkum. Soon afterwards they moved to Berlin, where Winifred survived the Second World War with her two sons.

Winifred Heller was widowed in 1944 and she died in 1977. In her later years she was very glad of her four grandchildren.

An unlucky man

Sir Edward Grey's affair with Florence Slee remained a secret in both Germany and England. He was able to continue his political career untainted by scandal. Sir Edward became a very capable Foreign Secretary, in office for an extraordinarily long time, from 1905 to 1916. Yet despite his best efforts he was not able to prevent the outbreak of the First World War. Grey was honoured for his political achievements before his resignation in December 1916. In July 1916 he had been made an earl, altered to a viscountcy at his request. His monumental political memoirs, *Twenty-five Years 1892–1916,* were published in both Great Britain and Germany.

Grey was remarkably unlucky in his private life. To add to the misfortune of his illegitimate child and the early death of a brother to whom he was deeply attached, his wife Dorothy died in 1906 after an accident with a dog cart. Fallodon Hall burned down in April 1917. His cottage in the Itchen valley also burned down. Grey married again in 1922, but his wife Pamela died just six years later. In 1915 his sight began to fail and by 1919 he was unable to read; he was blind for the last ten years of his life. He died, 'childless', in 1933 at Fallodon Hall in Northumberland, which had been rebuilt.

Grey's old love, Florence Slee, did not remarry. Instead she spent much of her life supervising the household of her two brothers, London estate agents. Florence died in 1957. On her death certificate she is described as a 'spinster'.

Hans-Joachim Heller is the son of Winifred Heller. Born in 1932, he became a civil engineer, and retired in 1997; he lives in Berlin. This article is reprinted from Family Tree Magazine *(October 2003) with the kind permission of the editor and the author.*

Grey's old love, Florence Slee, did not remarry … she died in 1957. On her death certificate she is described as a 'spinster'.

DUNDEE'S G

On 25 November 1885 Edmund Robertson (1845–1908) won a seat in the House of Commons as Liberal MP for Dundee. He represented Dundee for twenty-three years, standing for re-election eight times and sitting in Parliament under seven different Prime Ministers through a period when there was much division among the Liberals in Dundee.[1] He held the post of Civil Lord of the Admiralty from 1892 to 1895 in the government of Gladstone and then Rosebery and was Secretary to the Admiralty from 1905 to 1908, when Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was Prime Minister. Regrettably ill health forced his early retirement from the House of Commons in 1908 and, following his elevation to the peerage as Lord Lochee of Gowrie, he served out the remaining three years of his life in the House of Lords. **Anne Newman** tells the story of his life.

GRAND OLD MAN

Robertson was by all accounts a man of great talent, integrity and humility, as his obituary in the *Dundee Year Book* 1911 exemplified: 'this singularly gifted man received no help from patronage … he owed everything to his own perseverance and energy'. He was remembered as a man of a very kindly and affectionate nature, with a penetrating intellect.[2] Unfortunately, however, he never cultivated the art of saying less or more than he thought and his plain speech and hatred of self-advertisement and circumlocution 'retarded his promotion.'[3] This article attempts to reconstruct an image of Edmund Robertson, gleaned from newspaper reports of his speeches, and to describe the man who earned the affectionate title of Dundee's 'Grand Old Man'.[4]

A village schoolboy with a passion for education

When standing for election for the first time, Robertson's passion for education and good humour were evident when he addressed the voters of the 'Intellectual Ward' as he termed them. He expressed his belief in free education, emphasing how 'one result of the education imparted under the Act had been the decrease of juvenile crime' and that as 'the State had made education compulsory it ought to provide the means for it.'[5]

Edmund Daniel Robertson was born on 28 October 1845 in the schoolhouse at Kinnaird, Perthshire, where his father was the parish schoolmaster for over thirty years. Edmund was the eldest of the five children of Edmund (senior) and Ann Robertson, both of whom lived all their lives in Perthshire, Edmund senior being from a humble family from Middle Dalguise in the Tay Valley. Edmund Robertson received all of his elementary education from his father and it is said that it was here that he gained a solid 'grounding in the Liberal principles to which he adhered tenaciously during his life'. Although Robertson was a self-made man 'he never forgot the debt which he owed to his father' and is reputed, on the eve of entering Parliament, to have sent a letter to a meeting of Liberals held in the Kinnaird school stating 'I am glad you are going to meet in the old schoolroom, which to me is associated with so many profound emotions. My first instructor in Liberalism, and in everything else, was my father.'[6]

Edmund Robertson, Lord Lochee of Gowrie (1885–1908) – from the *Dundee Year Book* of 1911, reproduced courtesy of Dundee City Archives.

The scholar

The young man with a great passion for knowledge proceeded to St Andrew's University where he matriculated in the 1863–64 session. Robertson's achievement in higher education was remarkable, exemplifying his dedication to attaining knowledge at the highest level. The philosopher John Stuart Mill recognised Robertson's talent and gave his special commendation in 1865 that Robertson be awarded the Rectorial Prize for the best essay on a philosophical subject.

Robertson won a scholarship to enter Lincoln College, Oxford where he completed a second BA, gained First Class Honours in Classical Moderations (1868) and in Literae Humaniore (1870), won the Oxford University International Law Prize (1869), and was elected a Fellow of Corpus Christi College (1870). In 1871 he successfully competed for the Vinerian Law Scholarship, and graduated with an MA in 1874.

The barrister, the academic, the teacher

Robertson went on to win a scholarship to Lincoln's Inn, delivering his obligatory Tancred student oration in Latin. He was called to the Bar as a barrister of Lincoln's Inn in 1871 and, selecting the Northern Circuit for his practice, he quickly gained a reputation as an excellent counsel and eloquent speaker. He was examiner in English Constitutional History at London University, 1877–82, and Public Examiner in Jurisprudence, Oxford, 1877–79. He was appointed Reader on Law

to the Council of Legal Education, and became Joint Examiner in Jurisprudence and Legal Constitutional History at the University of London, and in Roman and International Law to the Inns of Court. He became a Professor of Roman Law at University College, London for several years and of Common Law at the Inns of Court. In 1886 St Andrew's University conferred an LLD upon Robertson in recognition of his academic achievements. He was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1895 and made a Bencher of Lincoln's Inn in 1898. His reputation as a barrister spread internationally, and he became one of the very few British barristers ever allowed to plead in an American Court of Law.[7]

Robertson's academic achievements were well known when he faced his Dundee constituents (who were predominantly from working-class backgrounds) for the first time. The *Dundee Courier and Argus* assured its readers, however, that their prospective Member 'though comparatively young' had 'business experience … sufficiently wide to correct that tendency to academic subtleties and that proneness to the hair-splitting of the schools only too often found characterising distinguished scholars and university dons'.[8] An active member of the Reform Club (which was founded by Liberals and remained the party's headquarters until the late 1880s) Robertson contributed regularly to the *Daily News* and expanded his growing journalistic expertise by contributing several articles on legal and constitutional subjects to the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. He was also the author of *American Home Rule: A Sketch of the Political System in the United States* published in 1887.

The politician

At the time that Edmund Robertson decided to enter the political world, the population of Dundee was growing at an enormous rate and the Liberal Association (formed in 1877) encountered many challenges. Dundee was in fact the largest constituency in Scotland at the time.[9] On a personal level, Robertson had to overcome the considerable debate about the necessity or otherwise of local candidates and he was seen by some as 'not truly local, a carpetbagger'. However, the voters of Dundee soon learned that he had grown up and received his early education in the area and Robertson rose to the challenge and 'charmed an audience of 3,000 at the Kinnaird Hall' with his outspoken profession of the Liberal faith and excellent oratory skills.

Robertson's dislike of the Tory party was greatly enjoyed by his prospective electors.

Support from John Leng (editor of the *Advertiser* at the time and later political colleague of Robertson's) no doubt sealed the Dundee approval. In fact the *Advertiser* reported that: 'Mr Robertson showed a disposition not only to march forward in the van of progress, but also such a grasp, a knowledge, and capacity for dealing with public questions that it was delightful to listen to him. His speech, in fact, was a political education.'[10] The *Advertiser* also assured the voters that Robertson had a 'thorough acquaintance with the theory and practice of law' and that he had recently represented local investment interests in the American Courts when he acted as counsel for the Oregonian Railway Company in 1888 when the company was brought before the High Courts of the United States.

Robertson's address for the 1885 election featured the reform of the land laws, the adjustment of taxation, the abolition of the game laws and temperance legislation. Robertson (who belonged to the radical section of the Liberal Party) saw himself as a servant of his constituents and many of his addresses to the electors of Dundee contain examples of his firm undertaking to increase the involvement of ordinary people in decisions directly related to their everyday lives. He believed in reform of local government to 'include representative government for Counties' with 'enlarged powers' to deal effectively with 'the regulation of the liquor trade, the utilisation of vacant spaces, the reclamation of common lands, sanitary improvements and other matters affecting the social wellbeing of the community.'[11]

However, where the issue of the disestablishment of the Church of Scotland was concerned he was more circumspect. The standard radical line at the time was to favour disestablishment, but Robertson (a moderate churchman) seemed to avoid openly saying he was in favour. He assured the voters that 'there was no man more strongly opposed than he was to the interference of the State in any way with religious affairs' and that 'disestablishment in Scotland was one which must be settled in harmony with the wishes of the Scottish people.'[12]

Dundee in the late nineteenth century was a working man's constituency, and foremost in Edmund Robertson's mind, as he faced his first election, was his concern for the working class. He was in favour of Board of Trade certificates of competency being granted to men in charge of steam engines and boilers and drivers of locomotives and traction engines to protect the safety of the public. He was in favour of the establishment of public Courts of Inquiry into the cause of sudden and accidental deaths in Scotland and for relatives of deceased persons to have the 'liberty to cross-examine witnesses on the subject'. He believed that shipwrecked seamen should be paid their wages up until the time they were landed back in the country; and he saw the overwork of railway workers as 'not only cruel but a source of danger to the travelling public'.

Robertson's dislike of the Tory party was greatly enjoyed by his prospective electors, especially as he entertained them with witticisms such as that: 'He thought the education of the Tory party should be made free, and it certainly should be made compulsory.' However, this humour turned to anger when he spoke

of Tory landlords replacing dissenting farmers at the end of their leases with 'Established Churchmen'. 'Landlord terrorism', as he termed it, operated 'just as much in political elections as it would do in any election on church affairs'. His concern for the well-being of the ordinary people was no better summarised than in his beliefs on higher education, where he dissented from the view that 'it was a middle class affair which might be left to the middle classes'. He believed that: 'The question of higher education was a matter of great importance to the working classes, whose sons would be deprived of the chance of appointments in the Civil Service if the means of obtaining higher education were put beyond their reach.'

Although Robertson chose an academic route for his own education he felt strongly about technological education, believing that: 'It was essential that working men should be fully instructed in the principles of the sciences applicable to their particular industries. This was necessary, not as a gratuity to the working classes, but as a means of self-defence against growing foreign competition.'[13]

With regard to land rights, Robertson was very clear about 'rights in land which the public possessed having, during the last twenty, thirty, or forty years, been taken away' and was strongly of the opinion that 'restitution of those rights should be obtained', emphasising that when there was 'no prescription in regard to Royal rights, he thought there should be no prescription in regard to the rights of the people'.[14]

The November election of 1885 saw 14,610 of the 17,420 registered voters for the constituency of Dundee record their vote. At this time Dundee was a two-member constituency and the Liberals ran two candidates, both of whom were elected. C. C. Lacaita topped the poll with 8,261 votes and Edmund Robertson ran a comfortable second with 7,187 votes.[15] But Robertson had entered politics at a turbulent time. Within a little over six months from his introduction to the political world, he had again to face the electors as the parliament that assembled on 12 January 1886 was dissolved in June.

Irish Home Rule was the contentious issue for the election of 1886, and both Robertson and Lacaita adhered to Gladstone's conversion to a Home Rule policy, though there was a Liberal split over the issue at this time.[16] Robertson wanted an Irish Parliament to settle the Irish land question and to be in control of the police.[17]

Robertson went on to win his Dundee seat in the elections of 1892 (twice – the second time unopposed when he contested the seat on his appointment as a minister), 1895, 1900 and 1906. When Lacaita resigned in 1888, Sir John Leng combined with Robertson to dominate Dundee elections until 1906 when Leng retired. Robertson again won the election in 1906, but this time with the moderate Labour candidate Alexander Wilkie.

The minister

During his time in parliament Robertson gained a reputation for his effective rhetoric, especially on issues such as education in Scotland and reforms that would improve the conditions of working men. During his period as Civil Lord of the Admiralty (under First Lord of the Admiralty, Earl Spencer) Robertson worked tirelessly to shorten the hours of the workmen in the Royal Dockyards. He is said to have been the only critic at the Admiralty whom Lord Fisher could not dominate. He was an ardent politician, keenly interested in every move of the political game. Direct and businesslike in all his ways, he was very intolerant of circumlocution, and for this reason he is said not to have been altogether *persona grata* to Mr Gladstone. On the other hand, he is believed to have had considerable influence with Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman.[18]

'Beer and the Bible have been wont in former times to play an important part in English politics, but not until this occasion have they been seen in close alliance in this part of the country, engaged side by side against the popular cause, and in support of monopoly and privilege.'

Apparently considered 'in the best and most honourable sense of the word … a favourite of the King'[19] (Edward VII), he became a member of the Privy Council in 1906.

The election of 1895 saw Edmund Robertson and John Leng speaking passionately about the 'maintenance of popular control over aristocratic influence and the destruction of class privileges', and again the main issues were Home Rule, complete religious equality and local control of the liquor trade.[20] One of the journalists of the time went as far as to say that:

> Beer and the Bible have been wont in former times to play an important part in English politics, but not until this occasion have they been seen in close alliance in this part of the country, engaged side by side against the popular cause, and in support of monopoly and privilege. The ministers wished to preserve their kirks and stipends; the publicans were concerned about buttressing their whisky casks and retaining their licenses.[21]

It becomes apparent, when reading the speeches delivered by Edmund Robertson to his Dundee electors, that he was a man of considerable tolerance and sensitivity. In October 1896 both Robertson and Sir John Leng spoke at considerable length to their constituents in a meeting held in the Gilfillan Memorial Hall. Robertson opened his remarks with the observations that:

> I never before saw a meeting of ours graced by the presence of so many ladies … I attribute their presence in these large numbers to the success of the newly founded Ladies' Liberal Association of Dundee. I am sure we all hope that that success may be continued, and that under the energetic leadership of the ladies who have taken command it may go on and prosper, and be a tower of strength to Liberalism in Dundee and district.[22]

However, it would appear that his tolerance did not extend to women having the vote. When facing the voters again in 1900, both Leng and Robertson were asked by the Dundee and District Women's Liberal Association whether they were in favour of women's suffrage and of women being returned as members of local governing boards. Whilst Leng was in favour on both counts, Robertson stated that he could not undertake to vote in favour of any of the female suffrage bills yet introduced but he was in favour of women being returned to public boards.[23]

The election of 1900 was dominated by the South African war, probably the most significant international incident during Robertson's time in Parliament. Both Leng and Robertson spoke at length to their constituents about the war.[24] Robertson severely criticised the Tories for hastening a war by 'blundering diplomacy' and having soldiers suffer because of 'mismanagement at home' including refusing, at an early stage of the war, mounted men offered by the colonies, believing that mounted men were not needed in South Africa. Soon after, the British government learned that all the Boers were mounted. Robertson characterised this mistake as 'unparalleled imbecility'.[25]

He admitted that he was deeply troubled by knowing that he was bound to vote for the supplies necessary to bring the war to a speedy conclusion. However he: 'regarded war as the most horrible calamity that could befall a nation … he had seen with horror the reports of speeches and of sermons exalting and magnifying war … telling the people it brought out the nobler qualities of human nature … But he considered that the invasion of British territory left him no alternative but to defend the territory …' and 'there could be no result but the restoration of British paramountcy … He wanted a settlement that would reconcile the devotion and loyalty of all races in South Africa, and must not be the establishment of a hateful ascendency of one race over another.'[26]

He admitted that he was deeply troubled by knowing that he was bound to vote for the supplies necessary to bring the war to a speedy conclusion.

Reform of the army was one of Robertson's great passions. The war gave him the opportunity to convey his ideas at length to his constituents, pointing out that the army was not administered as a 'business institution' as the navy was. He believed the military needed to become more scientific. What most concerned him was 'the barrier by which we shut out competent men from the army' which he saw as 'the most ignoble and vulgar that can be devised, because it is the barrier of money'.[27] The obstacle to army reform, in Robertson's opinion, lay in the belief of the Tory Government which, 'calmly admitted – in the House of Commons – that no young man could be an officer in a cavalry regiment unless he was in possession of a private income of at least £500 a year.'[28]

The election of 1900 also saw Robertson supporting old-age pensions and the abolition of the sale of alcoholic drink to children. On the former, Robertson emphasised to his constituents that the old-age pension scheme must be 'an all-round one, without discrimination of sex. The women must have it as well as the men.'[29] He also spoke about desired changes to the Teachers' Superannuation Act, being of the opinion that the pensions provided to existing teachers were inadequate and that women should have the option of retiring at the age of fifty-five. The Liberal team was again returned to parliament with Robertson polling 7,777 votes and his friend and colleague Sir John Leng receiving 7,650 votes. The total registered electorate was 18,655 and, of these, 13,024 exercised their franchise.[30]

Return to power

In January 1906 Edmund Robertson, Dundee's Grand Old Man, again came before his constituents seeking to be part of the new Liberal government under fellow Scot, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. Robertson spoke of his passion to have his Homestead Bill passed through Parliament. This bill 'proposed to declare that a certain necessary minimum of a working man's household furniture and effects should be sacred from the process of law, and not liable to seizure or sale for any cause'.[31]

Free Trade was the main issue of the election and Robertson appealed to Dundee to vote for those candidates who were 'willing to support the only Government that could make Free Trade safe and kill Protection'.[32] Much was spoken about the national debt, which had increased mainly due to the war, and of the need to reduce the burden of taxation. When Robertson won his seat for this last time he topped the poll with the highest vote ever recorded in the city, 9,276 votes. The total number of voters who went to the poll was 16,031 out of a total electorate of 19,492.[33]

When Campbell-Bannerman formed his new ministry Robertson was appointed Secretary to the Admiralty; Lord Tweedmouth was First Lord of the Admiralty. Robertson's main ministerial role was to deal with naval business in the Commons, which placed him at the heart of political controversy at a time when the UK's foreign and economic policy was still underpinned by the strength of the Royal Navy. He answered questions in the Commons on a regular basis and was responsible for carrying the Navy Estimate through Parliament, for which he required all his legal skills to master a complex and intricate brief.

At the beginning of the twentieth century there was considerable pressure to expand and modernise the British navy, a programme which was commenced by Sir John Fisher (First Sea Lord) in 1904.[34] Pride of place in Fisher's plan went to the construction of *Dreadnought* battleships, which were far superior to the best vessels of the UK's acknowledged competitors, France, Germany,

Russia and the US. Ships of this sort were not cheap. The government's expenditure on the navy increased from £18.5 million in 1894/95 to £42 million in 1905/06, and expenditure on the army also increased over the same period.

The *Dreadnought* programme also inspired a European arms race, which suggested that further heavy expenditure would be required in future years to ensure that the 'two-power standard' was maintained. Since the 1890s, the UK had explicitly aimed to maintain a naval capacity superior to the combined strength of any two other navies in the world – which in practice meant the navies of France and Germany. Unless international diplomacy could somehow restrain the construction programmes commenced in those countries as a result of the Fisher reforms, significant extra military expenditure would be required. This would have to be financed from increased taxation, or a reallocation of existing expenditure commitments. The second of these options jarred with the Liberals' commitment to increased social expenditure; the first was also politically difficult, as David Lloyd George, in particular, was to find out.

On top of these difficulties, naval policy sat on the fault line in the Liberal Party between the imperialists, who were generally in support of a large Navy and commitments abroad, and those who preferred to see military expenditure reined in and foreign entanglements avoided. The 1904 Anglo-French treaty suggested to some, including Campbell-Bannerman, that the two-power standard might no longer be necessary, and that naval expenditure could be reduced; but it was the perfect issue with which the Conservative opposition could make mischief and divide the Liberal Party.

Robertson was pitched into this maelstrom of conflicting diplomatic, strategic and political pressures. In 1900 he had expressed a fairly conventional belief in a strong navy to his constituents:

> If they [the Conservative Government] maintained a proper policy and civility as part of their national manners, he did not see why the army should be increased beyond its present size. With a predominant navy they need care very little what the size of other armies was, and with a predominant navy they could make all other armies helpless.[35]

In moving the Navy Estimate in 1907, however, he came across as a thorough anti-imperialist, trumpeting a reduction in spending, although acknowledging that increased spending would be required in future unless France and Germany decided to accept the UK's superiority and slow their own naval expansion programmes.[36] Changes to the deployment of the UK's naval forces, so that fewer ships were at sea, were also controversial. The significance of the debate was indicated by the intervention of the Prime Minister, forced to explain whether he agreed with the maintenance of the two-power standard, as commonly understood, and the Leader of the Opposition. Some Liberals backed Robertson to the hilt; others, such as Sir Charles Dilke, struck a noticeably more cautious note.

Robertson was not to come back to speak to his loyal supporters in Dundee for two years, his work as Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty taking up all his time. When he spoke on 26 November 1907 at the Gilfillan Hall, the reception was no more than cordial though there was some sympathy for the arduous responsibility he had experienced through his work at the Admiralty and the effect of the workload on his health. However, his rhetoric was still excellent as he spoke about the nature of his work.

The Admiralty, he explained, was responsible for about 128,000 officers and men on active service (not including the reservists), and there were at this time 12,000 officers, men and boys from 'dockyard boys to Admirals' undergoing education of one form or another. Robertson emphasised that the Admiralty had to deal with 'a great many of what were called social problems' associated with the 30,000 dockyard workers (both skilled and unskilled). He explained how he and Lord Tweedmouth had 'divided the dockyard between them' and they 'allowed every trade and every section of a trade to send representatives to them to state their grievances.'

In moving the Navy Estimate in 1907, he came across as a thorough anti-imperialist, trumpeting a reduction in spending.

Robertson also addressed his constituents about the establishment of the two-power standard. He stated his conviction that, although the necessary work to maintain the navy must be undertaken, he sought to 'appeal to other nations to agree to limit armaments, which were a terrible burden to the industry and a terrible reproach to the civilisation of civilised countries'. He expressed his deep sadness that the Hague Conference, on which Campbell-Bannerman had pinned his hopes, had failed in this respect and he saw this as a 'great blow to the progress of civilisation'.[37]

But dissension in the audience from suffragette hecklers exemplified the beginning of a new era in politics, one in which Robertson was not to participate. He was definite in his objection to women being granted the right to vote but his objection seemed to be a procedural one, in that the issue of female suffrage could not be considered until a political party had raised it. He advised the suffragettes in the meantime to do the best they could to educate public opinion.

Sadly, the evening came to a close with a vote of no confidence in Mr Robertson being moved by Miss Annot Wilkie, a suffragette, who was possibly related to the city's other MP. She declared that 'the question of female suffrage was deep and serious, but Mr Robertson had treated it as if he had no heart and no feeling'.[38] The motion of no

confidence was carried. Two days later, Edmund spoke probably for the last time as the Member for Dundee. This time Miss Wilkie used as part of her argument the fact that women in Australia had the right to vote (granted in 1895 in South Australia).

The *Daily News* summed up Edmund Robertson, the politician as:

> One of the chief successes of this Liberal Ministry. No man on the Treasury Bench, not even Mr Asquith, answers questions in a more effective and business-like manner. When he speaks for his Department of the Admiralty (which includes the dockyards) in debate, he is always clear, sensible, and cogent … Mr Robertson troubles himself very little about form. He is downright to the verge of bluntness, and plain-spoken to the verge of cynicism. He has no Parliamentary tricks. He treats the House of Commons as he would treat any other audience of intelligent and educated men, the students of the Inns of Court, or the electors of Dundee. The solemn plausibilities of the world, as Burke calls them, have little or no influence over Mr Robertson. There is no red tape about him, and no nonsense of any kind.[39]

Reward: a seat in the House of Lords

On 25 April 1908, the Dundee Liberal Association met to discuss the political situation created by the sudden resignation of Edmund Robertson from the Ministry on his elevation to the peerage. The meeting was unanimous in expressing gratitude for Robertson's service. At the same meeting when discussion turned to selecting someone to succeed Robertson, a voice was heard to call 'Winston Churchill'.[40] In April 1908, Churchill had stood for the seat of Manchester Exchange and was unsuccessful. Immediately after the result was declared he received a telegram from the Liberals in Dundee inviting him to be their candidate, as the sitting member was about to be elevated to the House of Lords. After thinking about it for a week or so Churchill decided to accept the offer.[41]

Was Robertson asked by the Whips to stand down in order to accommodate the return of Churchill? Why was Robertson suddenly elevated to the Lords? The truth behind Robertson's departure from Dundee may never be known. His work in the Admiralty had taxed his health and his style in managing the Navy had not been the subject of universal praise. The *Morning Post's* opinion on Mr Robertson being made a peer was that his:

> Elevation to the House of Lords has caused considerable surprise in the Navy but we may assume that the title of Baron has been conferred for services to his party since the late Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty is not known to have advanced our naval efficiency.[42]

But did he sacrifice his position in the House of Commons for the rising star of the Liberal Party? The sentiments expressed in the letter Robertson sent on his resignation to the President of the Dundee Liberal Association sum up the great sadness he must have experienced on what was to be the end of his political career:

> My long political connection with Dundee comes to an end. How well I remember its beginning; how greatly I rejoiced in its continuance; how deeply I lament its termination no words of mine can adequately tell.[43]

Although Churchill polled 2,200 fewer votes than Robertson had in 1906, he returned to Parliament, and to the continuance of his remarkable ministerial career.

The title that Robertson took (Lord Lochee of Gowrie) was in some ways indicative of the man. His love of the beauty of the countryside was symbolised in taking the name Gowrie from the beautiful Carse of Gowrie where he was born, and his dedication to the improvement of the working man's life was represented by Lochee, an area of the city he had served for twenty-three years.

Did he sacrifice his position in the House of Commons for Churchill, the rising star of the Liberal Party?

It was ironic that Robertson should end his political career in the 'House of Landlords' as he often termed it. However, it was a sign of the humility he possessed that he never used his title, continuing to be referred to as Edmund Robertson.[44] On his retirement he wrote a letter to the people of Dundee;[45] while justly claiming that he had 'stood faithfully by the Liberal principles to which Dundee has ever been attached' he acknowledged the debt he owed them for giving him his career in the House of Commons and humbly recognised that 'my success from first to last has been mainly due to the cheerful and determined energy of the working men'.

Robertson made only one speech in the Lords, on 24 November 1908, defending the naval policy that he had administered.[46] After that, it seems, ill-health took its hold. Dundee's Grand Old Man died at Canterbury on 13 September 1911 and is buried in Holywell Cemetery, Oxford.

> Thus ended a romance of real life, in which the studious reader discerns the irresistible power of merit and legitimate ambition. From humble life rich in high ideal Edmund Robertson toiled successfully to reach lofty positions in the service of the nation.[47]

Anne Newman is a descendent of Edmund Robertson's family; her great grandmother was his cousin. She was a member of the Australian Democrats for many years and was a senior lecturer in Special Education and Literacy at the Australian Catholic University in Melbourne; she now pursues her new career as an artist.
Anne would also like to thank Robert Ingham, Biographies Editor of the

Journal, *for suggesting the idea for the article and for his advice and patience.*

1 Jackson, J.M. (ed.), *Third Statistical Account of Scotland: City of Dundee*, 1979.
2 *The Pelican Record,* Oxford University, 1911, pp. 24–26.
3 Ibid.
4 *The Dundee Advertiser*, 1906.
5 Ibid., 7 October 1885
6 *Dundee Year Book*, 1911.
7 Ibid.
8 *Dundee Courier and Argus*, 26 November 1885.
9 Ibid., 8 September 1885.
10 *Dundee Advertiser,* 22 September 1885.
11 Ibid., 23 September 1885.
12 Ibid., 7 October 1885.
13 Ibid., for all quotes above.
14 *Dundee Courier and Argus*, 8 September 1885.
15 *Dundee Advertiser*, 26 November 1885.
16 A splinter party, the Liberal Unionists (who wanted Ireland to remain a part of Britain), led by Joe Chamberlain was formed.
17 *Dundee Advertiser*, 28 September 1900.
18 *The Pelican Record*, Oxford University, 1911, pp. 24–26.
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20 *Dundee Advertiser*, July 1895.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., 2 October 1896.
23 *The People's Journal*, 29 September 1900.
24 *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 25 September 1900.
25 *Dundee Advertiser*, 1 October 1900.
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27 *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 25 September 1900.
28 Ibid.
29 *Dundee Advertiser*, 26 September 1900.
30 Ibid., 3 October 1900.
31 Ibid., 5 January 1906.
32 *Dundee Advertiser*, 5 January 1906.
33 Ibid., 16 January 1906.
34 *The Millstone: British naval policy in the Mediterranean, 1900–1914* by Geoffrey Miller is an excellent reference on this topic. The entire text can be read at www.manorhouse.clara.net/book3/index.htm
35 *Dundee Advertiser*, 1 October 1900.
36 *Hansard*, 5 March 1907, cc. 654–716 for the whole debate.
37 *Dundee Advertiser*, 26 November 1907.
38 Ibid., 26 November 1907.
39 *Daily News*, January 1894, quoted in *The People's Journal*, 16 September 1911.
40 *The People's Journal*, 25 April 1908.
41 Patterson, Tony, *A Seat for Life* (Dundee, Scotland: David Winter & Son, 1980).
42 *Morning Post*, 17 April 1908, *Times* 17 April 1908.
43 *The People's Journal*, 25 April 1908.
44 *Dundee Year Book*, 1911.
45 *The People's Journal*, 25 April 1908.
46 *Hansard*, 24 November 1908, cc. 41–49.
47 *Dundee Year Book*, 1911.

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 3) for inclusion here.

Aneurin Williams and Liberal internationalism and pacificism, 1900–22. A study of this radical and pacificist MP (Plymouth 1910; North West Durham/Consett 1914–22) who was actively involved in League of Nations Movement, Armenian nationalism, international co-operation, pro-Boer etc. Any information relating to him and location of any papers/correspondence welcome. *Barry Dackombe. 32 Ashburnham Road, Ampthill, Beds, MK45 2RH; dackombe@tesco.net.*

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.*

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/).

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

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.*

Liberal policy towards Austria-Hungary, 1905–16. *Andrew Gardner, 17 Upper Ramsey Walk, Canonbury, London N1 2RP; agardner@ssees.ac.uk.*

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

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.*

SDP in Central Essex. Contact with anyone who had dealings with the area, and in particular as many former SDP members of the area as possible, with a view to asking them to take part in a short questionnaire. Official documents from merger onwards regarding the demise of the local SDP branches and integration with the Liberals would also be appreciated. *Elizabeth Wood, The Seasons, Park Wood, Doddinghurst, Brentwood, Essex CM15 0SN; Lizawsea@aol.com.*

Student radicalism at Warwick University. Particulary the files affair in 1970. Interested in talking to anybody who has information about Liberal Students at Warwick in the period 1965-70 and their role in campus politics. *Ian Bradshaw, History Department, University of Warwick, CV4 7AL; I.Bradshaw@warwick.ac.uk*

Welsh Liberal Tradition – A History of the Liberal Party in Wales 1868–2003. Research spans thirteen decades of Liberal history in Wales but concentrates on the post-1966 formation of the Welsh Federal Party. Any memories and information concerning the post-1966 era or even before welcomed. The research is to be published in book form by Welsh Academic Press. *Dr Russell Deacon, Centre for Humanities, University of Wales Institute Cardiff, Cyncoed Campus, Cardiff CF23 6XD; rdeacon@uwic.ac.uk.*

FRANCES STEVENSO
AND THE SURREY – SUSSEX DIMENSION

Ian Ivatt looks at David Lloyd George and Frances Stevenson's connections in Surrey and Sussex. The two of them nurtured friendships in the southern counties, undertook house purchases and appreciated the tranquillity of the region's golf courses. The main British proposals for the post-war peace treaty at Versailles were drafted by Lloyd George and the War Cabinet at Danny House, in Sussex.

David Lloyd George (1863–1945) was the first native Welshman to achieve inclusion in the British Cabinet and to go on to be Prime Minister. As a young politician, he was mainly associated with the Radical movement in Wales, nationalism, and nonconformism. His parents, William and Elizabeth (Betsy) George, both keen Baptists, briefly resided in the lower-middle-class suburb of Chorlton, Manchester, and it was during this period that David Lloyd George was born. William Lloyd George was headmaster of a Manchester elementary school but quickly turned to farming and was to die when young David was only a year old. The family returned firstly to Pembrokeshire, and then to Llanystumdwy in North Wales where Betsy's brother and mother lived.

Lloyd George later married Margaret (née Owen) in 1888[1] after a three-year courtship, although her parents had some doubt about his suitability. Margaret herself had deep Methodist convictions, and these acted as an unusual complement to Lloyd George's strict lifelong Baptist ideals, yet later blended with his own brand of free-thinking attitudes. Whilst the relationship was stormy, even bittersweet, and became effectively a sham marriage, it nevertheless lasted nearly fifty-three years, despite them being essentially estranged after 1922.

Lloyd George's relationship with Wales was somewhat ambivalent. He retained his Welsh parliamentary seat throughout his career but, as he moved upwards in the political world, claiming, when appropriate, that his rise was that of the 'cottage-bred man', he spent a decreasing amount of his time in the Principality. The icon of Welsh identity seems in practice to have preferred to view his homeland from afar and to spend much of his time in Southern England, in particular Sussex or the Sussex–Surrey borderlands.

His connections with Sussex seem to have been nurtured just before and during the First World War. Brighton was viewed as an excellent retreat,[2] and nearby

ON, LLOYD GEORGE

David Lloyd George in 1916; Frances Stevenson in her office in Whitehall.

Lewes Golf Course had significant appeal. He had close friends and political allies such as Stuart Rendel, Sir George Riddell and Sir Albert Stern, who had houses in the county, but we can also perceive that an affection for the area developed in parallel with a shift in his political career, which saw him move close to the political centre and eventually lead the coalition government, and with a significant move in his private life as Frances Stevenson (1888–1972) became firmly ensconced as his mistress. Notorious for his flirtations and affairs, Lloyd George's love life from early 1913 was mainly confined to Frances, formerly a school teacher and later secretary. By some coincidence, Frances had actually been at school with Lloyd George's daughter, Mair, who tragically died (of a burst appendix) in 1907, to his lasting grief. The secrecy of the affair was vital, to avoid scandal, and they both accepted this – with Frances enduring two if not three abortions.

Lloyd George became Prime Minister in December 1916, and his term of office lasted until October 1922; during his entire premiership, he was dependent on Conservative Party support. The pinnacle of his time in coalition was the peace-making after the First World War and the earlier treaty planning meetings, especially the decisive treaty discussions in October 1918, organised at a sixteenth-century manor house in Sussex.

As the hostilities progressed into the second part of 1918, much thought was given to the eventual treaty terms. In July of that year, Lloyd George's affluent friend and confidante, Sir George Riddell (proprietor of the *News of the World* newspaper), leased the Elizabethan mansion at Danny, in Hassocks (now in West Sussex) from the Campions, a family of the Tory local gentry. A. J. P. Taylor, in his book *My Darling Pussy*,[3] provides an interesting insight into the undoubted deep fondness between Lloyd George and his secretary, Frances Stevenson, by reproducing key personal letters that have survived. Frances was not always present at Danny, but in October 1918 she remained at Hassocks endeavouring to shake off a severe cold. Meanwhile Lloyd George was in Paris with his French and Italian prime ministerial counterparts to prepare armistice and peace terms.

The Danny House archives reveal that Lloyd George was at Danny several times during the Great War and, when there, invariably climbed the challenging nearby hill at Wolstenbury. Once, when doing so, he inadvertently let Cabinet papers fall from his pocket. A faithful secretary was despatched to retrieve them safely.

An inspection of the visitors' book reveals that even earlier, on 14 July 1918, Lloyd George was at Danny, again with Riddell, and also with Imperial War Cabinet members, both military and political: Jan Smuts, Viscount Milner, Admiral Wemyss, Sir Henry Wilson, and Cabinet Secretary Hankey. Interestingly enough his wife Margaret and daughter Megan were also present on that day – with Frances Stevenson!

On the wall of the Great Hall at Danny, which now displays portraits of the high and mighty

from past ages, there is a commemorative plaque recording the vital meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet on 13 October 1918, including such eminent persons as Lloyd George himself, Churchill, Bonar Law, Balfour, Wemyss and Hankey, plus Kerr and Lord Reading (Rufus Isaacs).

Thus, the main British proposals for the peace treaty at Versailles were drafted by Lloyd George and the War Cabinet at Danny House in Sussex. The final details were promptly cabled to President Woodrow Wilson for his seal of approval. Later, in March 1919, Lloyd George attended the peace conference itself in Paris, and Frances, who went with him, was treated generally as his unofficial spouse.

Amidst a resurfacing of the Irish troubles, Lloyd George formed a separate friendship with Major Stern (later Sir Albert Stern, 1878–1966) who had the use of his brother's property, a superbly beautiful house, with splendid views, as the name might suggest, at Highdown in Worthing, Sussex. Both Lloyd George and Frances spent weekends there; apparently, Major Stern had a reputation for being an excellent entertainer. He was also involved in tank design and was, accordingly, an important man in the military. Frances Stevenson dutifully records their meetings with Stern in her well-maintained diaries – including a comment that there was even some talk of her marrying Stern, by then, in 1917, promoted to Colonel. She writes on 14 April 1917, referring to Stern, 'I like him, though he has an unlovable side, but he is most kind and considerate.'[4] Later, in 1919, one of Stern's friends ventured to ask why Frances did not marry him, only to receive the half-reproach: 'one excellent reason is that he has never asked me'[5]. Frances equally and correctly knew that Stern was very much aware of her relationship with Lloyd George. Nevertheless, she was astute enough to realise that Stern would leap at the chance of marrying her, should she give even the slightest encouragement.

Lloyd George built a beautiful home there, naming it 'Bron y De', which means 'breast of the south'.

Earlier, in 1915, there were other letters, which Lloyd George knew about, from a Captain Hugh Owen, with more than hints about marriage to Frances. On 5 October 1915 Frances wrote in her diary: 'I cannot marry Owen. I have told him so.' Owen in turn wrote to Frances (20 October) accepting the finality of the situation.

Before the Great War, Lloyd George had cultivated a friendship with Stuart Rendel (1834–1913) a former Liberal Member of Parliament for Montgomeryshire (1880–94). Like Lloyd George, Rendel had not been born in Wales, but at Plymouth in Devon. Rendel, far from being poor, had acquired property in Clarendon Terrace, Kemp Town, Brighton (he also had a house near Guildford and a villa in Cannes) and he readily placed his Sussex home at Lloyd George's disposal as an escape from his government business. This was accepted with great joy. Lloyd George had, before that, tended to spend weekends in a suite at the Royal Albion Hotel, in Brighton. Lloyd George might scoff at public schools and universities but he swiftly despatched young Olwen, one of his five children (born 1892), off to the exclusive Roedean School, near Brighton. *The Personal Papers of Lord Rendel*[6] provide a clue to Lloyd George's wife's attitudes to this friendship: it was through these weekends at Brighton that 'my husband's health was saved from breaking point when he piloted the 1909 Budget through the House'.[7]

By 1922, Lloyd George was looking for a Home Counties base, with excellent rural views, nearer London. Frances came to the rescue and recommended a house and fifty acres (later purchasing a further 950 surrounding acres, including farms) in Churt, Surrey. The property was chosen because Frances favoured the south-facing views and Lloyd George promptly authorised her to buy it. Later it was discovered that the 'perfect' house actually faced north but Lloyd George built a beautiful home there, naming it 'Bron y De',[8] which means 'breast of the south'. The Surrey village of Churt is on the edge of Sussex, as well as bordering on nearby Hampshire. They both eagerly set about cultivating the fields for vegetables, planting orchards (Lloyd George had a great fondness for soft fruit), growing tomatoes in greenhouses, keeping cows and pigs, even bees, with Ann Parry, Lloyd George's Welsh Secretary, doubling up as bee-keeper.[9]

Frances bought land adjourning the Bron y De estate, which she farmed until Lloyd George's death in 1945. Meanwhile in 1934–35 Frances built nearby 'Avalon' for herself where her daughter Jennifer,[10] who was born in 1929, resided. It would appear that Lloyd George never visited Avalon but Frances stayed there particularly on the occasions when Margaret and Megan came to Bron y De. Otherwise, when not at school Jennifer travelled the one mile to Bron y De to see her mother and Lloyd George, whom she undoubtedly believed was, at the very least, her stepfather. Jennifer called Lloyd George 'Taid' (Grandfather) from an early age, although she knew perfectly well he was not her grandfather – but Lloyd George was aged sixty-six when Jennifer was born, so this subterfuge seemed fitting.

During the summer holidays, before the Second World War, Frances rented 'Grassmead' – a house in Felpham, near Bognor Regis in Sussex, with a private road running down to the sea – for two or three weeks each year. Jennifer is sure Lloyd George never came to Felpham, but Margaret, the cook, and Rose, the maid, came over from Avalon, with the boy John Brook, Elizabeth (Lizzie) May Morris and her mother, 'Auntie Elsie'. Certainly, Frances wrote to Lloyd George from Felpham from 1932, and the 1931 *Kelly's Directory* shows the resident of the house in First Avenue, Summerley Estate, Felpham as a Miss Stevenson. Later, in 1939, Frances purchased a bungalow on the same estate at Felpham, but this was let

out for a very small sum and sold to the tenant after the end of the war. Curiously enough, whilst Frances's parents were both born outside England, they, nevertheless, retired, firstly to Bexhill, then to Bognor, and later to Worthing, all in Sussex.

Leaving aside the political aspects that were common to both of them – although Frances had 'modern' views and was mildly supportive of the earlier suffragists[11] – Lloyd George and Frances Stevenson also had a shared interest in golf. Frances's diaries reveal golfing days with herself, Lloyd George, and a combination of Sir George Riddell, Sir Philip Sassoon, or Lloyd George's eldest daughter, Olwen (by now Mrs Carey Evans), with a secretary or two to make up any appropriate foursome. Generally courses at Walton Heath or St George's Hill, both in Surrey, were favoured and Lloyd George greatly encouraged Frances in the skills of the game.

Additionally, as a separate event, Frances's diaries refer to 'Cuckoo' Bellville, a well-known name in Mayfair who had a high-class dress shop. Both Lloyd George and Frances, together with invited members of high society, including the King of Spain and the Prince of Wales, attended a party of hers on one occasion, although the previous weekend was a much quieter affair at Bellville's country cottage retreat at Herstmonceux, also in Sussex. Where necessary, Lloyd George was 'at home' with the affluent – particularly where such attachments helped his political and welfare aspirations.

On the political front, Lloyd George attained the premiership, although his coalition government collapsed in the autumn of 1922 due to a Conservative volte-face. Lloyd George resigned and was never to hold government office again. He remained, nevertheless, a key yet solitary political figure – still much respected and even feared. Despite his narrow escape from the pre-war Marconi share involvement, the alleged sales of titles and honours and previous personal dalliances with money men and supposedly other men's wives, he still retained popular appeal and was nominally true to his nonconformist Liberal ideals. Lady Margaret Lloyd George died in 1941, leaving Lloyd George to make the patient Frances his second wife. They were married at Guildford Registry Office on 23 October 1943 – Frances' sister Muriel acted as a witness, as did Lloyd George's long-suffering private secretary, A. J. Sylvester (also best man) – not that far from the Sussex border.

Lloyd George was laid to rest in Wales on his death in 1945, and on her death in 1972 Frances's ashes stayed at Churt, Surrey. In life they were together for many years, yet in death they were not united. Even so, the legacy of the great man lingered on in Churt – where during his life he was revered as a fair employer of local labour. Close by at Wormley, Frances's daughter Jennifer Longford still resides, and she still remembers her Sussex childhood holidays with her mother and friends with treasured affection. Jennifer has speculated that if there had been no (Great) War, Lloyd George might well have become a great reforming prime minister, bringing in measures that had to wait many more years. If so he may well have conceivably chosen to spend even more time relaxing from government pressures in his favoured Brighton.

Ian Ivatt is undertaking a thesis through the Open University on the subject of Edwardian Liberal politics in Sussex, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight. He would like to acknowledge the kind assistance of Ivan Graham (Archivist, Danny House, Hassocks, Sussex); A. W. Purdue (Open University); Jennifer Longford (daughter of Frances Stevenson); Ruth Nixon (Jennifer Longford's daughter); Olivia Cotton (historian and writer, Churt, Surrey); and Ian Dean (of Felpham, Bognor Regis, Sussex).

1 1888 was a significant point in his life. Additionally he won the nomination for the Liberal candidature of Caernarvon Boroughs, and the family firm of solicitors, Lloyd George and George, was founded in that year.
2 Additionally Lloyd George was recommended to a masseuse, a Mrs Walden, who specialised in improved circulation techniques, who lived there. Source: *National Library of Wales*, MS 23660E 41–48 (re. Frederick Edward Guest, MP for Dorset East). The Bedford and Royal Albion Hotels were, furthermore, of great attraction.
3 A. J. P. Taylor, *My Darling Pussy* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975).
4 Frances Stevenson, *Lloyd George, a Diary by Frances Stevenson* (London: Hutchinson, 1971), p. 151.
5 Ibid., p. 185.
6 F. E. Hamer (ed.), *The Personal Papers of Lord Rendel* (London: Ernest Benn, 1931), p. 234.
7 Colin Cross, in *The Liberals in Power 1905–1914*, p. 102, also refers to Lloyd George drafting the final text of the Budget during a weekend in Brighton.
8 Burnt down after Lloyd George's death and renamed 'Churt Place'.
9 After the necessary property alterations and improvements, young Megan Lloyd George (born 1902) was 'chaperoned' by Lady Mond, but Megan was not especially happy. Lord Alfred Mond helped propel Lloyd George to the premiership in 1916.
10 Jennifer was, in all probability, the daughter of Frances Stevenson and Colonel Thomas Tweed, Lloyd George's political adviser from 1926.
11 Lloyd George was, additionally, in favour of votes for women, but not necessarily how some females sought to achieve this. He was certainly not amused when the suffragettes, in their campaign for female franchise, blew up part of the small house earmarked for his use at Walton Heath.

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All political parties require backroom engineers who do the donkey-work of political organisation, without enjoying public recognition or the opportunity for political advancement. Raymond Jones was an outstanding and loyal servant of the Liberal Party during its days of decline from a party of government to little more than a parliamentary pressure group. A lifelong Liberal, Jones held senior positions within the party from the height of its success in 1906 until his retirement in 1948. A constituency organiser, election agent and parliamentary candidate, he passed through the party's central finance organisation in the 1920s to become Secretary to the Liberal Central Association (the support organisation for the Chief Whip and Parliamentary Party) in the 1930s and 1940s and in his last year become Chairman of the National Liberal Club. In this article his daughter, **Brenda Tillotson,** recalls her father and his involvement in the Liberal Party during its long decline in the first half of the twentieth century. Written with **Ian Hunter.**

AT THE HEART

Raymond Victor Jones was born on 11 June 1883, in the family house at 47 Broad Quay, Bristol. He was the third of seven children to Alfred Edmund and Mary Ann Jones. Raymond's father owned three 'Jones and Sons' furniture shops. The family was Nonconformist Baptist, Liberal and teetotal. Ironically, his grandfather, James Jones, worked as the accountant for George's Brewery in Bristol, but this was never discussed by his abstemious descendants. The family had voted Liberal since the formation of the party in the mid-nineteenth century – though prior to the Ballot Act of 1872, which allowed secret ballots, Raymond's grandfather had required police protection before he dared record his Liberal vote.

Raymond Jones was a pupil at St Mary Redcliffe School, a Church of England grammar school, situated opposite the main 'Jones and Sons' shop at the top of Redcliffe Hill. He excelled as a student and chorister but, although he matriculated from school, he did not attend university. He did, however, maintain a powerful tenor singing and speaking voice throughout his life, and enjoyed public speaking, conversation, reading aloud, and telling yarns and jokes. His education gave him an understanding of the established Church of England which, combined with his thorough knowledge of Nonconformist church history, gave him a broad view of Christian doctrine and the social structure of his day. Despite his strong views, he was tolerant of the lifestyle of others – his belief in freedom of choice reigning supreme.

Lloyd George once dubbed him 'the loyallest of the loyal'.

On leaving school Jones joined his father in the furniture business, and he was apprenticed to the clock and watch trade. He gave up the latter due to the onset of severe migraine headaches, a problem that plagued him for the rest of his life.

On 14 September 1914 he married Mary Beatrice Poole, also of Bristol, in a quiet, informal ceremony, overshadowed by the outbreak of the First World War. It was a very happy marriage and produced one child, Brenda, in 1927. As she remembers:

> My father was a Nonconformist churchman and a strong supporter of the Temperance Movement throughout his life. As well as abstaining from alcohol, he never smoked, gambled or went to the races. He kept to a vegetarian diet with the addition of fish, poultry and eggs, which was meant to limit the precipitation of the migraine attacks. As an occasional supplement to his diet my father was fortunate enough to receive, during the shooting season, birds from Scotland, and at Christmas a large hamper from Fortnum and Mason – both sent by Sir Archibald Sinclair (future

OF THE PARTY

leader of the party between 1935 and 1945).

Jones took an active part in the 1906 election, which resulted in a landslide victory for the Liberal Party, and he became a ward secretary in his local area of Bristol. This was a time of great social reform when, under Prime Ministers Campbell-Bannerman (1905–08) and Asquith (1908–16), the authority of the House of Commons was established and the foundations of the welfare state were laid. As a passionate believer in social reform, Jones became professionally involved with politics, and in 1912 became assistant to H. F. Lane in the constituencies of South and West Bristol. After nine months he became agent to Sir Charles Hobhouse, MP for East Bristol, who was Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster from 1911 to 1914, and Postmaster General from 1914 to 1915. Jones stayed as his agent until 1918.

Medical problems prevented Jones from joining up during the First World War. The government struggled to cope with the demands of what became a more protracted war than the country had ever experienced, and this conflict prompted the decline of the Liberal Party. Jones' war work related to voluntary recruiting, war aims, war savings, and managing the local distribution of potatoes. In addition, he ran the cashier and shipping departments of the Pool Board Petroleum Supplies Company.

The party was deeply divided during the war, as Asquith entered a coalition with the Conservatives in 1915. In 1916 Lloyd George replaced Asquith as Prime Minister, and, in the 1918 general election, Asquith lost his seat. Jones had much in common with Lloyd George, as they were both from middle-class, Nonconformist families, but Jones would have disapproved of Lloyd George selling honours for the benefit of his personal campaign fund.

Raymond Jones as a young man; in 1928, with a very young Brenda; and in middle age.

Jones moved from his post in Bristol to take responsibility for the Liberal Associations of the four Leicester constituencies, and by 1920 he was appointed Secretary to the Liberal organisation embracing the twelve Birmingham constituencies. This was a much tougher challenge than either Bristol or Leicester, as Birmingham was the former stronghold of the Chamberlainite Liberal Unionists. It was, in 1920, a strongly pro-coalition Conservative city with very few Liberal activists or credible constituency organisations.

By the early 1920s those industrial areas such as Bristol and Leicester that had been Liberal strongholds had now fallen to Labour, and it was difficult to predict which parts of the country could be counted on for Liberal support, apart from rural Wales. The prominence of the right-wing and new left-wing

parties sidelined the divided Liberals into third place, and after the 1924 election many supporters defected. Churchill went to the Conservatives and many former Liberal ministers joined the Labour ranks. In 1925 Jones was promoted to the finance department at Liberal Headquarters.

Jones stood as the Liberal candidate for Mitcham, Surrey, in the 1929 general election. Party leader, Lloyd George, with campaign funds left over from the sale of peerages, had set about reinvigorating the party with new ideas. The unemployment issue dominated the campaign, inspired by economist J. M. Keynes, who was one of Lloyd George's main advisers. For the first time, Keynes advocated the use of public money to alleviate unemployment, thereby boosting national income. Jones made impassioned speeches broadcast from a van as it drove round the streets of Mitcham. He spoke of:

> The total inability of the Conservatives to deal with unemployment. This failure is a tragedy, which is reflected in hundreds of thousands of homes today. Men and women, healthy and strong are unable, though willing, to find work. More than a million of these awake every morning to face a day of hopeless seeking, and as each night comes round they close their eyes upon another day of dark despair. We Liberals say to both of these parties … Conservative and Labour … 'Enough of this dallying! If you can do nothing yourselves, then make room for those who can and will face this problem with courage and determination.'

Although the Liberals won over five million votes they won only fifty-nine seats, and in Mitcham Jones took third place, with the Conservative candidate, R. J. Meller, winning the seat. The 1929 election marks the point when the Liberal Party became permanently identified as a third party by the electorate, although the minority Labour government depended on Lloyd George and Liberal support in order to achieve progress on unemployment and electoral reform. In the election, the Conservative and Labour parties won seats in their now traditional heartland areas, but the Liberal vote was spread evenly across the country and did not convert to seats under the first-past-the-post electoral system – a situation which still persists today.

'He grabbed father, who called a cab and wrote the first page of the speech as they raced to their venue. Father continued to write the speech off stage. As he completed each page he passed it over to Sir Archibald.'

After his defeat by Meller, Jones was appointed Secretary of the Liberal Free Trade Association. In 1928 he moved his family to a three-bedroom detached house in Edgware, Middlesex. 'Father loved "do it yourself" projects, best of all he loved gardening. He was a very warm, loving father and husband. He taught me to set goals, make decisions, never to be afraid of being in the minority, and to prepare for meetings,' remembers Brenda.

He took an active part in his local community, attending the Presbyterian Church where he was an Elder. Like his father and grandfather before him he was a Freemason, belonging to a Temperance Lodge. He was a founding member of the Edgware Rate Payers' Association, which lobbied Hendon Borough Council and was instrumental in obtaining local improvements such as walkways under the Watford bypass.

The financial crisis of 1931 touched the lives of everyone. The Jones family furniture business was no exception, and the shops that Jones managed eventually went out of business in the mid-1930s. As a result of the crisis, in 1931 Prime Minister Macdonald formed an emergency coalition with the Conservatives and Liberals and called another election. The Liberals split three ways: Liberal Nationals (Simonites), Liberals (Samuelites) and Lloyd George's Independent Liberals. As a lifelong supporter of free trade, Jones supported Sir Herbert Samuel's official Liberals, and vigorously opposed Sir John Simon's Liberal Nationals who unconditionally supported the coalition.

As an eight year old, Brenda gained some experience of the poverty and poor housing that blighted parts of Britain. Before the 1935 election, she accompanied her parents to South West Bethnal Green, Sir Percy Harris' constituency from 1922 to 1945. 'Lady Harris, my mother and I stamped and stuffed envelopes for hours … One afternoon for a change I was taken door-to-door canvassing in the poorest part of town and was shocked at what I saw – the dank, dismal buildings of a London slum.' Brenda also remembers the tramps who roamed the country knocking on doors seeking a free meal and who at night could be seen curled up in newspapers on London's park benches.

The election of 1935 saw a further erosion of Liberal seats, when the party won just twenty-one. Sir Archibald Sinclair took over from Samuel as party leader. He and his colleagues supported Churchill in warning of the dangers posed by Nazi Germany, and in arguing for the need to uphold the League of Nations and for rearmament. When Churchill became Prime Minister in 1940, the Liberal Party joined the coalition government, with Sinclair appointed Secretary of State for Air until the end of the war. Soon after Sinclair took over at the Air Ministry he was invited to speak at a meeting. Brenda remembers:

> Archie, being busy in his new role, hadn't prepared a speech. He grabbed father, who called a cab and wrote the first page of the speech as they raced to their venue. Father continued to write the speech off stage. As he completed each page he passed it over to Sir Archibald. All went without a hitch. Father wrote well, fast and easily. He looked upon this small challenge with great amusement.

Jones admired Sinclair and always enjoyed working for him.

During the 1938–39 era of Conservative government appeasement, Jones limited his vacations and worked long hours, particularly supporting the many refugees who approached the Liberal Party. It was at this time that Jones met Dr Peres, an international lawyer appointed by Jan Masaryk, the Czech ambassador to London, to negotiate with the British government on behalf of Czechoslovakia. 'Peres approached the Liberal Party for help,' recalls Brenda. 'It must have been devastating to fail in this mission.'

As an ardent supporter of free trade, in 1937 he compiled and edited a hard-cover booklet, *100 Flashlights on Trade* – an important reference at a time when armament profiteers were in evidence and war was looming. Sources for the booklet included the work of Sir Herbert Samuel, Sir Norman Hill and Alfred Beesly.

Jones was appointed Secretary of the Liberal Central Association in 1938, a post which he held for ten years until his retirement. This included the role of Chief Agent, and, with his extensive knowledge of electoral law, he hosted seminars at the National Liberal Club for party agents and travelled the length and breadth of the country once an election was called.

In 1939 Jones was invited to join the newly formed Ministry of Information that was established to monitor the media during the conflict. He moved his office to the Ministry, but returned to the headquarters of the Liberal Parliamentary Party at Gayfere Street in Westminster after a short time. He worked closely with the Chief Whip, members of the press and, during the wartime coalition government, his counterparts in the Conservative and Labour parties. He volunteered for air raid duty on the roof of the National Liberal Club where he extinguished fires from incendiary bombs.

Jones devoted considerable time and effort to understanding the procedures and protocol of the House of Commons and became a much valued adviser to prospective Liberal candidates and newly elected members. His close friend, Major General Wulff Grey, a much decorated veteran of the First World War, with whom he lunched every week during the war, had a son, George, who stood for the Liberal Party in 1941. Jones became something of a mentor to George Grey when he entered the House (becoming its youngest member) as MP for Berwick-upon-Tweed. Jones assisted Grey with his maiden speech, and advised him on party policy, parliamentary protocol and how to nurse a constituency. 'Father, and I believe the party as a whole, thought George Grey had the potential to become a national leader,' said Brenda. 'As an MP he was exempt from military service, but chose to fight. Regrettably Captain George Grey was killed in Normandy just a few days after D Day, a deep sorrow for his family, my father and the Liberal Party.' In the by-election following his death, Sir W. H. Beveridge was elected MP for Berwick-upon-Tweed.

Party work continued at the Club. 'I'm sure many important plans and decisions were made over lunch, or sitting in a quiet lounge,' recalls Brenda. 'Unless Father had a specific engagement he lunched with six to eight friends at the large round table near the entrance to the dining room where conversation and jokes were enjoyed.' Although he was much loved by many, there were a few who were a target for Jones's outspoken opinions and quick temper, not least the club chef who would occasionally serve a rare delicacy only available on the black market. Jones had no time for illegal trading and would insist that the offending ingredient be removed from the menu immediately.

Jones suffered from migraine attacks throughout his life and during an attack would retreat to his room at the Club. On occasion a migraine would render him unable to speak so he carried the address of the Club on a card to show to taxi drivers. The club porter would take care of him for a few hours.

Harcourt ('Crinks') Johnstone was frequently mentioned in conversation, Brenda recalls. 'Father probably worked for him on a daily basis during the coalition government.' Johnstone was elected MP for Middlesbrough West in 1940, and served as Secretary to the Department of Overseas Trade in the coalition government. 'I don't remember him referring to Harcourt as "Crinks". This may or may not have social significance. They shared similar political views and enjoyed each other's company, despite vastly different tastes, lifestyle and backgrounds.' For some years Jones was prospective Liberal candidate for South Shields, Johnstone's previous constituency, and spent considerable time nursing it. However, in 1940 he found a replacement candidate so that he could commit himself solely to his work in London.

During 1941 Jones escorted William Beveridge to meetings on the 'Construction of a Modern Welfare State' which Beveridge chaired. Jones listened to

Raymond Jones in Liberal Party HQ, Gayfere Street, Westminster.

the discussions at these meetings, but he was not directly involved. He also served on the 1942 Electoral Machinery Committee, chaired by the Registrar-General, Sir Sylvanus Vivian. Issues such as electoral boundaries, registration of voters and proportional representation were discussed and Jones was an invaluable contributor with his in-depth knowledge of electoral law and first-hand experience of constituency work during elections.

Jones took an active part in the life of the National Liberal Club and served on the executive that dealt with the Club's management and business arrangements. He became Chairman in 1946. He invited distinguished politicians and foreign dignitaries as luncheon speakers. Brenda joined her father at some key events following the end of the war. As well as the Victory in Europe Thanksgiving Service at St Paul's Cathedral, she attended the opening session of the General Assembly of United Nations in London. 'It was the second day and Mr Trygve Lie had taken the chair – another day of excitement and hope for the future, though the failure of the League of Nations was still in our minds,' she said.

After the war there seemed to be a national shift in political mood towards the left, and the Liberal Party hoped to benefit, especially since Beveridge had been elected as a Liberal MP in 1944. However the Labour Party routed the other parties, leaving the Liberals with just twelve seats, all rural. Clement Davies was elected temporary chairman of the Liberal MPs and, when the expected by-election to re-elect Sinclair did not materialise, Davies continued to lead the party for another eleven unremarkable years.

Jones retired as Secretary of the Liberal Central Association on 30 June 1948. On 8 July he was entertained to dinner at the House of Commons by seventeen of his closest colleagues in the party. Viscount Samuel and Clement Davies gave speeches. He had made plans for his retirement, having been invited to do work for the BBC and also considering opening a chain of coffee shops in London. In August 1948, however, he suffered a coronary thrombosis and died on the Isle of Wight while on holiday with his family celebrating Brenda's twenty-first birthday.

Raymond Jones was a passionately committed Liberal throughout his life and, although he was angered by injustice, he never became depressed or despondent.

Raymond Jones was a passionately committed Liberal throughout his life and, although he was angered by injustice, he never became depressed or despondent. The publication of the Beveridge Report and the formation of the United Nations gave him much hope for the future. Lloyd George once dubbed him 'the loyallest of the loyal'.

After her father's death and, sadly, that of her mother a year later, Brenda Jones (now Tillotson) left England to work in Canada, the United States and South Africa as a physiotherapist. She settled in Vancouver, British Columbia. Throughout her career she found that the lessons learned at her father's knee were invaluable. She is now retired and lives with her husband near Vancouver. Ian Hunter is the editor of Winston & Archie: The Letters of Winston Churchill and Archibald Sinclair *(Politicos, forthcoming, 2005).*

More on Lib Dem voting in the House of Commons

Philip Cowley and **Mark Stuart** (Nottingham University)

In our earlier article in *Journal of Liberal History* 43 (Summer 2004) tracking Liberal Democrat voting in the Commons between 1992 and 2003, we showed that the party had shifted from being almost indistinguishable from Labour in terms of its voting to having become a *bona fide* party of opposition. Analysis of the last full session's voting data (ending in November 2004) shows that that trend has continued: out of the 284 Commons whipped votes in which Lib Dem MPs participated, the party's MPs voted against the government in 208 (73 per cent). They voted with the government in just 76 divisions (27 per cent). (There were also 53 Lib Dem free votes, and three occasions when the Lib Dem frontbench line was to abstain.)

The party's tendency to vote with the Conservatives has now been growing steadily year on year: from 27 per cent in the first session of the 1997 Parliament, to 40 per cent in the second, 44 per cent in the third, 47 per cent in the fourth, to 54 per cent in the first session of this Parliament, to 66 per cent in the second session, and reaching 67 per cent between 2003–04. Liberal Democrat MPs are now therefore more than twice as likely to vote with the Conservatives as they were at the beginning of the 1997 Parliament.

These overall figures continue to mask some differences between the different types of votes. The Lib Dems are more supportive of the government over the principle of legislation than over its details – although even here, there has been a noticeable drop in their levels of support. The third session saw the Lib Dems back the government in 53 per cent of votes on the principle of government legislation (voting with them on either second or third reading). Where they really get stuck in, though, is over the fine print – voting against Labour in more than four out of every five votes on the detail of government legislation.

More information on this and related issues can be found at the website www.revolts.co.uk.

LETTERS

Liberalism in the 1920s

Larry Iles's letter on my article 'Spectacular Victories' (*Journal of Liberal History* 45) adds some interesting facts and reflections about Charles Masterman's win in Rusholme in 1923. However, I would question his comment about Masterman's defeat in 1924. It is highly doubtful if Colonel Tweed or anyone else could have saved Masterman from defeat in that disastrous general election for the Liberals. Larry Iles suggests that, by demonising local Labour supporters as 'communistic', Masterman alienated 'many local Christian socialist vicars (who) refused to support him … preferring Labour's William Paul'. In Masterman's defence it should be noted that Paul was in fact a Communist Party member and for this reason stood as a Communist in 1924, having been refused official Labour endorsement. Why local vicars should have rallied to him rather than Masterman is hard to fathom.

Andrew Hudson's letter about *Prime Minister Portillo and Other Things that Never Happened* in the same issue refers to my chapter in that book (published under the pseudonym James Parry), commenting that I 'ignored the strength of social Liberalism, which was by no means restricted to New Liberalism and the Lloyd George era'. It was certainly not my intention to suggest that it was. In fact – as the chapter states clearly – the long association of British Liberalism with social liberalism is not in doubt. But I do think that the economic liberal current in the party after 1914 has been seriously neglected in Liberal historiography. I was trying in the chapter to challenge this orthodoxy and to suggest that the direction of modern centre-left Liberalism from the 1960s was not a simple linear development of the ideas of the party in the interwar and early post-1945 period.

The *Journal* will be exploring some of these questions further in a special issue on 'Liberals of the Right?' to be published later this year.

Jaime Reynolds

Hair in history

Many thanks for issue 45; as always, a very interesting read. However just to show I can 'out-anorak' the very best …

The article on 'The Flawed Strategy of the SDP' had a picture on the second page captioned as being at the formation of the SDP. I beg to differ. I strongly believe it was taken at the 1986 spring conference in Bath to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the SDP launch. I was at the conference, so I am certain I am correct.

Apart from my knowledge that that is the case, there are two strong clues. First, Bill Rodgers' hairstyle changed from the rather long slicked-back style at the launch to the shorter, more contemporary, style that is shown on the picture in around 1982. Second, David Owen had little or no grey hair and his parting was much less pronounced at the time of the launch. By the time of the fifth anniversary – as the picture shows – his parting was quite pronounced and he had a fair amount of grey hair.

Tim Hill

Liberalism in Liverpool

The *Journal of Liberal History* has established a justified reputation for academic excellence based on the quality of its contents. Given this background, the report of the Group's fringe meeting on 'Liberals in Liverpool – Their Legacy' (in issue 45) was particularly disappointing. Contemporary history is certainly important, but the report suggests that the meeting resembled one of those fabled ALC meetings on 'How we won Abercromby'.

If the legacy of Liverpool Liberals is to be looked at seriously it needs to begin well before 1968. The role of dedicated Liberals who kept the party alive in the 1950s, such as Warwick Haggart, Beryl Hands and Russell Dyson – not to mention that splendidly eccentric Liverpool Young Liberal, Len Bennett, who used to sport a conference badge giving his identity as the 'Kabaka of Runcorn' – needs evaluating.

If the legacy of Liverpool Liberals is to be looked at seriously it needs to begin well before 1968.

The curious survival of Liberal 'institutes' such as the Garmoyle and the Kildonan which provided meeting facilities was another factor, as was the existence of the broader Merseyside Liberal presence thanks to the munificence of Graham White, the former Liberal MP for Birkenhead, who funded a headquarters in Hamilton Square in that borough, and a full-time Liberal agent, Alf Hayes, all of which also aided the election of Councillor (later Lord) Gruff Evans.

It would also be interesting to know more of how Cyril Carr engineered a straight fight with the Conservatives in – I hope I recall it correctly – a by-election in Church Ward which led to him becoming, together with Joe Wilmington, one of the first Liberal councillors in the city in 1962.

The complete eclipse of the Conservative Party as a municipal force in Liverpool is mentioned in passing in the report but deserves much more analysis. How could a party which controlled the city council as recently as 1972 disappear completely from that council? Is there, for instance, a connection with the rapid decline of anti-Roman Catholic working-class Conservative support, seen at its most blatant in the election of 'Protestant Party' councillors in wards such as St Domingo and Netherfield, and which virtually ended with local government reorganisation in 1974?

Another curious episode in Liverpool Liberal history concerns a deselected Labour councillor, Bill Smythe, who won Childwall ward for the Liberals in 1973 though still a member of the Labour Party. Peter Kilfoyle MP, in his excellent book on the city, *Left Behind,* recounts how Smythe became Liberal group leader and leader of the council whilst still being a Labour Party member – after being voted for by Labour and Conservative councillors and the anti-Jones portion of the Liberal group! How did this come about? How significant was Cyril Carr's declining health in the whole episode?

Finally, if there is to be a residual 'How we won Abercromby' style to such a meeting, then, from an historical point of view, we also need to know 'Why we lost Abercomby'.

Michael Meadowcroft

REPORT

Roy Jenkins – Reformer, Visionary, Statesman

Fringe meeting report, September 2004, Bournemouth, with Dick Taverne, Shirley Williams and Peter Riddell

Report by **Neil Stockley**

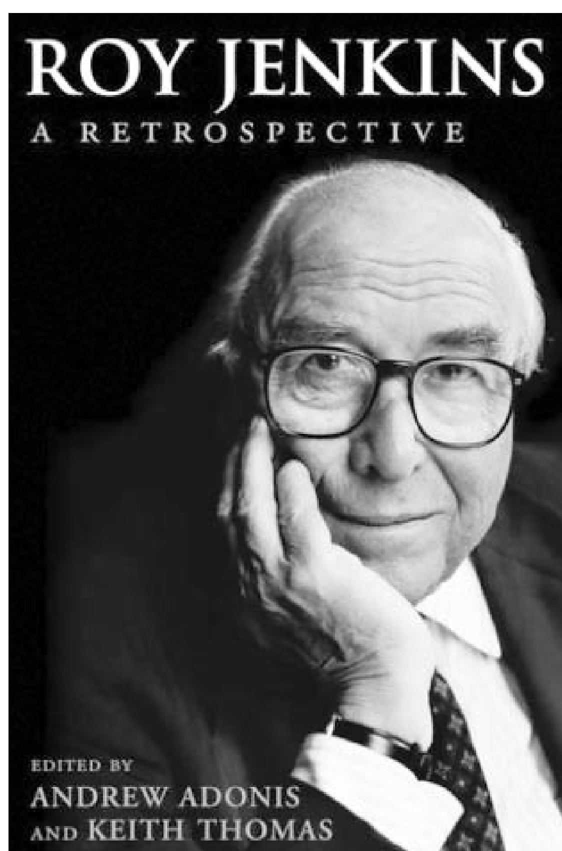
On the Sunday night of autumn conference a standing-room-only audience, including Dame Jennifer Jenkins, gathered to hear three distinguished guests reflect on the life and career of the late Lord Jenkins of Hillhead. The meeting was held to mark the publication of a new collection of essays, edited by Andrew Adonis and Keith Thomas, *Roy Jenkins: A Retrospective* (Oxford University Press, 2004). The speakers were Lord (Dick) Taverne, who served under Jenkins as a junior minister at the Home Office and the Treasury, Baroness Shirley Williams, a co-founder of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), and the veteran political journalist Peter Riddell.

Dick Taverne argued that Jenkins had been 'the most significant member' of the disappointing 1964–70 Labour government and that he was 'responsible for its most important achievements'. By the late 1960s, he was widely seen as the 'dominant force' in Harold Wilson's Cabinet. The first reason was the big list of reforms that Jenkins was responsible for introducing during his time as Home Secretary. His roles in enabling the passage of private members' bills to liberalise the law on abortion and to decriminalise homosexual practices between consenting adults are well documented. So are his work to set in train the Race Relations Act and the relaxation of theatre censorship. Taverne also pointed out that Jenkins passed comprehensive, progressive criminal justice legislation and drove reforms to improve the ability of the police to bring crime under control. Shirley Williams agreed that Jenkins had taken over the Home Office and turned it from a 'heartbreaking department' into 'an engine of radical reform'.

Jenkins had taken over the Home Office and turned it from a 'heartbreaking department' into 'an engine of radical reform'.

The second reason for Dick Taverne's fulsome assessment was Jenkins' record as Chancellor of the Exchequer. He went to the Treasury after the disastrous 1967 devaluation and slowly but surely masterminded an economic recovery – and is generally recognised as one of the best post-war Chancellors. Still, aspects of his stewardship have been criticised in recent years, most notably by Edmund Dell in *The Chancellors* (1996). Dick Taverne agreed with Dell that Jenkins delayed taking some tough decisions for too long, for example in acting to reduce demand. But he argued that Dell's analysis of Jenkins' 1968 budget – that, tough as it was, the measures may still have been too lax – was only made with the benefit of hindsight. Similarly, Taverne mounted a robust defence of Jenkins' handling of the sterling balances, arguing that, ultimately, it succeeded.

But the meeting was no dry discussion of Roy Jenkins' many accomplishments, important as they were. The speakers went to some lengths to explain the personal gifts that made Jenkins such an important political figure. Dick Taverne said that his mastery in debate, grasp of his subject and excellent judgement, along with his influence over events and his work as a writer on events had made him one of the most outstanding figures of modern political history. In describing his mastery of the House of Commons, Taverne gave as examples two important milestones in Jenkins' ministerial life. The first was his skilful, incisive reply to the Conservative front bench in the Commons debate that followed the escape from prison of George Blake. The second was his speech laying out the tough Budget of 1968, which imposed the largest tax increases this country had ever seen. This time Taverne quoted with approval the judgement of Edmund Dell: 'Never has



pain been inflicted with greater elegance'.

Shirley Williams acknowledged that Jenkins was a great orator with a brilliant command of language, whose contributions were lightened by his wit and use of anecdotes. But she paid more attention to the depth and breadth of his political vision. She contrasted Jenkins with his old friend and rival Tony Crosland who, despite being the main philosopher of post-war democratic socialism, had not devised the reformist agenda that Jenkins pioneered at the Home Office. For instance, Crosland's seminal work *The Future of Socialism* said nothing about issues around race and gender equality, which are now 'part of the meat and drink of being a Liberal Democrat'. Williams believed that the attainment of social reform was all part of a 'learning process' for the progressive forces in British politics that had been 'led by Roy'.

Peter Riddell argued that it was his grasp of the big picture that made Jenkins so successful as a minister. Riddell believed that rather than being a policy wonk, he mastered 'the broad themes, the broad sweeps' of politics and still managed to achieve a great deal. He contrasted Jenkins to the current Chancellor, Gordon Brown, who was 'obsessed with the detail of policy'. Riddell said that it was Jenkins' grasp of the 'broad historical sweep' that linked his roles as a biographer and a politician.

But Riddell also pointed out that, in terms of the broad sweep of politics, Jenkins was not 'a mould breaker' in the way that Margaret Thatcher had been and in so doing, brought out the central paradoxes of Jenkins' career. On social reform, Europe and the future of centre-left politics, Jenkins was indeed a visionary. As Home Secretary and – although the meeting did not really get to it – President of the European Commission, Jenkins achieved a great deal. If he was not a perfect Chancellor, he was certainly a successful and masterful one, who made the very best of a grim inheritance. But the so-called Keynesian approach to economic management – to which he closely subscribed – unravelled not long after he left the Treasury in 1970. After 1979 the Conservatives ruled for eighteen years and Mrs Thatcher's government turned the old political consensus on economic policy on its head and brought in a new economic orthodoxy. Neither John Major nor his Labour successors have tried to alter its fundamental tenets.

In other areas that were central to Jenkins' political vision, the picture seems similarly bleak. More than thirty years after he led the Labour rebellion on joining the EEC, Britain still does not play a full role in Europe. Even if his main social reforms are part of the fabric of national life – and some have been extended further – the Home Office under Michael Howard, Jack Straw and David Blunkett has hardly been an engine of liberal reform. In the wake of Belmarsh and with ID cards looming, we clearly do not live in the age of Jenkins.

The first reason is obvious: unlike Margaret Thatcher, he never became Prime Minister, let alone the leader of a purposeful administration that stayed in office for a long time. But if he was so gifted, why did Jenkins never get to the very top? The question is most relevant to his time as a leading Labour politician, when he had two serious chances to take the top job. Taverne recounted how, as Wilson floundered in 1968, a coterie of Labour MPs plotted to mount a putsch that would install Jenkins as Prime Minister. But, he said, 'Roy called them off' because, he believed, Jenkins thought it would be 'dishonourable' to try to topple the Prime Minister who had appointed him; he consistently supported him in Cabinet over some very difficult issues. A second opportunity came the following year, after Wilson was forced to make a humiliating retreat over the reforms to industrial relations law set out in the White Paper, *In Place of Strife*. But Taverne explained that Jenkins had supported the proposals and believed that it would be opportunistic to use their failure as a basis for mounting a challenge. All of this reflects very well on Jenkins as a man.

There were other, more personal reasons why he did not become leader of the Labour Party or Prime Minister. For example, Jenkins was often portrayed as too aloof, too grand and as something of a bon viveur who did not take his political work as seriously as he might. There was a suspicion that Jenkins had enjoyed something of an easy life and, therefore, expected political fortune to somehow fall into his lap. Here, the speakers vividly and affectionately brought to life some of the tremendous personal qualities that may not have been so apparent to most of his colleagues – particularly in the Labour Party – and the public;

when they started to emerge, it was too late. Dick Taverne recalled how, as a young MP, he got to know Jenkins and entered a wide circle of devoted friends. 'No friend could ever say he let them down,' he said. Peter Riddell also said that Jenkins was very kind to younger people.

Shirley Williams suggested that the apparent remoteness was really a kind of shyness and that when he contested the 1981 Warrington by-election for the SDP, Jenkins reached out to people in a way that he never had before. 'There was no side to him,' she insisted. She also paid a generous tribute to the 'astonishing self-discipline' that he brought to all his work, including as a writer and author. Perhaps, however, he was not single-minded or ruthless enough to be Prime Minister. Indeed, Shirley Williams was clear that Jenkins was never dominated by his own political ambition. She believed that he really coveted the Foreign Office rather than Number Ten.

Peter Riddell took us back to Jenkins' successful candidacy for the SDP in the crucial Glasgow Hillhead by-election of 1982. As the nascent party's star started to wane, victory in the cold, wet and difficult campaign was by no means assured. But Jenkins knew he had to fight to win and Riddell reminded us that he did so with great vigour.

The second reason we do not live in the Age of Jenkins is the failure of the SDP to break the mould of politics and, more importantly, for the Labour Party to modernise itself quickly enough. Margaret Thatcher became the political giant of the late twentieth century and repainted the political landscape. Nobody could seriously suggest that any of this, or even the fate of the SDP, was Jenkins' fault. Still, the meeting touched on some uncomfortable realities. If Lord Taverne vividly captured the essence of Jenkins' superiority as a debater and parliamentarian during the 1960s and early 1970s, Shirley Williams showed just as clearly that as leader of the SDP in 1982–83, he did not find the Commons a very happy place to be. Jenkins was simply not used to being interrupted and to suffering the brutal heckling of Denis Skinner and others. She also argued that he was damaged by the growing and changing role of television because 'his thinking was too deep' to be easily condensed in ten-second soundbites: whereas Jenkins was suited to the 'age of words', we lived in 'the age of images'. Williams was surely correct that this demonstrated the 'shallowness of our politics', but the hard truth was that his political style was simply not suited to a more populist era.

Shirley Williams was surely right when she said that the Liberal Democrats are 'Roy's legacy'.

More fundamentally, Peter Riddell questioned whether, for all his mastery of the broad sweep of politics and history, Jenkins had really understood the extent of what was happening in British politics during the 1980s. Riddell did not spell it out, but he was presumably referring to the rise of more materialist, consumerist and, indeed, individualist values within the electorate as a whole and the slow acceptance – however grudging – of a more bitter political medicine and a greater demand for tough leadership. Riddell believed that Dr David Owen did recognise how politics was changing around him – but the SDP was still promising a 'better yesterday' or, at heart, trying to create a better Labour Party.

This is not to suggest that the meeting saw Jenkins as, to quote Harold Wilson's former spin doctor Joe Haines, 'a gifted failure'. Far from it. We heard how, in many important respects, Jenkins was way ahead of his time. Dick Taverne reminded us that as early as 1959 he was campaigning for Britain to play a full part in Europe. Similarly, Jenkins had contemplated starting a new social democratic party in the early 1970s, some ten years before the SDP was formed. Shirley Williams recalled how from 1974 to 1976 she had served in the last Wilson Cabinet with Jenkins, who was a reluctant, recidivist Home Secretary. He had submitted to the Cabinet proposals to hold a Speaker's Conference on three important constitutional reforms: electoral reform for the House of Commons, a human rights bill and freedom of information legislation. All three were resoundingly rejected. Thirty years later, proportional representation is used at a number of levels of government, there is a Human Rights Act and, now, a Freedom of Information Act. All were a long time coming and Shirley Williams was clear that 'they all started with Roy'.

It could be added, however, that we still await electoral reform for Westminster (which Jenkins made a valiant attempt to achieve in 1998), the broader purposes behind the Human Rights Act are in grave danger and Labour's FOI Act is, to quote Shirley Williams, 'castrated'. In these areas, and in others, such as Europe, Jenkins left important business for others to finish.

The speakers did not comment on it in detail, but it was his 1979 Dimbleby Lecture that started the chain of events that led to the formation of the SDP. It was also the party's philosophical foundation and much of it has stood the test of time, both as a critique of the Thatcher and now of the Blair administration, and as a statement of the shared political credo of modern liberals and genuine social democrats. Shirley Williams was surely right when she said that the Liberal Democrats are 'Roy's legacy'.

The Journal will be publishing a full review of Andrew Adonis and Keith Thomas, Roy Jenkins: A Retrospective *in issue 48 (autumn 2005).*

Adrian Slade talks to the Liberal Democrat leader in the Lords, Tom McNally.

THE PRO WITH PROVEN POLITICAL EFFECTIVENESS

Tom McNally outside the House of Lords.

In 1980 he was a comparatively late convert from Labour to the newly trumpeted SDP. He even stayed in the Labour Party long enough to vote for Denis Healey as Deputy Leader. Of the two SDP leaders he felt more at home with David Owen than with Roy Jenkins, although he was no acolyte to any member of the original 'Gang of Four'. When Liberal/SDP merger came under discussion, unlike his then party leader, he supported the concept, but for many Liberals at the time he was never their favourite Social Democrat, and in the nearly seventeen years of the Liberal Democrats' existence he has often chosen to cast himself, almost deliberately, as the obverse of the radical Liberal coin, occasionally clashing vigorously with the more grassroots members of the party.

And yet the sheer political effectiveness of Tom McNally over a period of more than thirty years has now seen him move into the role previously occupied by Roy Jenkins, Bill Rodgers and Shirley Williams – that of leader of the Liberal Democrats in the House of Lords – with the almost full support of his peers and certainly without having to stand for election. It is a remarkable achievement for a man who, for all his outward affability and sense of fun, has not had a smooth political or personal life and is very much his own person.

What Liberal Democrats sometimes forget is that, apart from the party's three famous ex-Secretaries of State – Roy Jenkins, Shirley Williams and Bill Rodgers – Tom McNally has been closer to the real levers of power at Westminster than any other active member of the party. It was he who, in 1969 at the age of just twenty-six, became International Secretary of the Labour Party, a job in which he continued for five years. It was he whom Jim Callaghan picked out in the early 1970s to work in his office as his speech-writer and one of his international advisers, and he followed Callaghan back into government in 1974 when Callaghan became Foreign Secretary and de facto deputy to

Harold Wilson after Roy Jenkins' departure to the European Commission in Brussels. McNally travelled everywhere with Callaghan, including Vietnam, the Middle East and the Soviet Union, meeting political names of now distant legend, such as Andrei Gromyko of the Soviet Union.

In 1975 for the first time he also met Paddy Ashdown, when Ashdown was notionally working as the 'librarian' at the Geneva peace talks. 'A dodgy cover for a trained killer, if ever there was one!' comments McNally, but the friendship that began to form then later led to him becoming close adviser, speech-writer and a necessary purveyor of jokes to Paddy Ashdown for the eleven years of his leadership.

In 1976, when Callaghan moved into 10 Downing Street, so did Tom McNally – to run his Political Office – and he remained there until Labour's defeat in 1979, witnessing the full impact of the IMF crisis and the subsequent Lib-Lab Pact that kept Callaghan's government in power. It was a time that helped to formulate many of his views about the future of British politics.

'Jim Callaghan and I got to know each other very well,' he says. 'He was always extremely kind to subordinates but he could be very difficult and very tough with people who were as big or bigger than him. I remember the meeting with Gromyko in Moscow. It was supposed to last an hour and went on for four. Gromyko was playing very hard ball but Jim matched him minute for minute and it was quite something to watch these grizzled old pros battling it out with each other.'

'I was an enthusiastic supporter of the Lib-Lab Pact. I liked David Steel from the moment that I first met him, and so did Jim,' he says. 'The saddest thing is that, in all those discussions, nobody ever thought that the best outcome of the pact could have been to put it to the country as a working coalition. It would have been a tragedy for democracy and for government if Labour had fallen solely on the bankers' ramp of the IMF crisis. In my view, that period of the pact was a period of very good government. I accept that there was more in it for Labour than there was for the Liberals, but that was partly because, unlike the Liberal Democrats today, the Liberals did not have the policy-making machinery to push their ideas. Jim wanted to give them more. I think both sides can feel genuinely proud of what they did in steadying the ship at a time when people were talking about Britain becoming "ungovernable".'

Life in Downing Street obviously suited the political animal that Tom McNally accepts he has always been. 'My father was a process worker for ICI, an active trade unionist and a Labour Party supporter. He never ran for office but he loved talking politics and, as I was the youngest of my family by fourteen years, he had more time to do that with me. The first election I was involved with was North Fylde in 1959, when I was sixteen. Labour was the only political home for me in those days, although one of my closest friends at grammar school was Chris Walmsley. We used to exchange provocative Labour–Liberal correspondence with each other in the *Blackpool Evening Gazette*.'

After three years at University College London, where he read Economics & Social History and was heavily involved in student politics and debating at every level, including the National Union of Students, Tom McNally applied for jobs with the TUC, the Labour Party and the Fabian Society. In 1966 it was Bill Rodgers who offered him his first political position, as Assistant General Secretary of the Fabian Society.

Surprisingly he did not stand for election to parliament until 1979, when he won Stockport for Labour. 'That was not a happy time,' he says. 'There had always been a vicious faction locally that did not want to adopt me, and at the other end of the line the party was supporting policies that I could never have supported. I cannot tell you what being in the Labour Party was like at the time. I felt I had no firm ground to stand on. But I was not a natural Social Democrat. It took me six months after the Limehouse Declaration to make a move to talk to Bill Rodgers. I remember him saying that he didn't know what would happen to the SDP, but either it would succeed and replace the Labour Party or the Labour Party itself would reform.'

I accept that there was more in the pact for Labour than there was for the Liberals, but that was partly because, unlike the Liberal Democrats today, the Liberals did not have the policy-making machinery to push their ideas. Jim wanted to give them more.

You get the feeling that McNally's move was more one of despair than of positive conviction. 'I wasn't a particularly active member of the SDP. I was uneasy with some aspects of it, for instance its top-down nature. Nor, although I admired him, was I a particular fan of Roy Jenkins. I was more a supporter of Owen. I even opposed a move for merger after the 1983 election. I believe that Owen's performance between 1983 and 1986 was one of the most brilliant individual political performances I have ever seen.'

McNally himself was not closely involved with the internal workings of the Alliance between 1983 and 1987. 'I was going through a lot of difficulties in my personal life at the time. I had left Labour, both my parents had died, I had lost my seat, my marriage was breaking up and I was drinking too much. I needed to sort myself out. My first real re-entry into mainstream politics was in 1987 when Alec McGivan asked me to be Rosie Barnes's minder in the Greenwich by-election [won by her for the SDP–Liberal Alliance]. That was also the time I first met my now wife Juliet. She worked in David Steel's office.'

Unlike Owen, the result of the 1987 election convinced him that merger was the best way to combine in one political force both the Liberal campaigning organisation on the ground that the SDP had never had and the SDP's more formal and less 'anarchic' approach to policy-making,

which he believed had been the Liberal Party's failing. 'The SDP undoubtedly had been the catalyst for change in the Labour Party, but that change had already begun under Kinnock and Brian Gould in 1987, and the Alliance had fallen back by ten points. We had to think afresh. The departure of Owen was sad in that we lost some good people but many of them have come back.'

He believes that the greatest difficulties in the early days of the merger had their roots in old SDP paranoia about controlling the party from the top and the Liberal Party's natural, 'anarchic', again, inclination to want to do the opposite. 'But as new people have joined who were neither one nor the other before, that problem has diminished significantly,' he says – although some might say that on bodies like the Federal Executive it is he who sometimes keeps the flame burning, if more slowly than in the past.

Tom McNally does not claim to be a Liberal but he believes that philosophically he is much more liberal than perhaps he is given credit for: ' For example, I am not enamoured of market economics. In fact, in those terms I am possibly what Tony Greaves would call a social liberal. Tony Blair has got the political roots of a box of watercress whereas mine go back to my background. I feel no empathy at all with what this government is now trying to do with civil liberties and human rights. I feel extremely comfortable with the way the party is holding its nerve on these issues, sticking out against an authoritarian state and being equally consistent in its commitment to Europe and internationalism. I can honestly say that I feel more comfortable in the stance of the party today than I have felt at any time in thirty years of politics.'

This forthright endorsement of today's independent party prompted me to remind him that perhaps he had felt rather differently in 1997 when he had been one of the stronger supporters of Paddy Ashdown's 'project' for closer and more permanent links with the Labour Party. His first response was to remind me that, when Charles Kennedy became leader, it was Tom McNally who was one of the first to call for an end to the Joint Cabinet Committee and for a distancing from Labour, but he admitted his earlier support, suggesting it was on practical grounds. 'I don't think any of us thought there was going to be a Labour landslide and a hung parliament was quite a possibility. I felt that we should be prepared for that.'

I am not enamoured of market economics. In fact, in those terms I am possibly what Tony Greaves would call a social liberal. Tony Blair has got the political roots of a box of watercress whereas mine go back to my background.

So his support was only in the case of a hung parliament and not in any eventuality, as some Liberal Democrats apparently favoured? 'I don't think that was ever really on but I never say never. When Roy and Blair were talking about healing the hundred-year rift on the centre left, I thought an alternative to another century of predominantly Conservative rule was very attractive and I fully supported Paddy in exploring what was on offer. I think he had a right to do that. Whether or not Paddy would ever have got support for what he wanted to do is another matter, but we mustn't run away from the reality of these things. And, if you look at what did actually happen, the Cook–Maclennan committee on constitutional reform certainly had a considerable influence on Labour's subsequent devolution legislation. I am in politics to get results and with that report we showed what was possible.'

To make sure I understand that his own thinking has now changed, McNally adds: 'Where Charles is right, of course, is that, if there were to be a hung parliament after the next election, we

could not sustain Blair in office because the people would have spoken decisively.'

McNally speaks highly of Charles Kennedy as a leader and communicator but you sense that his greatest loyalty may have been to Paddy Ashdown. Out of very difficult beginnings after the merger he believes that Ashdown 'did lots of good things' for the party, perhaps including exploring 'the project'.

Since the mid-1980s Tom McNally has spent a number of years working in the lobbying end of some of London's larger PR firms, and in the past his connections have occasionally led him into controversy. However he is less involved now and is free to concentrate fully on his new job as leader in the House of Lords, a House he first entered as a peer in 1995.

Commenting on the Lords, he says: 'We are and should be a revisory chamber. I see absolutely no role for a veto on legislation but we should retain strong powers to delay and force reconsideration if necessary. I am not against frustrating government in that sense. The screams of Labour ministers when we do frustrate them are proof that we are doing our job. The problem of these massive majorities delivered in the Commons is that, unless there is some check and balance, we will have what Hailsham described as an elective dictatorship. The powers we now have were given to us four or five years ago and, until they change them, we should use them to improve legislation and limit the powers of the executive.'

'As far as Liberal Democrats are concerned, we should be making sure that, whatever may be thrown at us about, for example, being "soft on crime", we maintain our commitment to human rights and civil liberties. We may be misrepresented occasionally but for a steady, solid, firm voice it is worth the risk.'

In the run-up to the general election he wants to see the Liberal Democrat peers working closely with colleagues in the Commons to put clear markers in the key policy-making areas but also making themselves available to help campaigning in the country. Within the House he will want, among other issues, to continue to harass the government about its links with the media. To illustrate his point he says: 'Norman Lamb has a question down asking the Prime Minister who has been entertained in Downing Street recently and, do you know, they won't tell him.'

We should be making sure that, whatever may be thrown at us about, for example, being "soft on crime", we maintain our commitment to human rights and civil liberties.

He wants to see further reform of the Lords included in the manifestos of all the parties and believes that, as a starting point for the longer term, almost any element of election to the Lords would be better than the current appointed House, and he pleads for party flexibility in making sure that some reform takes place.

In conclusion we talked about party prospects, which he believes are better than at any time since the first Alliance election of 1983 and the Liberal Party's success of February 1974. 'Don't forget that in votes we fell back in 1987, 1992 and 1997, and that it was only the clever targeting of Chris Rennard and others that gave us our extra seats. I think the opportunity is now there to win the campaign. Charles at his best is one the best campaigners and communicators in British politics, particularly on television, and I think you only have to look at the parliamentary party as a whole to see that we don't need to prepare for government: we are ready for it. For example, people like Vince Cable are more than a match for Gordon Brown, and of course in Menzies Campbell we have the Foreign Secretary that Blair has always wished he had.'

That's a pretty reassuring endorsement from the party's longest-running pro.

A shorter version of this interview appeared in Liberal Democrat News *in November 2004.*

REVIEWS

Why bother with the Liberals again?

David Dutton: *A History of the Liberal Party in the Twentieth Century* (Palgrave, 2004)

Reviewed by **Matt Cole**

Jorgen S. Rasmussen's seminal study of the Liberal Party published in the 1960s opened with a passage headed 'Why bother with the Liberals?', in which the author sought to justify his dilation upon such an apparently insignificant and neglected topic. Curiously, David Dutton's much-awaited history of the party opens in a similar way, but for very different reasons. Now the question is one of what benefit there is to be gained from revisiting debates that have been so thoroughly researched and rehearsed in the years since Rasmussen's work; for example, since 1965 over a dozen substantial monographs and readers on the Liberal Party have been published – the result of an attraction to the subject which Dutton says 'might fairly be deemed excessive'. The question this time might perhaps be 'Why bother

with the Liberals *again*?' – and with this book Dutton provides an answer to this question that is as full and effective as could be expected by his most demanding reader, or the willing non-specialist.

Dutton has set himself the task of drawing together the findings of the historians and social scientists involved in the debate of the last forty years – and the seventy since Dangerfield's *Strange Death of Liberal England*. In doing so, he begins by declaring that the debate has been unduly partisan, too dominated by rhetoric and pre-cooked conclusions, and its protagonists have been too unwilling to accept the force of some of the evidence ranged against them. He warns from the outset that the truth is likely to lie somewhere between the familiar theories of the party's decline. 'The debate', Dutton says, 'has sometimes been conducted with a predictability of argument and an absolutism of analysis which have not helped historical understanding.' He also observes that he can review the debate from the vantage point of a revival in Liberal fortunes to a level more favourable than any witnessed since Dangerfield's time. The story, he rightly says, will be brought right up to date.

The first strength of Dutton's work is his handling of the evidence base. In no other title on the history of the Liberal Party is such a varied body of research brought together so succinctly. This includes other major published studies, general histories and biographical titles, but Dutton also makes use of unpublished theses, his own research, and a number of more occasional articles including (needless to say) half a dozen from the *Journal of Liberal History*. These are orchestrated with a style which is necessarily economical, yet loses neither its attention to relevant detail nor its sense of momentum. The general reader will not need too much prior knowledge of the inner workings of the party; yet the cognoscenti will keep a bookmark in the notes to check some sources.

Secondly, this is a proper history of the party, rather than a tale of its glory or a report of its impact upon other institutions, so that the periods of its poorest fortunes are not passed over either out of embarrassment or for want of easily accessible evidence. The wilderness years of the 1950s are, as they should be, chronicled and investigated with at least the same endeavour as the glory days of the Edwardian era. This is reflected in the classification of the phases of the party's development: 1914, 1918, 1931 and 1945 are ditched as milestones in favour of 1916, 1935 and 1955.

So does Dutton succeed in plotting a more reasoned path than those of his predecessors through the battlefield of Liberal history? This is a substantial and important challenge, and it is in the analysis of his subject matter that Dutton's greatest strengths, and also some remaining questions, lie. In brief, Dutton's analysis is cogent but understated, and perhaps, in some ways, even incomplete. Whilst the social and economic explanation of the party's decline sets the parameters within which Liberal achievements must be considered, the latitude within these seems considerable. At the outbreak of World War One, for instance, Liberalism was 'a varied, but generally robust, political force – but one that was beset by more than its fair share of problems' (these, such as the failure to nominate working-class candidates and the terms of the Trade Union Act of 1913, were partly self-inflicted).

The fatal damage was done by a twenty-year 'civil war', Asquith's decision to support Labour's first administration, which 'smacked of the fatal "wait and see" style', and the effects of descent into third-party status with its inevitable consequences in the British electoral system. There were further

misjudgements and vanities in the 1930s, but it seems that for Dutton the killer episodes for the Liberal Party were the outflow – rather than simply the initial substance – of the wartime Asquith–Lloyd George split. In this analysis, Dutton shows a subtlety lacking in some earlier studies, notably showing the 'kaleidoscopic' variations in the Liberal factions of the inter-war period. For example, how did the alliance of the radical Lloyd George with the Conservatives, and then his sympathy for the General Strike and buttressing of Labour, on each occasion attacked by his Liberal detractors, demonstrate ideological fault lines in the Liberal Party? Rather, they reflected the personal nature of the embittered dispute.

This approach will probably leave Labour historians feeling less than fully recognised, and Dutton's general stress upon leadership and parliamentary (or at least upper-level extra-parliamentary) affairs will confirm their suspicions. Yet it is hardly reassuring for Liberal sympathisers either, for the party is, for

the remainder of the century, depicted largely as the helpless victim of circumstance: in the 1920s there was a 'two-pronged pincer assault launched by its political opponents'; in the 1930s the Liberal Nationals were seduced away by the Conservatives; in the Second World War 'it is doubtful whether the party derived any long-term advantage from its occupation of office'; in the 1950s it was squeezed by Butskellism; and even the subsequent revival was built upon 'a purely negative response to one or both of the two leading parties … Psephologists have identified a relatively small "core" Liberal vote … and a far larger "sympathy" vote.' There were no real achievements to show for the Lib-Lab Pact, and whilst the Liberal Democrats position themselves to the left of Labour, their voters and target seats are primarily composed of disillusioned Tories.

This pessimism struggles to explain the gradual nature of the Liberal recovery, which as Dutton acknowledges, saw the party in 2001 gain 'its best parliamentary tally since 1929, and the first time ever that the party had increased its vote after a full-term Labour government.' Dutton makes magnificent work of illuminating the Liberals' decline, but accounts for their revival by a series of misjudgements on the parts of their opponents which is now becoming too extended to be credible alone: the Conservatives could have killed the Liberals off in the 1950s but did not, and the Grimond myth sustained them in the 1960s; the main parties polarised and gave them space in the 1970s and 1980s, and although the Ashdown–Blair Project of the 1990s brought short-term results, and awaits a fuller retrospective assessment, 'it remains questionable whether even a fully committed Blair could have taken his party with him.' Underplayed in all of this – though by no means entirely missing – is a recognition that Liberal leaders and activists played the limited hand they had better than was acknowledged at the time: the 1950s, for instance, did not simply, as Dutton suggests, 'witness Liberalism moving distinctly to the right' under the influence of Churchill and the Liberal Nationals, but a rational strategy for survival in the pressing circumstances Dutton himself describes so well. Many Liberals, of course, remained profoundly anti-Tory, which is part of why the pressure never paid off.

Dutton makes magnificent work of illuminating the Liberals' decline, but accounts for their revival by a series of misjudgements on the parts of their opponents which is now becoming too extended to be credible alone.

This is something of a selective account, since Dutton acknowledges in places the 'continuity of Liberal principles', the role of 'key figures … who managed to convince at least themselves that the Liberal cause was not lost', and the shrewd electoral tactics of 1997 and 2001. It is the very mixed nature of Dutton's explanation which is frustrating to a reader seeking patterns, and it is interesting that Dutton devotes most of his Conclusion to an assessment of the Liberal Democrats' current position rather than to the search for a single theme in their past. Dutton's place in the debate emerges slowly, but it would be too harsh to use of him Robert Frost's definition of a Liberal as 'a man too good-natured to take his own side in an argument'; he is at worst measured, possibly cautious in his expression of his case. Perhaps he is right, and we are so deafened to the heavy-metal sound of partisanship in Liberal history that we struggle to hear the more elaborate melodies of reasoned, even balanced, argument. Certainly, this will justly be listened to for a long time.

Matt Cole is a research student in the Modern History Department at the University of Birmingham, examining Liberal Party identity during the post-war period.

'Nothing talked of, thought of, dreamt of, but Reform'

Edward Pearce: *Reform! The Fight for the 1832 Reform Act* (London: Pimlico, 2004)

Reviewed by **Dr Kathryn Rix**

'Nothing talked of, thought of, dreamt of, but Reform. Every creature that one meets asks, What is said now? How will it go? What is the last news? What do you think? And so it is from morning till night, in the streets, in the clubs, and in private houses.' Charles Greville's diary entry for 7 March 1831 recorded the excitement generated by the Whig Government's introduction into the Commons of the measure that was eventually to become the 1832 or 'Great' Reform Act. This legislative landmark in the evolution of the modern British political system had two key elements: it redrew the electoral map through the extensive redistribution of seats, removing 'rotten boroughs' and giving representation to growing industrial towns such as Leeds, Manchester and Birmingham for the first time; and it extended the franchise to a larger, albeit still limited, number of voters. It was a measure which took a tortuous fifteen months to pass, and Edward Pearce's *Reform! The Fight for the 1832 Reform Act* provides a vivid and engaging account of the events of this period.

Pearce sets the scene with a chapter outlining some of the defects of the pre-1832 system:

the control of seats by aristocratic patrons, or by borough-mongers who sold them to the highest bidder; the limited extent of the franchise; the survival of rotten boroughs such as Old Sarum with a mere seven electors; the over-representation of areas such as Cornwall, contrasted with the under-representation of northern industrial towns such as Oldham. His depiction of 'the old system' is enlivened by examples from contemporary fiction, including the Eatanswill election from *The Pickwick Papers* alongside extracts from less well-known works. The chapter on the demise of Wellington's Tory ministry – the Duke having personally pledged to resist Reform – adeptly conveys the fluidity of party politics during this period.

The bulk of Pearce's account is devoted to a detailed description of the key events of the Reform crisis: the heated debates following the introduction of the new Whig ministry's first Reform Bill; the passing of its second reading in the Commons with a majority of just one vote; the general election of 1831; the Lords' rejection of Reform and the ensuing riots in Bristol, Nottingham and elsewhere; William IV's prevarication on the question of creating additional peers to force the bill through the Lords; the (temporary) resignation of the Whig ministry; and finally a mass exodus of Tory peers from the Lords when they realised that they could obstruct Reform no longer. Although Pearce provides an extremely lucid and coherent narrative, the addition of a chronology would be a useful aid to the reader in understanding this complex sequence of events.

As befits a former parliamentary sketch-writer, Pearce puts the debates in the Commons and the Lords centre stage, with extensive quotations from *Hansard* throughout. He skilfully evokes the atmosphere of the debating chamber, from dramatic events such as William IV's hasty arrival to dissolve Parliament in 1831 to quieter moments such as the second reading of the government's second Reform Bill in the Commons, which Pearce deftly summarises as 'not much more than an exercise in statutory grumbling, a limping jog around a required track with none of the racecourse buzz attending the contest of the first bill' (p. 160). He emphasises the extensive use which MPs made of historical precedents in framing their arguments, and he is careful to give credence to the reasoning behind the anti-Reform case, and to illustrate the diversity of opinions among both pro- and anti-Reformers. It is perhaps because Pearce is so adept at conveying the mood of the nineteenth-century legislators that the more recent historical and cultural allusions with which his text is peppered – ranging from Franklin D. Roosevelt to *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* – tend to jar. There may, however, be some readers who find that such references lend additional colour to the narrative.

The author's parliamentary sketch-writing skills also show in his depiction of the personalities involved in the debates on Reform. He begins with a series of potted biographies of 'the cast': on the Whig side, Lords Althorp and Durham, Earl Grey and Henry Brougham; on the Tory side, Wellington, Robert Peel, John Wilson Croker and Sir Edward Knatchbull; and representing popular politics, the radical Henry Hunt and Thomas Attwood, leader of the Birmingham Political Union. These entertaining pen portraits give a good sense of the characters of some of the leading protagonists, although in some cases – both in these biographies and later in the book – Pearce is tempted to include rather too many asides, which tend to detract from the main flow of the narrative, all the more so when encumbered with unfortunate typographical errors such as the reference to Dickens's *Bleak Horse* (p. 9).

The omission of Lord John Russell from those deemed worthy of a biographical sketch will seem particularly odd to historians of the Liberal Party, given that he was responsible for introducing the Reform Bill into the Commons, and had been a proponent of Reform since the 1820s. Little more than two pages are devoted to the Cabinet's framing of the initial bill, a process which Pearce describes as 'haphazard' (p. 69). This may well be a fair assessment, but he could usefully have devoted more space to consideration of how the measure was shaped not simply by expediency, but also by a long-standing and principled commitment to Reform on the part of Whigs such as Grey and Russell.

Pearce's account of the debates on the Reform Act shows these leading individuals in action: Grey, the reforming aristocrat, endeavouring to win over the Lords; Wellington, determined to resist popular pressure; Lord Chancellor Brougham, 'clever, explosive, devious' (p. 189), a skilful debater (allegedly with

the assistance of mulled port on one occasion). However, Pearce also considers the contribution that less well-known figures made to the debates. He cites to great effect the speech of John Hawkins, a Whig backbencher, dismissing the arguments of 'that class of protagonists … who always entertain a sincere conviction at any given moment that the present is not the right moment for the discussion of this question, and they arrive at such conviction by this ingenious dilemma. When the people are clamorous for Reform, they tell us that we ought not to concede such a measure to the demands of popular turbulence; and when the people are silent, that silence is proof of indifference and therefore the measure need not be passed' (p. 134).

While Pearce focuses primarily on Westminster, the extra-parliamentary activities of what Hawkins termed 'the people' and what others referred to as 'the populace' or, less sympathetically, 'the mob', are given their place in his account. Pearce's eye for a telling detail – the rough-sharpening of their swords by the Birmingham garrison (so as to inflict more serious wounds on would-be rioters), the request for fifty copies of the Birmingham Political Union's rule-book (so that similar organisations could be set up elsewhere to campaign for Reform) – means that the relatively limited attention he gives to popular politics is nonetheless effective in conveying the mood of the time. His citations from Charles Greville's diary are particularly revealing, and indicate that the forthcoming publication of an abridged version of Greville's diaries (edited by Pearce) will be a fertile source for historians of this period.

Such are the strengths of this lively and interesting work. Whether it greatly advances historical knowledge on the subject is another question. This is certainly not the book for those wanting detailed statistics on the number of voters enfranchised by the 1832 Reform Act, or a roll-call of the constituencies disfranchised and created. Pearce's analysis of the impact of the Act amounts to less than a page. He fails to mention key innovations such as the creation of an electoral register, which had a crucial impact on the future development of party organisation. He also ignores other elements of the Act which have attracted more recent interest from historians, notably the issue of 'gender', with the 1832 Act being the first legislation to define the franchise as specifically male.[1] Those wishing to understand points such as the distinction between the potwalloper and the scot-and-lot franchises (which Pearce conflates into one category) or the finer implications of the Chandos clause (entirely absent from this study, although the source of some controversy among academic historians) will also not find much help here. Nor does Pearce engage with any of the secondary literature on the Act, although ending as he does with Sydney Smith's declaration that 'they had accomplished a very great good' (p. 302), it is clear that his account fits in with more recent work which has tended to reassert the significance of 1832 in the face of earlier efforts to downplay its impact.[2] Nevertheless, for those wanting a readable account of the events surrounding the passage of the 1832 Reform Act, Pearce's work still has much to commend it.

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Dr Kathryn Rix is a Junior Research Fellow in History at Christ's College, Cambridge, and is currently working on a study of the professional Liberal and Conservative agents in the late nineteenth century.

1 See for example Anna Clark, 'Gender, class and the constitution: franchise reform in England, 1832–1928', in James Vernon (ed.), *Re-reading the Constitution: New narratives in the political history of England's long nineteenth century* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 230–53.

2 See, for example, Derek Beales, 'The Electorate Before and After 1832: The right to vote, and the opportunity', *Parliamentary History*, 11:1 (1992), pp. 139–50.

The double Duchess and a violently moderate man

Henry Vane: *Affair Of State: A Biography of the 8th Duke and Duchess of Devonshire* (Peter Owen Publishers, 2004)

Reviewed by **Tony Little**

The 8th Duke of Devonshire embodied late Whig politics; he led the Liberal Party for five years and served in both Liberal and Conservative governments. The Duke was only man to be offered the premiership three times, without taking the office, and Henry Vane argues he deserved a fourth chance at the opening of the twentieth century. Louise van Alten was from one of the oldest Hanoverian noble families and fashioned a career as a British political hostess, with a beauty that won her the hand of two dukes. Yet, outside the circle of historians of the nineteenth century, they are largely forgotten.

In 1852, the twenty-year-old Louise married Viscount Mandeville, who succeeded as Duke of Manchester in 1855. Despite their rank, the Manchesters were not among the richest in the land. The Duke does not appear to have had strong political

ambitions, unlike his wife who, Vane argues, set out to establish a Tory salon to rival the Peelites' Lady Waldegrave and the Whig establishments of Ladies Sutherland and Palmerston. The social occasions managed by these leading hostesses were critical in building party cohesion and facilitating political plotting. Lady Palmerston's successes can be contrasted with the social ineptitude of Lady Russell as an important factor in the ultimate victory of Lord Palmerston over Lord John Russell.

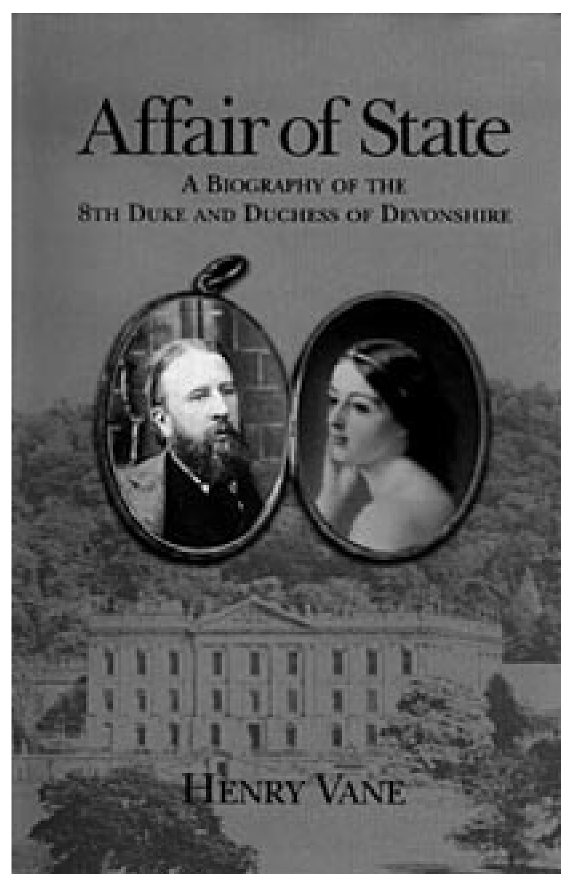
Having wangled a promise out of Lord Derby over a flirtatious glass of champagne, the Duchess of Manchester was appointed as Mistress of the Robes under the Tory leader's minority government of 1858. Despite initial successes at Court, she was snubbed when invitations were issued for the wedding of the Prince of Wales in 1863. Vane attributes this to Queen Victoria becoming aware of and resenting the unconventional manner in which she acquired her household appointment. But is it possible that the Queen disapproved of another facet of her 'fast' lifestyle – an affair with Lord Cowper?

Spencer Compton Cavendish was born in 1833 and, when his father became Duke of Devonshire in 1858, he assumed the courtesy title of Lord Hartington until he in turn became Duke in 1891. Hartington gained an MA from Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1854 and for a few years led the usual life of a young man of high social position, hunting a good deal and serving as an officer in the militia. Between 1859 and 1862 he notoriously conducted an affair with Catherine 'Skittles' Walters, six years his junior, who shared his love for country sports. While never likely to lead to a suitable marriage, this must be considered a serious episode in the life of both parties and Vane has gone to some effort investigate his somewhat babyish correspondence with her.

In 1857, Hartington was elected for North Lancashire. After the 1859 general election, he moved the motion of no confidence enabling Palmerston to displace Lord Derby's government. He was appointed a junior Lord of the Admiralty, and in February 1866 became Secretary of State for War in Russell's government, entering the Cabinet at thirty-four. In Gladstone's first government he introduced the secret ballot and nationalised the telegraphs. After Gladstone's defeat in 1874 and resignation in 1875, Hartington led the Liberals in the Commons but was unable to resist Gladstone's comeback, in 1880, despite the Queen's efforts to make Hartington prime minister. In Gladstone's fractious second government, he served loyally in several roles but these were secondary to his leadership of the Whig faction in the jostling with Chamberlain for the expected succession to the Grand Old Man.

Hartington's stubborn antagonism to Gladstone's Home Rule proposals in 1886 broke up the Liberal Party, with Hartington leading the Liberal Unionists in alliance with Salisbury's Tories. Both in 1886 and 1887, Salisbury tried to persuade Hartington to take the premiership, a step he felt would have left him a prisoner of the Tories. In 1895, when hope of the Liberal Unionists rejoining the Liberal Party had faded, the Duke of Devonshire served under Salisbury and, on Salisbury's retirement, in Balfour's government.

In the creation of the Liberal Unionists, Hartington had co-operated surprisingly well with Chamberlain, the radical who had once attacked him as 'Rip Van Winkle', an allusion to Hartington's slothful habits as well as an attack on his supposedly retrograde politics. But in 1903, Chamberlain proposed to substitute Imperial Preference for Free Trade. Balfour's convoluted mishandling of this crisis concluded with the resignations of both Chamberlain and Devonshire, ending the Duke's career and paving the way for the Liberal landslide of 1906. Vane argues that Devonshire, not Balfour, should have succeeded Salisbury and would have been more effective in restraining Chamberlain's outburst.



Hartington had known the Duchess of Manchester from the late 1850s and Vane suggests they became lovers around 1864. Despite being excluded from the Prince of Wales' wedding, the Duchess became an established member of the somewhat dissolute Marlborough House set that surrounded the heir to the throne. Hartington's love of good food, hunting and horse racing ensconced him in the same circle. The affair between the two was widely known but they abided carefully by the conventions of the time. Both seem to have been on good terms with the Duke of Manchester, perhaps helped by his reputed fondness for alcohol, something that Vane only hints at. Indeed at one stage Hartington contemplated making a threesome with the Manchesters for an overseas tour.

Although the Victorian world shared our obsession with

celebrities, the press was more careful to wait for the incontrovertible evidence of court cases before indulging in the pleasures of prurience. Hartington's discretion allowed his public career to continue untarnished by scandal. Louise married her second duke in 1892, after the death of her first husband and Hartington's father. Once officially established as a couple, Louise was able to entertain on a grand scale at Devonshire House in London and at Chatsworth, most spectacularly during the celebrations for the Queen's silver jubilee in 1897. The age of the salon had passed but Louise was thought to have helped push Hartington in a conservative direction and to have kept him engaged in politics despite his distaste for the infighting.

So why is Hartington so neglected? Gruff, offhand, unpunctual, careless of his personal appearance, though with a nice line in self-deprecatory humour, his public persona was too austere to command adulation rather than just respect. Goschen once described Hartington as 'a moderate man, a violently moderate man' but it is the charismatic personalities like Gladstone or the men of exceptional ideas like Chamberlain who command attention from posterity rather than the safe pair of hands and the 'might-have-been' premiers.

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In addition, Hartington has not been fortunate in his biographies. The two-volume tombstone by Bernard Holland was published too close to his death to allow a full approach to his private life. The only modern life, prior to Vane's, was, self-consciously, a political life only.[1] In contrast, Henry Vane has clearly concentrated on the social life. While we must be grateful that this redresses the balance, it has its own disadvantages. Judging from the way in which Vane drags in most of the social embarrassments that surrounded the Prince of Wales, there is insufficient material on the Devonshires for their lives to stand on their own, which is a disappointment as the Duchess in particular appears to be a character whose political influence should be further investigated.

More importantly, the significance of the Duke of Devonshire is essentially political. Outside politics, what did he accomplish? If he had been only a hunting, shooting and fishing duke who restored the family fortunes, we would no doubt be pleased that we can still enjoy the treasures of Chatsworth and the pleasures of Eastbourne but nothing more. Consequently Vane cannot stick to his intentions; politics keeps surfacing. But his concern to return to the social means that the issues are over-simplified, particularly in the way that he feels obliged to take the Duke's side in all the quarrels which divided the statesmen of the Victorian and Edwardian periods. For readers of the *Journal* that must be frustrating, and a challenge for a historian to bring us a balanced life of one of the finest of the last generation of Whigs.

Tony Little is Chair of the Liberal Democrat History Group.

1 Patrick Jackson, *Last of The Whigs: Political Biography of Lord Hartington, Later Eighth Duke of Devonshire (1833–1908)* (Fairleigh Dickinson, 1994).

ARCHIVES

The Beveridge archives at the LSE Library

by **Sue Donnelly**

William Henry Beveridge was born in 1879 and educated at Charterhouse and Balliol College, Oxford. He was Sub-warden of Toynbee Hall between 1903 and 1905, before becoming a leader writer for the *Morning Post* from 1905, where he wrote on social problems. He joined the civil service in 1908 and entered the Board of Trade. He was the Director of Labour Exchanges 1909–16, and he was a leading authority on unemployment and social security, authoring *Unemployment: a Problem of Industry* in 1909 (revised 1930), a pioneering study of the labour market's complexity. He helped draw up the 1909 Labour Exchanges Act and part ii of the 1911 National Insurance Act, the latter introducing unemployment insurance for two and a quarter million workers in the heavy industries.

In 1919, he became Director of the London School of Economics, a period often described as a second foundation of the School. It was a period of tremendous growth, and Beveridge's directorship was responsible for the School's recognition during the 1930s as one of the world's leading social science centres. He was a central figure in the sheltering of the 'refugee scholars' displaced by Nazi oppression in the 1930s; the Academic Assistance Council was established as a result of his initiative. He resigned the directorship in 1937, taking up the Mastership of University College, Oxford before joining the government in 1940. In 1944 he became the Liberal MP for Berwick-upon-Tweed, and after the loss of his seat in 1945 he served as a Liberal peer in the House of Lords.

His most famous contribution to society is the Beveridge Report (officially, the *Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services*) of 1942, the basis of the 1945–51 Labour government's legislative

programme for social reform. Beveridge saw full employment as the pivot of the social welfare programme he expressed in the report, and *Full Employment in a Free Society* (1944) expressed how this goal might be gained. Alternative measures for achieving it included Keynesian-style fiscal regulation, direct control of manpower, and state control of the means of production.

The impetus behind Beveridge's thinking was social justice, and the creation of an ideal new society after the war. He believed that the discovery of objective socio-economic laws could solve the problems of society. He was critical of shortcomings in social legislation after 1945, and his *Voluntary Action* (1948) defended the role of the private sector in the provision of social welfare. In later years Beveridge devoted himself to a history of prices, the first volume of which, *Prices and Wages in England from the Twelfth to the Nineteenth Century*, had been published in 1939. He was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1937.

Scope and content of the collection

Personal papers of William Henry Beveridge, 1st Baron Beveridge of Tuggal, and his family, [1880]–1963, comprising the following.

- Family and personal papers, 1869–1963, including genealogical material; correspondence, books and royalty statements relating to the work of Beveridge's parents, Annette Susannah and Henry Beveridge, 1901–59; papers concerning Beveridge's education, 1891–1903; personal ephemera including birthday cards, programmes, academic notes, and invitations, [1884]–1961; personal diaries, 1903–05, 1929–34, 1949–52, 1959 and 1961; engagement diaries, 1933–61; material relating to grants and degrees, 1916–61, notably honorary degrees, the KCB and his barony; papers concerning household affairs, 1906–63; personal financial papers, such as personal account ledger, 1907–20, income tax papers, 1907–61, correspondence, bills, receipts and insurance papers, 1903–62; photographs of family and friends, 1884–1958.
- Correspondence, 1883–1963, including Beveridge family letters and letters to and from friends and colleagues.
- Papers relating to unemployment and labour exchanges, 1902–60, notably material of the Mansion House Unemployed Fund, 1904–05, the London Unemployed Fund, 1904–05, and the Central (Unemployed) Body for London, 1905–08; correspondence, notes and statistics concerning unemployment insurance and labour exchanges in Germany, 1907, and Britain, 1908; notice and syllabus of lectures by Beveridge on 'The economics of unemployment', 1908; material relating to the publication of *Unemployment: a Problem of Industry* (Longmans and Co, London 1909), 1907–34, notably correspondence with Longmans, royalty payments, reviews, and notes and drafts relating to later editions; papers relating to his work at the Board of Trade, 1908–60, including correspondence and memoranda concerning juvenile employment, 1910–11, reports and speeches concerning labour exchanges in Ireland, 1910–19, and Ghent, Belgium, 1913–14, and various memoranda on the working of labour exchanges, 1915–16; material concerning the unemployment insurance scheme, 1907–44, including memoranda and drafts, reports, statistics, committee minutes, press cuttings and Beveridge's notes about unemployment insurance by industries and casual labour; working notes and correspondence for *Insurance for All and Everything* (*Daily News,* London, 1924); Ministry of Labour reports, notes and memoranda on unemployment insurance, 1910–29; Government Acts, reports and publications on unemployment, 1902–30.
- Papers relating to Beveridge's work during World War One, 1914–21, including material relating to the Ministry of Munitions, 1915–16, such as correspondence, memoranda and reports on manpower problems, and memoranda concerning the history and activities of the Ministry; papers of the Manpower Distribution Board, 1916; material relating to post-war reconstruction, including schemes for demobilisation, and papers relating to the post-war prospects of trades and industries; correspondence, minutes, memoranda and reports created by the Ministry of Food, 1916–21, on subjects including food rationing, family budgets, and the staffing of the Ministry.
- Material collated during Beveridge's time as Director of the London School of Economics, 1895–58, notably correspondence with Sir Arthur Herbert Drummond Ramsay Steel-Maitland, Chairman of Governors, 1924–25; memoranda and correspondence mainly relating to LSE prizes and scholarships, 1924–52; Director's reports, 1924–37; lecture notes and texts of speeches, 1920–37; programmes, 1920–37; correspondence relating to his resignation from LSE, 1936–37; correspondence and papers concerning his role as a member of the Senate of the University of London, 1923–58, notably papers relating to the purchase of the Bloomsbury site, 1923–33.
- Papers relating to Beveridge's post as Master of University College, Oxford University, 1937–62, including correspondence and reports concerning the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, the Institute of Statistics, and Nuffield College.
- Material relating to politics, 1943–63, including correspondence, speeches, press cuttings, and reports created whilst MP for Berwick-upon-Tweed, 1944–45; papers concerning the general election of 1945, mainly comprising pamphlets, election addresses, press cuttings and correspondence from candidates, constituents, and the Berwick Division Liberal Association; Beveridge's speech notes and *Hansard* extracts from parliamentary debates in the House of Lords, 1946–63, on subjects mainly related to welfare, unemployment, and economics; papers concerning the Liberal Party Organisation, 1945–62, including correspondence with the LPO and

A Liberal Democrat History Group fringe meeting

LIBERALS AND ORGANISED LABOUR

The loss of the support of organised labour during the late Victorian and Edwardian period was a key factor in the decline of the Liberal Party as an electoral force. Once this confidence in the party was gone, the Liberals never got it back and trade union and labour issues have never since had the highest priority in Liberal politics. Our speakers will examine why and how organised labour broke away from supporting the Liberal Party, and its impact on the Liberal vote.

Speakers: **David Powell** (Head of the History Programme, York St John College; author of *British Politics and the Labour Question, 1868–1990*) and **Keith Laybourn** (Professor of History, Huddersfield University; author of *Liberalism and the Rise of Labour, 1890–1918*). Chair: **Alan Sherwell** (chair, Liberal Democrat policy working group on employment and trade unions).

8.00pm Friday 4th March 2005

Charter Suite, Moat House Hotel, Harrogate

Please note that due to increased conference security, only those with conference photo-badges will be able to attend. For those only wishing to attend fringe meetings, registration is free, but is limited to Liberal Democrat party members; and please allow time to register and pick up your badge at the Conference Centre in Harrogate.

other Liberal organisations.

- Material concerning other interests and activities of Beveridge, 1920–62, notably papers relating to the health services, pensions, and old age; New Towns, including material on the Peterlee Development Corporation and the Newton Aycliffe Development Corporation; traffic and preservation problems in Oxford; population and fertility, including articles, pamphlets and correspondence; weather periodicity; world government and peace aims, 1944–62, including minutes and correspondence of the Crusade for World Government, Britain in Europe Ltd, the European–Atlantic Group, the Federal Educational and Research Trust, the Federal Union, One World Trust, the Parliamentary Group for World Government, the World Parliament Association, and the United Nations; correspondence and other papers relating to broadcasting and television.
- Papers created during the writing of reports, 1925–50, including the report of the Royal Commission on the Coal Industry, 1925–30; the report of the Unemployment Insurance Statutory Committee, 1934–44; the report of the Sub-Committee of Committee of Imperial Defence on Food Rationing, 1936–37; report of the Manpower Survey, 1940, and Committee on Skilled Men in the Services, 1941; report of the Fuel Rationing Enquiry, 1942; report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Social Insurance and Allied Services (Beveridge Report), 1941–45; report on Social Insurance, 1924, 1941–51; report of the Broadcasting Committee, 1951.
- Material relating to publications, 1901–63, including manuscripts of books, pamphlets and articles, correspondence with publishers, royalty statements, working notes, research papers and memoranda; reviews, letters to the press and obituaries, 1909–62; texts of lectures, speeches and broadcasts, 1901–63.
- Papers concerning working visits abroad, 1918–61, to Austria (the Inter-Allied Commission on Relief of German Austria), Canada, the USA, Germany, France, India, Spain, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand, Belgium, Switzerland, and Italy, mainly comprising correspondence, diaries, lecture notes, press cuttings and photographs.
- Press cuttings, 1870–63, including *Morning Post* leaders written by Beveridge, 1905–08, and cuttings concerning his death.
- Miscellaneous material, including inventories of papers in the Beveridge collection.

To gain access to the collection, please contact the Archives Division, 10 Portugal Street, London, WC2A 2HD, 020 7405 7223; document@lse.ac.uk.