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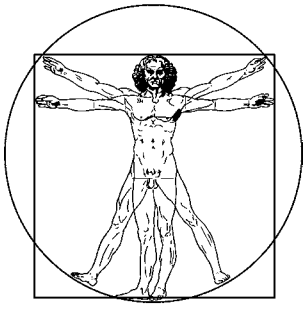
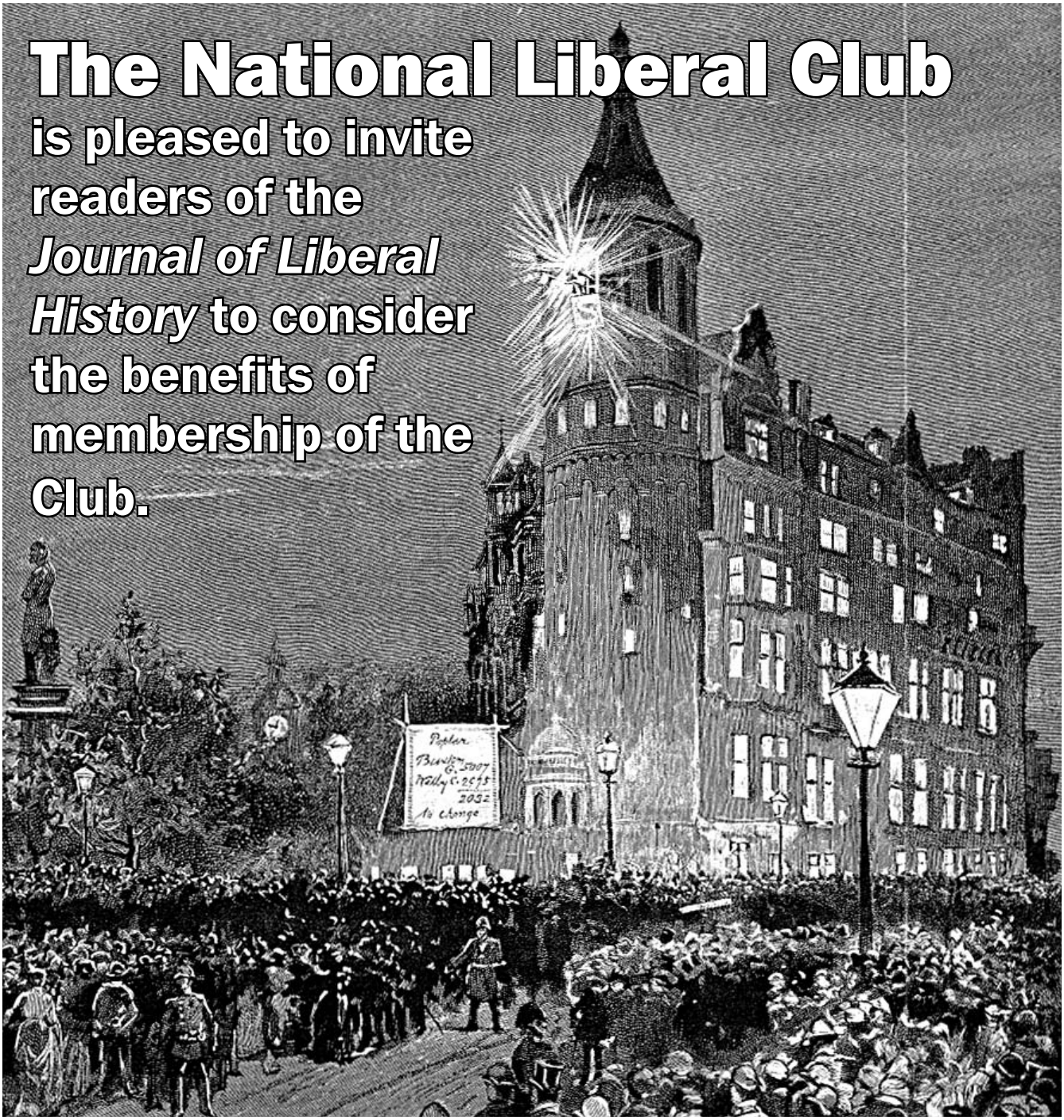
The Real Lloyd George



Liberal Democrat History Group



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THE REAL LLO

In 1947, Lloyd George's former private secretary, A. J. Sylvester, published *The Real Lloyd George,* an insider's look at Lloyd George as he really was. Although much of the contents of the book were pedestrian, it still remains an important addition to the huge Lloyd George bibliography, if only because of its author's closeness to his subject from 1923 until his death twenty-two years later, and his habit of keeping a full diary of the events which he observed at first hand. **Dr J. Graham Jones** discusses the classic semi-biographical work, and assesses its impact and reactions to its contents and influence.

A. J. Sylvester and Lloyd George.

Albert James Sylvester (1889–1989) experienced a quite unique life and career.[1] Born at Harlaston, Staffordshire, the son of a tenant farmer of very modest means, he was compelled by family poverty to leave school at just fourteen years of age and secured employment as a clerk at Charrington's brewery.

During these years he attended evening classes in shorthand and typing, gained professional qualifications in these subjects and attained champion speeds in both skills. He then migrated to London in 1910, eventually setting

OYD GEORGE

up his own business as a freelance shorthand writer at Chancery Lane, before, early in the First World War, securing a position as a stenographer (shorthand writer) in the office of M. P. A. Hankey (later Lord Hankey), who was at the time Secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence and thus at the heart of the Allied war campaign. This auspicious move was to launch Sylvester on his professional career. He became the first man ever to take shorthand notes of the proceedings of a cabinet meeting – a truly pioneering task.

In 1916 he became Hankey's private secretary, and in 1921 took up a similar position in the employ of David Lloyd George, then Prime Minister of the post-war coalition government. Although he initially remained at 10 Downing Street when his employer fell from power in the autumn of 1922, a year later Sylvester gladly rejoined his 'old chief' as Principal Private Secretary (a title upon which he himself insisted), remaining in this position for more than two decades until Lloyd George's death in March 1945.

In this privileged position his duties were necessarily wide-ranging, onerous and demanding. He ran Lloyd George's London office at Thames House, Westminster (which sometimes employed a staff of more than twenty individuals), he dealt, often on his own initiative, with his employer's massive postbag, he acted as LG's press officer and responded to most of the requests and demands which came from his constituency of Caernarfon Boroughs. He also made the practical arrangements for Lloyd George's numerous trips overseas, and, increasingly as the 1930s ran their course, he was regularly in attendance at Westminster, acting as his employer's 'eyes and ears' in the House of Commons. Sylvester was also much involved in the research and preparation of the mammoth *War Memoirs* which occupied so much of Lloyd George's time during the long 1930s. He undertook some of the research himself, arranged for the classification of the massive archive of official and private papers which Lloyd George had accumulated, and conducted often lengthy interviews with many former ministers of the crown. Sylvester was also heavily implicated in his employer's complex, bizarre personal and family life, becoming closely involved with almost all members of the sprawling Lloyd George family, spanning three generations, and experiencing an especially delicate relationship with Frances Stevenson, LG's secretary, mistress and eventually (from October 1943) his second wife.

A. J. Sylvester remained loyally in Lloyd George's employ until the very end, long after it was to his personal advantage to remain in the position. After Lloyd George had married Frances, Sylvester often felt uncomfortable, even embarrassed, at the new situation which had arisen. Yet, when he displayed any inclination to depart for a new career, both Lloyd George and Frances, clearly considering him nigh-on indispensable, begged him to remain in post. This was especially true during the autumn of 1944 after Lloyd George and Frances had returned to live in their new North Wales home, Ty Newydd, Llanystumdwy. Sylvester soon began to resent staying on indefinitely in this remote area and threatened to return to the south-east, feeling that he had been badly treated by his employers – who implored him to remain in their service:

> Frances assured me that things would be all right for me later. (All she did was to double cross me, and she did NOTHING.) In this controversy LG himself said not a word to me: neither I to him. The whole attitude and atmosphere was: He must not be bothered about things like this'[2]

Sylvester … became the first man ever to take shorthand notes of the proceedings of a cabinet meeting.

Lloyd George died at Ty Newydd on 26 March 1945. Sylvester, who had been present at the deathbed scene, suddenly found himself out of a job for the first time in his life, at fifty-five years of age. Within days of her husband's death, Frances told him in no uncertain terms that she had resolved to dispense with his services. The man who had been considered indispensable as long as Lloyd George lived was now, it seemed, suddenly dispensable. Any aspirations which Sylvester might reasonably have entertained that he might have been kept on to collaborate with the Dowager Countess (as she had now become) in perpetuating LG's good name and memory, and in working on the massive and

important archive of papers left by him, had been cruelly and finally dashed. It should be noted, however, that he was given three years' salary, a substantial sum, in lieu of notice, and that he also inherited the sum of £1,000 under the terms of Lloyd George's will.

Sylvester's first subsequent employment after Lloyd George's death was on the staff of Lord Beaverbrook at the *Daily Express* on a three-year contract. From his earliest forays into British public life during World War One, Sylvester had been an instinctive, compulsive note-taker, a practice naturally much facilitated by his fluent shorthand. He wrote especially detailed notes on the seminal events which he witnessed, and at times he took to keeping a diary, albeit spasmodically. Many of those around him, especially the eminent newspaper proprietor Lord Riddell, impressed upon him that he should record in detail everything that Lloyd George did or said. The result was that certainly from 1931 onwards Sylvester went to great pains to chronicle his famous employer's doings and sayings. It became his regular pattern late at night to keep his diary in his meticulous Pitman's shorthand, partly to achieve speed, partly for security reasons. By the time of Lloyd George's death Sylvester's diaries were an immensely detailed, perceptive source of quite unique information about the former Prime Minister and his family, intermingled with much very personal material.

By the time of Lloyd George's death Sylvester's diaries were an immensely detailed, perceptive source of quite unique information about the former Prime Minister and his family, intermingled with much very personal material.

Once Lloyd George had died, Sylvester immediately began to make use of his run of diaries and the more modest archive of correspondence and papers which he had carefully squirreled away to pen a semi-biographical volume about his former employer with a view to immediate publication. He laboured away with extraordinary speed and diligence so that a typescript draft of the projected volume, provisionally entitled 'The Real Lloyd George', had been completed by May 1946. The original text ran to more than 200,000 words. A diary which its compiler had originally intended to be a private record was now to be made available to the public at large. Although Sylvester was himself a competent and accurate typist, his voluminous text was retyped by Alex McLachlan of St Leonards, Sussex, who made use of economy spacing so that it might be published as a single volume by Cassell & Co. the following year. Sylvester was himself a little unhappy with the proposed title 'The Real Lloyd George', fearing that it 'might possibly produce the idea that the book contains an attack which it does not'. Rather, he proposed 'Lloyd George as I Knew Him', 'The Lloyd George I Knew', or 'Lloyd George – a Close Up'. The publishers, however, preferred to stick with the original title.

As the publishers began to make arrangements for the publication of the volume, Sylvester forwarded a copy of the typescript to his employer Lord Beaverbrook in the hope that the press magnate might adhere to his previous half-promise that extracts might be published in the *Sunday Express* prior to the volume's appearance: 'The mere possibility of such a book has been kept secret. The reason is that I have competitors, and I mean to be first in the market.' He wrote to Beaverbrook:

> In dealing with my late Chief nothing whatever has been said to belittle his great reputation, still less to attack him. There is nothing 'catty' in this book. He is shown as the greatest man I have known; a Genius, but, like us all, with weaknesses, and is therefore intensely human. An endeavour has been made to show him in all his moods. This has been done by reciting incidents and leaving them to produce their own effect.[4]

At about the same time copies were despatched to a number of literary agents in the United States in the hope of securing simultaneous publication on both sides of the Atlantic. The text was, however, generally badly received by readers in the USA: 'The book is an intimate, gossipy record of political anecdotes and small talk centering around Lloyd George … We don't believe there would be a large enough market for it to justify publication by us.'; 'The author intrudes himself into every situation, thus making them seem more trivial than they may actually have been.'; 'We old people may know of Lloyd George, but he is only a name to a great many and a name in not too good odor [*sic*] at that'.[5] It was quite clear that the idea of simultaneous publication on both sides of the Atlantic was a non-starter.

A little later Sylvester approached a number of editors of British newspapers requesting them to publish lengthy extracts from *The Real Lloyd George* as a series to whet the appetite of the post-war British public prior to the book's subsequent appearance as a monograph. The proposal was sympathetically considered, but eventually rejected, by the *Evening Standard* and the *Sunday Express*. As paper was in notably short supply during this period of severe austerity in the late 1940s, editors tended to shy away from entering into such a commitment, arguing the necessity of focusing on current affairs rather than material with a strong historical or personal slant – like the book in question. The author was especially hurt by the refusal of the *Sunday Express*, owned by his employer, to serialise the work: 'It grieves me a little that, after your kindness to me, it is not possible for some space to be found in your papers for something about L.G. to whom I know you were so personally attached. I am, too, in a personal dilemma, because my agents will obviously attempt to get this serialised elsewhere. What am I to do?'[6]

Within days his prophecy had come to fruition when he was informed by his literary agents that the first British serial rights of the volume had been purchased

by the *Sunday Dispatch* for £500.[7] Arrangements were then finalised for extensive extracts to be published in the *Dispatch* at the beginning of 1947 several months before its appearance as a monograph. Some publicity was also given to its publication as a book before the end of the same year.[8] 'You must have worked very hard on it', wrote Dr Thomas Jones CH, the former Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet, who was at the time also writing a full biography of Lloyd George, '& it is sure to meet with great success. For myself my pace is that of a septuagenarian & a slow one at that'. 'I am waiting for your Life', responded an appreciative Sylvester, 'for you can give the Celtic touch, with your knowledge and experience of the subject which no other can excel'.[9]

As the *Sunday Dispatch* proudly announced its intention to publish extracts from the book beginning on 2 February 1947, Sylvester wrote reassuringly to Lady Megan Lloyd George, youngest daughter of the subject of his volume, still the Liberal MP for Anglesey, who was especially sensitive to her father's reputation, memory and good name:

> It is not a life. It is a portrait of the greatest and most remarkable man I have ever known, with all or rather some of his strength and some of his weaknesses. This I have done by way of relating events and leaving the reader to make up his own mind. It is intimate and dignified, and there is no 'dirt' in it.[10]

The *Dispatch* predictably gave the work maximum publicity, pointing to its unique originality and frankness and drawing attention to some of the more dramatic chapter headings:

- THE WOMAN WHO BOSSED LLOYD GEORGE
- LLOYD GEORGE AND HITLER
- LLOYD GEORGE'S MARRIAGE TO HIS SECRETARY AT THE AGE OF 80
- THE DIFFICULTY OVER LLOYD GEORGE'S TITLE

Outspoken extracts from the book were given advance currency:

> Lloyd George gained a reputation as a great organiser. In some ways that reputation was justified, but in others it was far from justified. The plain unvarnished truth is, left alone he was a most unholy muddler. Left to himself he could not even dress without upsetting everything in the room and losing half of his clothing. Give him an important document and the next moment he had lost it. That did not trouble him. Someone could search for it.

And again:

> Domineering as he was, there was one person who bossed him. She was the one woman who could and did put Lloyd George in his place. She was no respecter of the dignity of Cabinet rank or Premiership. To her, Lloyd George was just a spoiled child who needed correction and got it. Once he entered his private apartments at No. 10 he had to reckon with her.[11]

This was a reference to LG's housekeeper, Miss Sarah Jones, who had served the family loyally for decades. The article about her – 'The woman who bossed Lloyd George' – was the second in the series, published on 9 February 1947, and provoked protests from the good lady herself (by then in the employ of Lady Megan Lloyd George at Brynawelon) whom Sylvester was then obliged to attempt to pacify: 'I have nothing but the greatest admiration for Miss Sarah Jones, and have always said so, and have expressed that admiration in everything that I have written.'[12]

On the whole the extracts published in the *Sunday Dispatch* during the early months of 1947 were well received and increased admiration for Sylvester. Some critics vocally protested that Lloyd George should be judged by his many achievements rather than by his more dubious personal and family life: 'I cannot see that your book can serve any other purpose than to grieve the relatives & friends of Lloyd George'.[13] This was, however, very much a minority viewpoint. Generally the articles which saw the light of day in the *Dispatch* whetted the appetite for the publication of the entire volume, which was scheduled to appear on 25 September.

The final published work ran to 322 pages and contained twenty-four chapters, some of them very brief, and nine photographs. It sold for eighteen shillings. The opening passages set the tone of the volume:

> That David Lloyd George was a genius, few even among his most bitter enemies will deny. He had all the strength of genius, but like others equally gifted, he had weaknesses. In presenting this picture of David Lloyd George, let me say at the outset, he had no greater admirer or more loyal servant than I. But, my admiration and loyalty did not blind me during the thirty years that I was in almost daily contact with him as secretary and confidant, to the weaknesses in his make-up.
>
> A strange complex character this Welshman, to my mind the greatest Parliamentarian since Pitt.
>
> Dominating, impulsive, masterful, emotional to a degree, yet often peevish and childish, a man possessed of unbounded moral courage but strangely lacking in physical courage, a leader, great in conception, but in some ways lacking the power of execution and follow through; in big things a man of action and instant decision, but in smaller things, slow and hesitant. To him small matters were a bore and unworthy of his consideration. They could be left to others while he devoted his attention to the direction or conception of policy.

'My admiration and loyalty did not blind me during the thirty years that I was in almost daily contact with him as secretary and confidant, to the weaknesses in his make-up.'

> Full of audacity and daring, a great showman, confident of his own judgment, in many things vain, able to sway the crowd even in the teeth of the most bitter opposition. Keen student of 'mob psychology', Lloyd George suffered from an inferiority complex, which in later life may possibly have accounted for his soured outlook, his suspicions and jealousies.
>
> Throughout his life he preached democracy, but in his own life he practised autocracy. No greater autocrat than Lloyd George ever lived, yet he failed completely to realise he was an autocrat, just as he failed to realise that he had become soured and embittered.[14]

Generally, the book's rather sensational title was not reflected in its contents. Much of it consisted of trivia. The main feature of historical interest was the revealing account of Lloyd George's second meeting with Hitler in 1936 which was genuinely informative and broke new ground. Otherwise, some observers were nonplussed at the picture of Lloyd George which emerged compellingly from a perusal of the book's pages. In his old age Sylvester's employer had become a soured, autocratic and peevish old man. Far from being the great organiser of social security after 1906 and the architect of victory of 1916–18, he had degenerated into an absolute muddler, constantly losing letters and frequently changing his mind at a mere whim, scarcely capable of even dressing himself without knocking things over and losing his clothes.[15] The following passage is fairly typical:

> In his last years spent at Churt, he one day made up his mind that he would open all letters addressed to him and gave instructions that none was to be opened by the staff. The result was that a few letters were opened, but the vast majority remained sealed up. He would push some in his jacket pocket until it was so full that it could not contain another one, then the contents of the pocket would be transferred to a drawer or desk and forgotten. Other letters, some opened, some not, would be dropped or left lying about in one room or another until the fit to dictate a reply to one or another of the opened letters seized him.[16]

In the first page of the last chapter, Sylvester wrote:

> Whether presiding over an allied conference; or handling potatoes or apples at Churt; or whether just looking at his pigs or with his dogs, wherever that personality went newspaper men always found in him good copy. As the years rolled on, however, it was disappointing to find him using his great gifts in such petty ways. L. G. became sour. This, together with his intense jealousy of the 'other fellow', were more responsible than anything else for his never returning to power, and for his attitude in the last war.
>
> As the war developed, he quarrelled or cold-shouldered one after another who did not agree with him, and became a very lonely figure. He had favoured a peace by negotiation in the early days of the war, as some others like him had also done. But the others, realising that was quite impossible of attainment, threw their energies into the national effort.[17]

The volume immediately attracted a great deal of attention, some of it complimentary. 'Much of the real Lloyd George is undoubtedly there', claimed the *Manchester Guardian*, 'What one fails to find is the whole Lloyd George. … Undoubtedly it is when dealing with Lloyd George's defects, which he does fully, sometimes even harshly, that he gets close to the real Lloyd George'.[18] 'Mr Sylvester valiantly asserts the greatness of his master's genius', responded the *Daily Telegraph*, 'but all he succeeds in showing us comes very close to being a catalogue of his littleness. … Many of the incidents related are pointless and without significance, the anecdotes without wit.'[19] Writing in the *News Chronicle*, A. J. Cummings dismissed the volume not only as 'incomplete' but also as 'a superficial and somewhat distorted characterisation of a great man in which his peccadilloes are made to take on a solemn and exaggerated importance'.[20] Sylvester's own postbag predictably contained more fulsome communications.[21] Dr Thomas Jones, who was at the time himself writing a single-volume biography of Lloyd George (a work which eventually appeared in 1951), wrote to Sylvester, 'So long as interest is taken in L.G., your book will be indispensable to an intimate understanding of his character'. In reply, Sylvester explained that the volume had been prepared hastily, mainly between December 1945 and May 1946, usually written during weekends and late at night.[22] The book predictably sold quickly and was out of print within weeks of publication. A reprint was at the time impossible because of the extreme shortage of paper during the immediate post-war years.

Far from being the great organiser of social security after 1906 and the architect of victory of 1916–18, he had degenerated into an absolute muddler, constantly losing letters and frequently changing his mind.

There was inevitably a great deal of speculation over how Frances, the Dowager Countess Lloyd-George, would react to the publication and revelations of *The Real Lloyd George*. There had inevitably been some latent friction and antagonism between Frances and Sylvester ever since he had re-entered Lloyd George's employ in the autumn of 1923, imperiously demanding to be called 'Principal Private Secretary' (a title which implied a position somehow superior to hers), and insisting on a substantial pay hike and generous compensation for forfeited civil service pension rights. Aware of Sylvester's many virtues and loyalty to LG, she grudgingly accepted the situation, but remained rather peeved.[23] Since working for Lloyd George was a task at best fraught with difficulties, problems and tensions, the two collaborated reasonably well for rather more than three decades. Interviewed in 1984

when he was ninety-five years of age, Sylvester recalled, 'Frances and I were colleagues for over thirty years. We worked together and never had any quarrel or disagreement of any kind. You had to work together in order to deal with a man like Lloyd George. He could have a filthy temper.'[24]

Beneath the surface, however, the relationship between them was far from harmonious. In her heart of hearts, Frances, although aware of Sylvester's strengths and usefulness, considered him to be vain, over-ambitious and touchy. Behind his back she would always laugh at him and his voice which had a strong nasal twang overlaying a marked Staffordshire accent and his tendency to rub his hands together rather subserviently which made him appear, in her view, a modern day Uriah Heep. Sylvester in turn accused Frances of being prim, stiff, and intent only on providing comfort for Lloyd George and personal self-seeking.

Once Lloyd George had died and Frances had rather unceremoniously dispensed with Sylvester's services just days later, the latent antagonism between them burst out into the open. When the articles derived from *The Real Lloyd George* were published in the *Sunday Dispatch* in the opening weeks of 1947, Frances's postbag contained a number of highly indignant letters: 'I am merely writing to say how furiously indignant I feel towards Mr Sylvester for his vulgar article on LG in the current *Weekly Dispatch*. It will be disliked by thousands & I really cannot think what ***possessed*** him. … It always hurts when a faithful dog turns & bites his master.'[26] Another correspondent wrote to express his 'disgust at reading the extracts in the *Sunday Dispatch* from Mr. Sylvester's book and my utter disapproval of that newspaper in printing such rubbish'. Warming to his theme, he went on:

> He was always a good friend to Mr Sylvester who would not dare to write as he does were David Lloyd George still with us and I can only put it down to a desire to get some money by writing sensational nonsense. To suggest that your husband was so friendly with Hitler is really a vile libel on a great British patriot and Mr Sylvester seems to forget entirely 1914–1918. The name of Lloyd George will live as long as this country has a history; his unworthy ex-Secretary and his wretched book will soon be forgotten.[27]

Frances, although aware of Sylvester's strengths and usefulness, considered him to be vain, over-ambitious and touchy.

There was particular annoyance at Sylvester's accounts of Lloyd George's visits to Hitler at Berchtesgaden in 1936 and his suggestion of LG's strong pro-Nazi sympathies at that time.

Frances, who had inherited her husband's massive archive of private and official papers at his death, had felt uneasy when she had read in the 'Books to Come' column of the *Times Literary Supplement* during January 1947 that Sylvester's book on Lloyd George was to appear that year, and instructed her solicitors to write to the author. 'No rights of Frances under LG's will have in any way been contravened' was Sylvester's dusty response.[28] She herself bit her tongue until the publication of the article on LG's visit to Hitler, a piece which provoked her to write to Charles Eade, editor of the *Sunday Dispatch*, a letter which was duly published in the paper the following Sunday:

> Mr Sylvester, by exaggerating certain incidents, and ignoring others, presents a distorted view of events, as indeed he does of my husband himself. To give two instances, where I could cite many: he does not mention the fact that my husband took Hitler to task for his treatment of the Jews and attempted to influence him on that matter; nor does he mention the fact that my husband did not conceal from Hitler his opinion of Germany's action in breaking the naval clauses of the Treaty of Versailles. Mr Sylvester prefers to present a picture which would lead one to imagine that my husband whole-heartedly approved and admired the Nazi policy and activities, which is the reverse of the truth.[29]

Sylvester responded to this attack simply by stating, 'My account was written from day to day in Germany and is accurate'.[30] Generally Frances was, and indeed remained, highly upset by Sylvester's portrayal of her late husband which, she felt, focused unduly on his petty domestic failings and the awkward traits in his personality and tended to play down his undoubted charm, humour and many inspiring qualities.[31] On the whole, however, the alleged defects in Lloyd George's character revealed to the world in *The Real Lloyd George* were relatively innocuous, and the volume did not reveal a great deal about LG's secret personal double life. Its tone reflected a heartfelt indignation on the part of its author that he had not been asked either to write, or at least to collaborate in, the writing of Lloyd George's 'official biography' which was then being prepared by Malcolm Thomson.

In turn, one of the reasons for Frances's annoyance was that Sylvester's book had appeared before Thomson's. In press columns she condemned *The Real Lloyd George* as 'a most unfortunate and regrettable book'.[32] Even before the volume had appeared in book form, the extracts published in the *Sunday Dispatch* at the beginning of the year had provoked Frances to write to the paper condemning them as 'beneath contempt and beneath comment', while Sylvester was, she wrote, typical of 'a man who, after his master is dead, betrays intimate, if inaccurate details of his private life'.[33] In April Sylvester wrote to E. P. Evans, formerly Lloyd George's loyal political agent in the Caernarfon Boroughs:

> As for the Dowager, it seems she is a little annoyed. Of course! Because I have come out first. She made the initial mistake in

> 1945 in not keeping her word with me. After LG's death she invited me to help in the writing of his Life. An eminent historian was to be chosen from a selected list. She was to write suggesting terms to me. At her invitation I actually started up negotiations with the Literary Agent. Only after many weeks did I hear that she had made other and different arrangements, and that I was to play no part.
>
> She does not realize what a mistake she made. LG's great achievements will not live by merely building him up as a good and godly old man. He wasn't anyhow. Read my Boswellian account of him when the book is out, and then I shall welcome your reactions.[34]

Even when she penned her autobiography years later in the mid-1960s, Frances recalled *The Real Lloyd George* as 'a mean and unlovely book'. As it was her opinion that Lloyd George had made ample provision for Sylvester, 'It was not necessary for him to get money in that way'.[35] She had dismissed Sylvester from her employment shortly after Lloyd George's death, and there was little contact and no reconciliation between them thereafter. In conversations and in his correspondence Sylvester was apt to dismiss Frances as 'the Dowager'. He knew very well that she was often very short of money after 1945. Hence her decision to sell the massive archive of Lloyd George's papers to her near neighbour Lord Beaverbrook in 1948–49. Sylvester took pride in stories that, having searched high and low for mementos and souvenirs of her late husband, she banged on Beaverbrook's front door begging him to buy them. It was said that she even offered him her husband's empty wallet![36]

Other members of the Lloyd George family were, however, much more conciliatory. Dick Lloyd-George, the second earl, who had been completely excluded from his father's last will and testament and was thus planning to contest the will on the grounds that Frances had exercised undue influence over her ailing husband, fulsomely applauded *The Real Lloyd George* in a lengthy letter published in the *Sunday Dispatch* following the appearance of extracts from the book:

> Mr Sylvester I have known for over thirty years, and no more loyal, efficient and hard-working private secretary could any Minister wish to have. Knowing his methods and his careful note-taking, I can vouch for the accuracy of everything you have printed.
>
> To put it mildly, my father was, as Mr Sylvester says, 'a very difficult man'. You could never pin him down to anything, whether to a decision or an opinion – he was as slippery as an eel, more particularly during the last twenty-five years of his life. That is why this story of his wobbling about retiring from the House of Commons and accepting a peerage makes such extraordinary reading to those who knew the old Radical in the heyday of his great powers.[37]

Within months poor Dick had been forced to file for bankruptcy. Dick's son Owen, too, wrote appreciatively to Sylvester on reading the full text of the book in October:

> I am truly glad that you took upon yourself the undoubtedly difficult task of producing an intimate picture of Taid [Grandad] for had you not done so I am sure that all of us who knew him and loved him, would have been the losers thereby in no small measure. The illustrations are so well chosen and I think the one of Taid standing on the bank above the [river] Dwyfor is quite remarkable.
>
> I feel I must say that you have handled the family side of it with infinite tact and consideration, particularly in view of the current scope for treading on toes (!), and I cannot see personally what anyone can find fault with, though I gather that Frances is not inclined to fall in with this opinion. I am so glad that your book has appeared before any other less authoritative work, of which I suppose there will be a few in due course.[38]

Even when she penned her autobiography years later in the mid-1960s, Frances recalled *The Real Lloyd George* as 'a mean and unlovely book'.

'I understand that the Dowager [Frances] is annoyed that my book is out before hers', replied Sylvester, 'but I have found no one who blames me for that! As a boxer you will appreciate the importance of getting in the first blow!'[39]

The Real Lloyd George was by far the most successful book published by Cassell and Co. for many years. Within months of publication copies were no longer available, and Sylvester felt some frustration that the acute shortage of paper supplies experienced during the immediate post-war years, and problems with bookbinding, meant that the publishers failed to produce a second edition. But he was gratified by the generally fulsome reviews published in an array of newspapers and journals and by the substantial appreciative postbag which came in. Frances's opinions were very much a minority viewpoint.[40] Most members of the Lloyd George family, estranged from the Dowager Countess since LG's death, were pleased that Sylvester's volume had appeared before the so-called 'official biography', which was being written by Thomson, who had been chosen for the task by Frances personally, granted full access to the Lloyd George papers in her custody and worked with her full co-operation and support. His biography was not destined to appear until 1948.

In the wake of the publication of *The Real Lloyd George*, it was mooted that Sylvester might then be knighted in recognition of his long role as Lloyd George's principal private secretary. Among Frances's papers is a draft of a letter from Lloyd George to Churchill, probably written in December 1944 (shortly before LG was awarded an earldom) which includes the following

sentence: 'There has been on my conscience an earnest desire to obtain a knighthood, and that is for Sylvester, who has served me so devotedly for over twenty years'.[41] This approach evidently came to nothing; competition for knighthoods was especially strong during the war years, and Churchill generally felt that such an award required a particularly good reason. Nor was his successor, the Labour premier Clement Attlee, a close personal friend of Lady Megan Lloyd George, more accommodating. As he wrote to her in September 1948, 'I gather this has been considered before but was not approved; it was considered that his C.B.E. was an adequate recognition. I should like to know how you feel about the whole matter – in particular about his book about your father – which I do not think was very good.'[42] Attlee, clearly, did not like Sylvester personally, did not like his politics, and was not an admirer of his biography of Lloyd George. Sylvester did not let the matter rest there. During the 1950s he again initiated several attempts to secure a knighthood, using his links with Gwilym Lloyd-George, who again held cabinet office under Churchill and Eden, but once again without success.[43]

The year 1948 eventually saw the publication of the 'official biography' of Lloyd George by Malcolm Thomson. After LG's death Frances had given long and serious consideration to the choice of a biographer who was to enjoy full access to her papers and her assistance. (At the same time she was also anxious to set up a Lloyd George museum at Llanystumdwy to house the many 'freedoms' and other memorabilia which he had bequeathed to her.) Her choice of biographer fell on Thomson, an old acquaintance whom she liked and who had worked alongside her as one of the team of researchers responsible for preparing the *War Memoirs*. Thomson, born in 1885, had served as a Baptist army chaplain from 1917 until 1920, and had earned his living as one of LG's team of secretaries from 1925 until 1940. He was, as a result, fully familiar with the extensive Lloyd George archives. In a rather lengthy, gushing introduction which she contributed to the volume, Frances wrote:

> I make no apology for having asked him to write my husband's Life. He can claim that he has an intimate knowledge of his subject, first in London in the compilation of various books dealing with schemes for Social Reform; and later, while the *Memoirs* were being written, at Churt. He had the rare privilege of talking with L.G. day in and day out, of hearing from his own lips stories of the varied incidents of his life, of studying his character at first-hand, of gaining L.G.'s confidence over the work with which he was entrusted. I have an instruction from L.G. that if anything happened to him before the *Memoirs* were completed they were to be finished by Malcolm Thomson and myself.[44]

In his author's preface, Thomson claimed that he had won his spurs through working 'most of the time' as Lloyd George's 'literary secretary' from 1925 until 1940.[45] Sylvester was predictably incensed at the lavish claims made by Frances and Thomson, roundly condemning them to Dr Thomas Jones as ' poppycock. … When it was once mooted L.G. got wild at the mere thought that HE should require a "Literary Secretary"! … Between them [Thomson and Frances] they have presented to the public the L. G. the Dowager wanted to produce. That is scarcely the great dynamic figure you and I knew so well, and, with it all, thought so much of.'[46] He regretted that Frances had not commissioned an eminent historian to prepare a full-length biography of Lloyd George, a project in which he would gladly have participated.[47] At this time he was rather licking his wounds at the somewhat abrupt, perhaps unexpected, end of his three-year contract in the previous September with Express Newspapers and his old ally Lord Beaverbrook who now spent most of his time in Canada and the West Indies and seemed to have given up on his British interests. Subsequently Sylvester worked for about a year – 1949–50 – as an unpaid assistant to Liberal Party leader Clement Davies before resolving to retire to Wiltshire to farm for the rest of his days.

Although Lloyd George was a wily operator, Sylvester was privy to most of his thoughts and viewed his actions at close quarters.

Although much of the contents of *The Real Lloyd George* was pedestrian, it still remains an important addition to the huge Lloyd George bibliography, if only because of its author's closeness to his subject from 1923 until his death twenty-two years later, and his habit of keeping a full diary of the events which he observed at first hand. Although Lloyd George was a wily operator, Sylvester was privy to most of his thoughts and viewed his actions at close quarters. The book contained significant new information on, especially, the second LG visit to Hitler at Berchtesgaden in the autumn of 1936 and includes other fascinating side-lights and snippets of information. In 1975, Sylvester was to publish *Life with Lloyd George: the Diary of A. J. Sylvester, 1931–45* which comprised extensive extracts from his diaries, carefully edited by his friend Colin Cross who also contributed a valuable introduction to the book. The second volume was potentially more revealing and fuller than the guarded account given to the world in 1947. Even so, much fascinating material was excluded from both volumes, partly for reasons of space, partly in the name of discretion. The original full typescript texts of the diaries among the A. J. Sylvester Papers purchased by the National Library of Wales in 1990 are certainly worth consultation by the historian who can still unearth a mass of new information from this important source.

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Archive at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

1 A helpful, brief account of A. J. Sylvester's life and career is now available in John Grigg's article in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 53 (Oxford, 2004), pp. 566–67. See also J. Graham Jones, 'Keeper of Secrets', *Journal of Liberal History* 44 (Autumn 2004), pp. 24–29. A much fuller account by the same author will appear in the *National Library of Wales Journal* during 2006. There is also much helpful material in Colin Cross (ed.), *Life with Lloyd George: the Diary of A. J. Sylvester, 1931–45* (London, 1975), pp. 11–18 (introduction to the volume).
2 National Library of Wales (hereafter NLW), A. J. Sylvester Papers A57, diary entry for 31 October 1944. When he came to edit his diaries for publication in the early 1970s, Sylvester still felt bitter about Frances s failure to keep her promise to him in 1945: 'She did nothing to keep this promise!' (Cross (ed.), *Life with Lloyd George*, p. 333).
3 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers, file D6, Sylvester to 'Miss Thomson', 17 May 1946 (copy).
4 Ibid., memorandum from Sylvester to Lord Beaverbrook, 15 May 1946. ('Confidential. Personal') (copy).
5 See the American readers' reports preserved ibid.
6 Ibid., memorandum from Sylvester to Lord Beaverbrook, 26 July 1946. ('Confidential and Personal') (copy).
7 Ibid., Sylvester to Miss Christine Campbell Thomson, 6 August 1946 (copy).
8 See e.g. the *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 December 1946.
9 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers, file D6, Thomas Jones to AJS, 23 December 1946; AJS to TJ, 29 December 1946 (copy).
10 Ibid., Sylvester to Lady Megan Lloyd George, 20 January 1947 (copy).
11 *Sunday Dispatch*, 26 January 1947. These provisional chapter headings were not all retained in the final published volume.
12 Ibid., 9 February 1947, p. 4; NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers, file D6, Rev. R. G. Hughes, Portmadoc, to AJS, 17 February 1947, and AJS to RGH, 21 February 1947 (copy).
13 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers, Kathleen Harvey, South Shields, to AJS, 1 February 1947.
14 A. J. Sylvester, *The Real Lloyd George* (London, 1947), pp. 1–2.
15 See Sylvester's obituary in the *Daily Telegraph*, 30 October 1989, and Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Lloyd George and the historians', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* 1971, pp. 70–71.
16 Sylvester, *The Real Lloyd George*, p. 43.
17 Ibid., p. 293.
18 *Manchester Guardian*, 2 October 1947.
19 *Daily Telegraph*, 26 September 1947.
20 *News Chronicle*, 25 September 1947.
21 See NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers, file D6.
22 Ibid., Thomas Jones to Sylvester, 18 September 1947; Sylvester to Jones, 18 September 1947 (copy).
23 See Ruth Longford, *Frances, Countess Lloyd George: More than a Mistress* (Leominster, 1996), p. 82.
24 *Wiltshire Scene*, 5 October 1984.
25 Longford, op. cit., pp. 158–59.
26 NLW, Frances Stevenson Family Papers, file FCG2/17, Constance Miles, Guildford, to Frances Lloyd-George, 4 February 1947.
27 Ibid., John P. Smart, Birmingham, to Frances Lloyd-George, 23 February 1947.
28 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers, file D6, J. E. Morris, Solicitor, Lincolns Inn, London WC2, to AJS, 17 January 1947; AJS to JEM, 20 January 1947 (copy).
29 Ibid., Frances Lloyd-George to Charles Eade, [February 1947]. The letter was published in the *Sunday Dispatch*, 18 February 1947.
30 Cited in Longford, op. cit., p. 172.
31 Ibid.
32 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers, file D6, Sylvester to Owen Lloyd-George (son of Richard, the second earl), 8 November 1947 ('Private') (copy); Sylvester to Lord Beaverbrook, 21 October 1947 (copy).
33 *Sunday Dispatch*, 18 February 1947. Letters sent to Frances concerning the publication of *The Real Lloyd George* and the serialisation of extracts in the *Sunday Dispatch* are preserved in NLW, Frances Stevenson Family Papers, file FCG2/17.
34 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers, file D6, AJS to E. P. Evans, 3 April 1947 ('Private and Confidential') (copy).
35 Frances Lloyd George, *The Years that are Past*, p. 213. Lloyd George had in fact left Sylvester the sum of £1000 in his will in 1945. There is a copy of the will in the NLW, Frances Stevenson Family Papers, file FB1/1.
36 See Sylvester's obituary in *The Independent*, 30 October 1989.
37 *Sunday Dispatch*, 16 March 1947.
38 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers, file D6, Owen L-G to AJS, 19 October 1947.
39 Ibid., AJS to Owen L-G, 8 November 1947 (copy).
40 Ibid., memorandum from Sylvester to Lord Beaverbrook, 21 October 1947 ('Private and Confidential') (copy).
41 Cited in Longford, op. cit., p. 159.
42 NLW MS 20,475C, no. 3165, Clement Attlee to Lady Megan Lloyd George, 4 September 1948 ('Confidential').
43 NLW MS 23,668E, ff. 174–76, AJS to Gwilym Lloyd-George, 22 January 1953 ('Private and Confidential').
44 Malcolm Thomson, *David Lloyd George: the Official Biography* (London, 1948), p. 9.
45 Ibid., p. 32.
46 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers, file C94, Sylvester to Dr Thomas Jones CH, 4 January 1949 ('Personal') (copy).
47 Ibid., Sylvester to E. P. Evans, 3 April 1949 ('Personal') (copy).

Gladstone's library under threat

by **York Membery**

Just about every modern US president established a grand library in their honour upon leaving office. However, the only such institution in Britain – the prime ministerial library founded by the Liberal leader and four-time premier William Gladstone – is under threat unless £500,000 can be found to undertake vital conservation work.

The St Deiniol's archive, in Hawarden, North Wales, houses one of the country's most important collections of books, dating back to the nineteenth century and beyond, and is the United Kingdom's foremost residential library. But unless essential maintenance work is undertaken on the roof of the century-old library, the collection of some 250,000 historic and theological books, many of which are irreplaceable, could be put at risk. The cost of repairs and refurbishment is estimated at £1.3 million and while around half the money has been raised as a result of Lottery Heritage Fund and other grants, the library still faces a £500,000 shortfall.

This year therefore saw the public launch of the 'Gladstone Project' in a bid to raise the necessary money and safeguard the historic library for the nation. Charles Gladstone, the great-

great-grandson of William Gladstone and president of the Gladstone Project, inaugurated the appeal at St Deiniol's on 2 May 2006 and at the National Liberal Club in London on 3 May 2006. 'It is absolutely vital that we meet our target because without the money that we're trying to raise this unique collection of books will be profoundly compromised,' he said.

The main library is housed in an imposing purpose-built structure designed by the architect John Douglas which was opened in 1902. Commissioned following Gladstone's death in 1898 at the age of eighty-eight, it was designed to serve as a fitting repository for Gladstone's books and act as a lasting monument to the library's founder. It was paid for by a £40,000 endowment made by Gladstone, and a public appeal. Five years later, the Gladstone family funded the building of the twenty-six-bedroom residential wing – providing the 'inexpensive lodgings' and 'congenial society' that were central to their founder's vision – to create today's unique institution.

Today, however the historic fabric of the main library building is showing its age and is in desperate need to repair. 'While it was built to a high standard and has been conscientiously maintained, the repair and restoration work now needed cannot be funded from the annual maintenance budget,' said Mr Gladstone. Essential repair work includes the renewal of leadwork on roofs and gutters, stabilisation and repointing of high-level stonework, and replacement of the boilers and renewal of the old Victorian heating system.

Among the books at danger from potential water damage unless the conservation work is undertaken are the 7,000 pre-1800 volumes in the closed access area, mainly concerning theology and church history. They include a rare copy of Erasmus's *Paraphrase of St John's Gospel* translated by the Tudor Princess Mary, and Gladstone's own annotated copy of the third edition of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Many of these items are so sensitive that they are locked away in a temperature-controlled room and can only be handled with gloves. The library's collection also includes some of Gladstone's Eton schoolbooks, containing caricatures of his masters, as well as a collection of Bibles translated into everything from Inuit to Blackfoot Indian.

The Gladstone Project – which will also fund much-needed improvements to the library's facilities which are designed to enhance its position as a centre for learning, debate, reflection and prayer – has the backing of high-profile supporters including the historian Lord Briggs and Loyd Grossman, a patron of the project. Lord Briggs, author of classics such as *The Age Of Improvement* and *Victorian Cities*, said: 'The library has one of the most important collections of books not just about Gladstone, but about nineteenth-century history generally, anywhere. People come from all over the world to view the collection – and I am fully behind this campaign. The library has a fascinating past and a promising future.'

Gladstone: The literary PM

Gladstone, despite the numerous demands on his time posed by a career in politics spanning sixty years, was a voracious reader. During the course of his life he is known to have read at least 22,000 books and to have bought some 32,000 – which form the heart of today's St Deiniol's collection.

Gladstone caught the book bug when, as a young boy, he was presented with a copy of *Sacred Dramas* by its author, Hannah More. He acquired more books at Eton and the collection really began to grow during his time at Oxford University. While at Eton, Gladstone, the son of a wealthy Liverpool merchant, developed the habit of making detailed annotations in the margins of books, registering his approval or disapproval of an author's ideas, using his own system of symbols and Italian words, of which 'ma' (but) is the most frequent.

In later life, Gladstone decided to make his personal library accessible to others. He thought his theological and other books would be of value to members of all Christian denominations but he wanted all students to have access to them. He also dreamt of creating somewhere they could stay and read and write in a scholarly environment.

The first step towards fulfilling his vision was taken in 1889 when two large rooms were erected, with six or seven smaller rooms to act as studies, near his Hawarden home. By then he might have been eighty but that didn't stop him from transferring his 32,000 books himself, helped only by his valet and a daughter.

The temporary building was only the start of realising his ambition to create a residential library. He endowed the library with £40,000 – indicating that this was to be his major bequest. And following his death a public appeal raised a further £9,000, allowing his vision to become a reality within a few years.

His great-great grandson Charles Gladstone believes St Deiniol's is a fitting tribute to the Grand Old Man, as he was affectionately known by his supporters. He said: 'The books of St. Deiniol's tell you more about the kind of man William Gladstone was than could any statue.'

York Membery is a contributor to BBC History *and* History Today *among many other publications.*

For more details on the Library: see: www.st-deiniols.co.uk.

SIR FRANK MEDLICOTT (1903–72)

Biography of the Liberal and Liberal National MP and activist, by David Dutton

Frank Medlicott began and ended his long political career as a Liberal. But for much of the intervening period and for the entirety of his parliamentary career he was closely associated with the Conservative Party.

Medlicott was born in Taunton, Somerset, in November 1903 and was educated at North Town Elementary School and Huish's Grammar School. He was an accomplished sportsman and played rugby for Harlequins and Somerset. He qualified as a solicitor at the age of twenty-one and practised in London from 1927. He stood, unsuccessfully, as a Liberal in Acton, West London, in the general election of 1929, the last occasion that the party approached a national contest with even a faint hope of forming the next government. Thereafter Medlicott concentrated on his legal career and it was not until a by-election ten years later in the very different constituency of Norfolk East that he secured his passage to Westminster.

The vacancy occurred because of the elevation to the peerage of the sitting MP, Viscount Elmley, as Earl Beauchamp. The seat had alternated between the Liberals and the Conservatives during the 1920s. Elmley had been elected as a Liberal in 1929 but had defected to the Liberal Nationals in 1931. Medlicott himself had joined the breakaway Liberal National group headed by Sir John Simon and, on 26 January 1939, four months after the notorious Munich Settlement, he won election as a supporter of the National Government and of Neville Chamberlain's foreign policy. The circumstances of his selection as 'Liberal and Conservative' candidate merit attention. Meeting separately, the local Conservative association originally chose a local candidate, more representative of the Norfolk agricultural interest than the London solicitor. Only after a joint meeting of the Conservative and Liberal associations was Medlicott narrowly selected and correspondence followed in the press which indicated the difficulties the government was experiencing in maintaining its 'National' credentials in the face of the overwhelmingly Conservative basis of its parliamentary support.

As an MP Medlicott rapidly changed his opinion about the merits of the Prime Minister.

As an MP Medlicott rapidly changed his opinion about the merits of the Prime Minister and, although he did not speak in the crucial Norway debate of 7–8 May 1940, he was among that band of thirty-eight members who withdrew their support from the government and voted in the Labour lobby – a defection which, if it did not actually lead to the government's defeat, was a decisive factor in Chamberlain's resignation and replacement by Winston Churchill two days later.

By this stage Medlicott was dividing his time between his political activities and service in the armed forces. Indeed, in 1940 he was a member of the influential Service Members Committee. He had enlisted in the Territorial Army in 1937 and, by the outbreak of war, was a lance-bombardier in the Royal Artillery. In parliament he spoke of the 'almost bewilderingly speedy promotion which [had] thrown [him] into the higher ranks.'[1] He was summoned by the War Office to organise the army's first 'legal aid' section in the Aldershot command. The success of his initiative led to legal aid being extended to the whole of the army. Medlicott was made a major in 1940 and honorary colonel the following year. In 1943 he became Director of Army Welfare Services with the 21st Army Group and in July of the following year he crossed to Normandy and took control of organising all the army welfare services for British troops in North-West Europe. Mentioned in dispatches, he was awarded the Bronze Star of the USA and a CBE in 1945. At the same time he continued to serve as an MP and in 1943 had become Parliamentary Private Secretary (PPS) to Ernest Brown, by then leader of the Liberal National group and Minister of Health in Churchill's coalition government.

In the post-war era the Liberal Nationals (renamed National Liberals in 1948) became increasingly difficult to differentiate from Conservatives, particularly after the Woolton–Teviot agreement of 1947. This allowed for

the selection of candidates by joint Conservative and Liberal National constituency associations. In practice, the majority of these were typical Tories. But Medlicott, who held on to his seat in the Labour landslide of 1945 when neighbouring Conservative constituencies were falling around him, retained many views that were distinctively 'liberal' and reflective of his nonconformist background. He opposed hanging, warned of the dangers of drink and protested at the cruelty of the Grand National and its annual tally of equine casualties. Most problematically, in a largely rural constituency dominated by prosperous Conservative farmers, he opposed blood sports and once described stag hunting as 'utterly inconsistent with the high traditions of treatment of animals of which this country in all other respects was justly proud'.[2] Such beliefs led to a somewhat uneasy but not as yet antagonistic relationship with his local constituency party. When the Norfolk East division disappeared because of boundary changes, Medlicott secured selection as National Liberal and Conservative candidate for Norfolk Central, which contained much of his old seat. He secured re-election by 3,891 votes in the general election of 1950 and successively increased his majority in 1951 and 1955.

Medlicott never rose to ministerial rank but developed a reputation as an inveterate poser of parliamentary questions. In the period 1945–53 he put down no fewer than a thousand. The range of his interests was catholic. His queries related, *inter alia,* to issues of health, food production and road safety. In November 1955, Medlicott asked the Minister of Transport if he could make a statement about the inquiries he had conducted into the use of winking traffic indicators on motor vehicles. 'These indicators were irritating, confusing, disturbing and dangerous to pedestrians and motorists and would become progressively more so with the increasing number of vehicles. Many motorists were of the opinion that these indicators were a blinking nuisance.'[3] Industrial relations and trade union restrictive practices were a matter of particular concern and in February 1956 he called for recognition of the status of 'conscientious objector' for those workers who wished to opt out of collective industrial action. As was normal with long-serving Conservative backbenchers without serious expectation of ministerial office – even those masquerading behind the label of 'National Liberal' – Medlicott was rewarded with a knighthood in 1955.

But the issue which transformed his career and reawakened Medlicott's dormant 'liberalism' was the Suez crisis of 1956. A survey, undertaken in 1995, of Liberal Democrat MPs, MEPs, peers and members of the party's Federal Executive and Federal Policy Committee singled out Suez as the most frequently cited event in the lifetime of those questioned in terms of its effect on their political beliefs.[4] For Liberals of the mid-1950s it was certainly a watershed, all the more poignant because of Prime Minister Anthony Eden's well-deserved reputation until that time for his commitment to the principles of liberal internationalism. The government's handling of the crisis put an end to a twenty-year period in which the Liberal Party had in general drifted progressively towards the right, narrowly escaping the complete embrace of the Conservative Party in the wake of the 1951 general election, when Clement Davies – with some reluctance – turned down Churchill's offer of a place in his government as Minister of Education. Violet Bonham Carter later confessed that she had 'almost persuaded' herself 'during the 51–56 government [that] Toryism was shading into Liberalism'. After Suez, however, she concluded that there had been a 'reversion to type'.[5] For at least a generation the image of the Conservatives as the natural repository for the best traditions of British Liberalism had been destroyed. Logically, that group of Conservatives who should have felt most alienated from their party by what happened in 1956 was the dwindling band of National Liberal MPs. In practice, however, all seem to have accepted the Eden government's actions – with the solitary exception of Frank Medlicott.

Medlicott never rose to ministerial rank but developed a reputation as an inveterate poser of parliamentary questions.

As was perhaps appropriate for an MP who had himself served in the armed forces, Medlicott kept his counsel until a cease-fire in Egypt had been declared. But then, on 8 November, he was one of just eight government supporters who abstained from voting on a motion of confidence. His fellow rebels included Robert Boothby, Nigel Nicolson and Edward Boyle. In a published letter to the Prime Minister, Medlicott declared:

> Throughout this whole crisis there have been on the part of millions of people grave doubts as to whether we have had any moral justification at all for our action in bombing Egypt and landing troops on Egyptian territory. These doubts will become certainties if we continue with our military occupation of the Egyptian territory in face of the UN resolution.[6]

Medlicott's actions immediately created conflict with his local party, as the Central Norfolk association declared its support for the Prime Minister. The association did not quite go so far as to tell Medlicott that it wanted a new candidate, but the sitting MP was prevented from speaking to the constituency branches and he received a letter from the local chairman gently suggesting his retirement from political life. Conservative Central Office declined to become involved in what it insisted was a local dispute, but, fearful of the outcome of a by-election, did tell Medlicott that he should not stand down from parliament. But in May 1957 it was announced that he would not be standing at the

next general election. Drawing a veil over what had become a bitter disagreement, the president of the Central Norfolk association insisted that 'all, including those who had been most angry with him, would recognise that for twenty years he had been a very good member'.[7] Medlicott, however, was determined that his real motivation for retirement should become known and he informed the press that his reason 'reflects little credit on those who are running the affairs of the association'. The latter wanted 'to be free to choose a party hack, prepared to throw overboard everything in which he believes if only he can cling to his seat in parliament'.[8]

Over the remaining months of his parliamentary career Medlicott increasingly distanced himself from the Conservative government and in November 1957 he resigned the whip. The following March he spoke out against the Conservative Party chairman, Lord Hailsham, when the latter appeared to suggest that his party had a monopolistic claim to patriotism. In February he joined the Liberals in signing a petition against supplying nuclear weapons to West German forces and in June he asked the Home Secretary to consider legislating for the introduction of proportional representation for elections to the House of Commons. But, despite being invited by the local party to stand as Liberal candidate at the next election in his old constituency, he drew back from a formal transfer of political allegiance, protesting that it would be too painful to oppose 'those with whom I have worked for so many years'.[9] Indeed, that November he asked, successfully, for the whip to be restored to him. Nonetheless, there was no question of Medlicott standing again as a Tory ally and his career as an MP came to an end with the general election of October 1959.

By 1962, however, with the Macmillan government sinking into a succession of crises and with the Liberals' post-Orpington revival at its height, Medlicott was ready to take the plunge. Now out of parliament, he wrote to the Liberal leader, Jo Grimond, admitting that there had been 'profound moral objections' to the government's Suez policy and announcing his wish to join the Liberal Party. At the Liberals' annual assembly that year he seemed ready to admit the error of his earlier ways. For three decades, he now conceded, the Liberals had soldiered on through the wilderness whilst the National Liberals had sojourned in the tents of the unrighteous. Though Labour and the Conservatives seemed intent, in the early 1960s, to contest the centre ground of British politics, Medlicott championed the Liberal claim to a distinct and viable identity. Responding to a suggestion in *The Times* that the larger parties had now outbid the Liberals in the field of social politics, he insisted that the latter, 'historically and in terms of authorship and capacity', had the right to offer themselves as more likely than either of the other parties to translate proposals for social reform into effective action. In addition, he stressed the Liberal Party's faithful support for the United Nations, its rejection of the policy of independent nuclear deterrence and its staunch belief in a European community, a cause for which Medlicott himself had expressed sympathy in the immediate post-war era.[10]

Determined, it seemed, to cut all links with the Conservatives and in no doubt that, in the absence of a Liberal candidate, Labour was the better alternative, he sent good wishes to Labour's George Thomas, standing for Cardiff West at the general election of 1964, as the 'candidate most likely to uphold the principles and traditions that are dear to Liberal men and women' and even advised Liberal voters in Huyton to support the Labour leader, Harold Wilson. 'Liberalism and Conservatism', he now declared, 'are basically and deeply opposed and when there is no Liberal candidate, as in Huyton, it is to me overwhelmingly clear that every Liberal vote should be cast in your favour'. Medlicott professed deep respect for Wilson's 'ability, integrity and dignity', adding, 'I believe that the essential characteristics of Liberalism will be safeguarded by you'.[11]

For three decades, he now conceded, the Liberals had soldiered on through the wilderness whilst the National Liberals had sojourned in the tents of the unrighteous.

Over the next few years Medlicott became increasingly active inside the Liberal ranks and in 1969 he was appointed party treasurer. It was an inauspicious time at which to assume responsibility for Liberal finances. The party had recently been obliged to leave its Smith Square headquarters on grounds of economy and was in debt to the tune of around £100,000. Medlicott set out to bring order to the array of party accounts, which had developed haphazardly over the years and only some of which were under the direct control of the treasurer. 'I think it is essential for all money to pass through the party's bank account under the jurisdiction of the party treasurer,' he insisted. 'If not, we run the risk of the party having as many treasurers as it has bank accounts.'[12] But this attempt to bring order out of chaos led Medlicott into direct conflict with the party leader, Jeremy Thorpe, who seemed to believe that his own position gave him the right to dispense with normal accounting procedures. Liberal finances were still in a parlous state on the eve of the 1970 general election. By mid-May just 286 prospective candidates were in place. Only when Thorpe announced a sudden windfall of donations, later attributed by *The Times* largely to the generosity of the multi-millionaire businessman Jack Hayward, did this total rise to 332. Medlicott hoped to use the Hayward donation to pay off the party's debts and proposed the setting up of a trust to ensure that the money was spent wisely. But Thorpe insisted that this donation, for which he took personal credit, should remain largely under his direct control.

A simmering dispute between leader and treasurer continued once the election was over, with

Medlicott now asking Thorpe what he intended to do to rectify the financial mess which the party was in, exacerbated by the leader's extravagant spending during the campaign itself. The death of Thorpe's wife Caroline in a car crash at the end of June inevitably brought a temporary truce to their feud. When, however, Medlicott confirmed Hayward's identity as the party's anonymous donor, matters entered the public domain. Thorpe publicly rebuked his treasurer at an evening reception for Liberal delegates at the party's annual assembly in Eastbourne. But, convinced that Thorpe was abusing his position as party leader, Medlicott was not prepared to give way and the uneasy stand-off between the two men persisted into 1971. 'I simply will not accept a situation in which the party leader subjects the party treasurer to lecturing and hectoring as though I were a defaulting bookkeeper.'[13]

In December 1971 Medlicott suddenly resigned on grounds of ill-health. He was in fact suffering from an inoperable brain tumour and he died less than a month later. Rumours, however, abounded that illness was not the only explanation for his departure. The Young Liberal newspaper, *Liberator,* suggested that Medlicott had sent in a letter of resignation a month earlier, before his illness had been diagnosed. It had then been agreed that no public statement would be made until a successor had been appointed. *Liberator* described the treasurer's clashes with Thorpe and his resentment at being refused access to the accounts of the Liberal Central Association, a version of events subsequently confirmed by Medlicott's son, Paul.

It was a sad end to a distinguished career. In an era of disciplined party management, votes in the House of Commons are only rarely of more than passing importance. But on two crucial occasions in May 1940 and November 1956 Medlicott had had the courage of his convictions to defy the Conservative Party whip. His career straddled the period in which a declining Liberal Party drew increasingly close to an apparently liberalised Conservatism. But his underlying liberalism was never entirely extinguished and, in the circumstances, his eventual return to the Liberal fold seemed entirely appropriate.

On two crucial occasions in May 1940 and November 1956 Medlicott had had the courage of his convictions to defy the Conservative Party whip.

Medlicott's religious commitment was at the root of his political beliefs. He served on the Conference Committee for Wesley's Chapel, London and, as a committed temperance campaigner, was a director of the Temperance Permanent Building Society and Treasurer of the United Kingdom Band of Hope. To the end of his life he remained a man of principle. 'Some people', he noted in 1958, 'mistake weakness for tact. If they are silent when they ought to speak and so feign an agreement they do not feel, they call it being tactful. Cowardice would be a much better name.'[14]

David Dutton is Professor of Modern History at The University of Liverpool. He is currently working on a history of the National Liberal Party – Liberals in Schism – *to be published by I.B. Tauris.*

1 House of Commons Debates, 5th Series, vol. 355, col. 14.
2 *The Times*, 8 March 1957.
3 *Ibid.,* 10 November 1955.
4. *Liberal Democrat History Group Newsletter,* 8 (September 1995), p. 3.
5 K. O. Morgan, *The People's Peace: British History 1945–1990* (pb. edn, Oxford, 1992), p. 155.
6 *The Times*, 9 November 1956.
7 *Ibid.,* 2 May 1957. See also L. D. Epstein, *British Politics in the Suez Crisis* (Urbana, 1964), pp. 102–4.
8 *Norfolk News*, 3 May 1957, cited by R. Jackson, *Rebels and Whips: Dissension, Discipline and Cohesion in British Political Parties since 1945* (London, 1968), pp. 282–3.
9 *The Times*, 23 May 1958.
10 *Ibid.,* 14 February 1964.
11 *Ibid.,* 13 and 14 October1964.
12 L. Chester, M. Linklater and D. May, *Jeremy Thorpe: A Secret Life* (pb. edn, London, 1979), p. 108.
13 *Ibid.*, p. 114.
14 *Reader's Digest*, July 1958.

Journal subs increase

For the first time in three years, we are increasing the subscription rate for the *Journal of Liberal History*. The main reason is the increase in the volume of material submitted to the *Journal*; currently we are unable to print everything we receive because the current sub will not cover the cost of printing it! So prices will go up from the 2006–07 membership year, and the average length of *Journals* will similarly increase. The new rates are as follows:

Individual subscriptions: £20.00 a year for UK addresses, (£12.50 unwaged); £25.00 a year for addresses outside the UK (£17.50 unwaged). For access online to pdf versions of all current and past issues, add £20.00.

The subscription year for individual subscriptions starts on 1 October, but subscriptions commencing after 30 June continue until 30 September in the following year without further payment. Subscribers receive all issues of the *Journal* published during the subscription year; those joining before 1 July are sent any issued since the previous 1 October. The subscription includes membership of the History Group unless we are informed otherwise.

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Standing order mandate forms are available on request from the Membership Secretary. Subscribers with existing standing orders will be sent an amendment form with the next issue of the *Journal*.

A MEETING PLAC

The National Liberal Club was founded in 1883. In November the following year Mr Gladstone laid the foundation stone of the new and permanent Club House, at 1 Whitehall Place, London SW1, and the building was opened in 1887. With aims including the provision of an inexpensive meeting place for Liberals and their friends, the furtherance of the Liberal cause, and the foundation of a political and historical library, the Club has witnessed many scenes of Liberal triumph – and less happy events – over the past century and a quarter. **Peter Harris** recounts the story of the National Liberal Club and gives a brief guide to its building.

CE FOR LIBERALS

On 4 November 1884, Mr Gladstone laid the foundation stone of the new and permanent Club House of the National Liberal Club. The Club itself had been launched the previous year and only six weeks after being announced had a list of nearly 2,500 intending members. By the date of the laying of the foundation stone the Club was already active with 4,480 members. At that time, and until the opening of the new Club House in 1887, the Club met in premises leased on the corner of Northumberland Avenue, overlooking Trafalgar Square. To celebrate the opening of the Club a great inaugural banquet was held at the Royal Aquarium, Westminster. This was a brilliant affair, at which the Earl Granville was the Chairman, and Mr Gladstone the principal speaker. The magazine Punch reported that 200 dozen bottles of Pommery champagne were ordered for the occasion.

The permanent housing of the Club was achieved with funds subscribed to a joint stock company bearing the name of 'The National Liberal Club Buildings Company'. Although incomplete, the building was opened for the use of members in time for the Jubilee of 1887, so that on 20 June of that year they were able to watch the procession from its windows and terrace. Two days later the membership reached a total of 6,000, two-thirds being country members.

The building, designed by Alfred Waterhouse, contained various features which were novel or uncommon, among them being the electrical passenger lift, which was one of the earliest, if not the first, to be installed in a London building.

(Left) The National Liberal Club at its opening. (All photos supplied by the National Liberal Club.)

The avowed objects of the Club were:

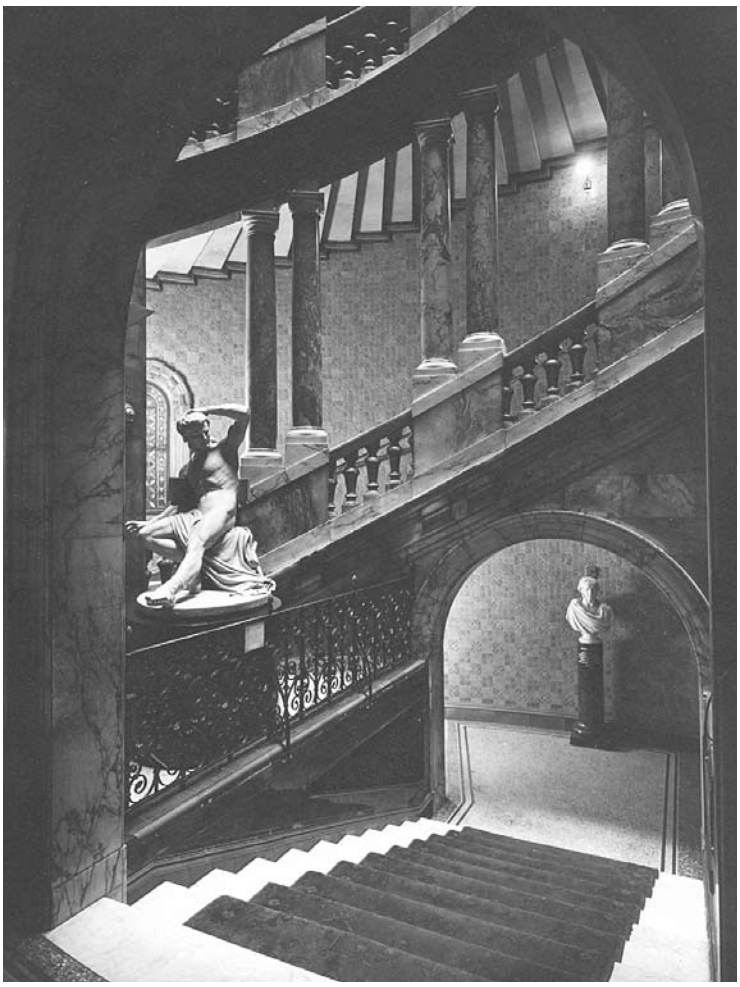
1. The provision of an inexpensive meeting place for Liberals and their friends from all over the country.
2. The furtherance of the Liberal cause.
3. The foundation of a political and historical library as a memorial to Gladstone and his work.

With the opening of this permanent home, the first of the objects of the Club was seen to be achieved, whilst the third was attained by the opening of the Gladstone Library on 2 May 1888 by Gladstone himself. The Library, ranking as the most extensive of the Club libraries of London, provided a valuable aid to Liberals on the intellectual side, whilst also serving as a most pleasant place for study for those members whose tastes were more literary than political.

The second object of the Club, by its very nature, continues as long as any force remains in Liberalism, and the record of the Club shows how much the Liberal cause, not only at home but in the world at large, owes to the existence of this place and the maintenance of its tradition.

From 1887 onwards, event followed event in a stirring sequence, and in victory and defeat, in expansion or decline, the Club performed the function of being the focus and centre of reform in the United Kingdom. The first half of the twentieth century alone renders the following list of more notable political issues: the Home Rule controversy and the split in the party which it caused; the 'flowing tide' of success during the early 1890s, and the temporary eclipse at the time of the South African War; the tremendous uprising of Radical enthusiasm from 1903 to 1905, with its triumphant culmination in the 1906 election, and its renewal in 1910; the epic struggle over the Parliament Bill, under the leadership of Mr Asquith; the long series of measures creating, improving, or extending the social services; the acrid course of agitation about women's suffrage – all these have had their intimate connection with the Club, for it was the mainspring of Liberal activity.

In personnel also, the Club had a dazzling record as the following list of names shows: Harcourt, Joseph Chamberlain, Lincolnshire, Morley, Grey, Birrell, John Burns, Carson, Haldane, Samuel and Simon. One special group deserves to be mentioned – seven Prime Minsters: Mr Gladstone, of course, Lord Rosebery, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, H H Asquith, David Lloyd George, Ramsay McDonald (briefly a member at the time of the First World War), and last – so far – Sir Winston Churchill. They were a mixed bag in their political affiliations when they took office but were all at some time at home in the Club.



Left: the original staircase; the Lady Violet Room.

Right: the dining room; the smoking room.

Gradually, from about 1922 onwards it became evident that the high tide of political success was receding. In general membership, however, more could be found who had joined a club rather than a hive of politicians. Civil servants, journalists – these, no doubt, finding the premises a convenient half-way house between Westminster and Fleet Street – literary and professional people had always been represented in the membership and were now becoming a more notable part of it.

A few high spots stick in the memory of the post-war years. Outstanding among them were the Coronation, with the Club full of members and their guests, to watch the procession along the Embankment as they had also in 1937, and election nights, when the Smoking Room was crowded, the results announced as they came in. There was also the dinner to celebrate the centenary of Gladstone's first administration, which received its seals of office on 9 December 1868. In the packed Dining Room there were speeches from Lady Asquith (herself a Prime Minister's daughter) and the Archbishop of Canterbury. In 1984 there was another centenary to celebrate – the laying of the foundation stone – and members gathered in the vast wine cellar of the Club to toast Mr Gladstone in front of the very stone that he had laid.

By 1976, the Club began to realise that the pattern of life had changed. Shorter working hours and the five-day week had taken their toll; weekend use of the Club had diminished drastically. Inflation, recession, the various attempts of successive governments to deal with them, all affected the running of the Club. Frankly, the building was too large for its post-war membership and maintenance was becoming an impossible burden. Closure seemed the only possible course but at the last possible minute hope was revived and with the generous help and energetic leadership of one of the

members, Sir Lawrence Robson, a company was formed to manage and finance the Club and its building. The accommodation used by the Club is now somewhat smaller but the Club rooms have been restored to their former splendour and the Club looks to the future with confidence.

The record of the Club shows how much the Liberal cause, not only at home but in the world at large, owes to the existence of this place and the maintenance of its tradition.

The building

Alfred Waterhouse, the architect finally employed by the Trustees of the Club, was born in Liverpool in 1830. His first commission was for the Grosvenor Hotel at Chester. His winning the competition for the Manchester Assize Courts, followed by other municipal buildings in that area, started his long career of important works.

Waterhouse had not been originally intended as the architect. The Club had been anxious to obtain some of the Crown land on the Embankment which was being developed by John Carr, an early member of the Club. However, Carr's plans were not to the Club's liking and eventually Waterhouse was commissioned. He was already well known among leading Liberals.

The limited company formed to build the Club House had a share capital of £200,000, and Waterhouse was commissioned within a fortnight of the company's launch. Determined to be a leader in style, the Club was to be designed in Italian style rather than solid gothic. Waterhouse's designs allowed for splendid club rooms and also the largest number of bedrooms of any club in London. It was designed for a membership who were accustomed to being at least weekly 'boarders' in town.

Waterhouse's designs offered ingenious solutions to a very awkwardly shaped triangular site. The building is centred around its grand staircase of white Sicilian marble. Not only did Waterhouse design the glittering rooms, displaying wonderful faience tilework manufactured by Wilcock & Co, but also the furnishings, down to even the Dining Room chairs. The structure was carefully composed of load-bearing steelwork, the exterior being faced in Portland stone. The design was to be of fireproof construction throughout. The latest systems of heating and ventilation were used. The electric lighting was by the pioneering firm of Edison & Swan. There was also to be a unique lift/railway designed to bring the wine bottles up from the vast cellars. The final cost of the building itself was £165,950.

The Entrance Hall sets the tone for the whole of the building. The walls are panelled with different shades of tilework and the woodwork is executed in mahogany. The reception counter on the left fills what was once the waiting room for members' guests. The large blocked up archway on the right once led through to the main reception area. The Entrance Hall was designed as a preparation for the Grand Staircase which was designed as one of the main glories of the building. The original staircase was based on that in the Barbarini Palace in Rome and was executed in marble and alabaster. Waterhouse was encouraged to design something that would simply be the best in London and certainly to outdo Barry's work at the Reform Club, a club from which many of the original members of the NLC came. The original staircase was destroyed by enemy action and is the greatest loss that the building has ever suffered. The flights of the staircase were joined by pairs of marble columns and in parts, the staircase quite literally 'floated' on bridges over voids created in the design. The walls of the staircase were tiled and in parts pierced by arched openings through to the corridors leading off the landings.

The staircase was rebuilt in the 1950s to a much simpler and, at that time, more fashionable design. The present steps and balustrade are remnants of the original. The corridors on each floor of the Club building retain all their original tilework, rising the full height.

The Lloyd George Room was originally the Grill Room and the original grill and oven remain. Once again there is much tilework in different shades of beige, green and, uniquely in the building, blue. Early photographs show the room set up with individual tables, each on their own Persian style carpet, with dining chairs specially designed by Waterhouse.

The Lady Violet Room was originally dedicated to be a small drawing room / reading room. On the plans it had been designated as an anteroom to the 'grand room' next door which was to be used for lectures, etc., and there are designs for a platform at the end of that room reached by a doorway from this room. Early photographs show a handsome overmantel above the fireplace and a set of large, square, mahogany-framed mirrors, similar to those still existing in the Lincolnshire Room above. Later in the Club's history this room was used as the Ladies' Drawing Room.

The Smoking Room is one of the chief glories of the Club. Along with the Dining Room it is lined with great tiled Corinthian columns which are remarkable in their own right. The triangular shaped tiles will only fit at their particular level since each row is smaller as they ascend and are curved specifically to match that point on the column. The tiles sheathe steel columns within. The Smoking Room was originally placed in the room below but at a very early stage in the history of the Club was moved to the present room. As such it has witnessed many of the great events of Liberal history.

The Dining Room with its bar leads out of the Smoking Room by way of an anteroom leading to the Embankment Terrace. Some of the tilework here is different from that in the rest of the building, having a somewhat Chinese theme.

Mindful of this splendid Club House and great history, the National Liberal Club is as alive today as it ever was and remains a meeting place for Liberals to further the Liberal cause. Members continue to be drawn from all walks of life and enjoy the very best club services and a wide variety of cultural, political and social events. As such a place with so great a tradition, it has a supreme appeal to those who love Liberal ideas, and value the corporate life. Each day we are reminded by Gladstone's bust which guards the front entrance, of the famous quote from his speech in Chester:

> The principle of Toryism is mistrust of the people, qualified by fear; the principle of Liberalism is trust in the people, qualified by prudence.

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.

Hubert Beaumont MP. After pursuing candidatures in his native Northumberland southward, Beaumont finally fought and won Eastbourne in 1906 as a 'Radical' (not a Liberal). How many Liberals in the election fought under this label and did they work as a group afterwards? *Lord Beaumont of Whitley, House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW; beaumontt@parliament.uk.*

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. (For further details of the Cobden Letters Project, please see www.uea.ac.uk/his/research/projects/cobden). *Dr Anthony Howe, School of History, University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ; a.c.howe@uea.ac.uk.*

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

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

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

The Liberal revival 1959–64. Focusing on both political and social factors. Any personal views, relevant information or original material from Liberal voters, councillors or activists of the time would be very gratefully received. *Holly Towell, 52a Cardigan Road, Headingley, Leeds LS6 3BJ; his3ht@leeds.ac.uk.*

The rise of the Liberals in Richmond (Surrey) 1964–2002. Interested in hearing from former councillors, activists, supporters, opponents, with memories and insights concerning one of the most successful local organisations. What factors helped the Liberal Party rise from having no councillors in 1964 to 49 out of 52 seats in 1986? Any literature or news cuttings from the period welcome. *Ian Hunter, 9 Defoe Avenue, Kew, Richmond TW9 4DL; 07771 785 795; ianhunter@kew2.com.*

Liberal politics in Sussex, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight 1900–14. The study of electoral progress and subsequent disappointment. Research includes comparisons of localised political trends, issues and preferred interests as aganst national trends. Any information, specifically on Liberal candidates in the area in the two general elections of 1910, would be most welcome. Family papers especially appreciated. *Ian Ivatt, 84 High Street, Steyning, West Sussex BN44 3JT; ianjivatt@tinyonline.co.uk.*

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

The Liberal Party in the West Midlands from December 1916 to the 1923 general election. Focusing on the fortunes of the party in Birmingham, Coventry, Walsall and Wolverhampton. Looking to explore the effects of the party split at local level. Also looking to uncover the steps towards temporary reunification for the 1923 general election. *Neil Fisher, 42 Bowden Way, Binley, Coventry CV3 2HU ; neil.fisher81@ntlworld.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.*

Life of Wilfrid Roberts (1900–91). Roberts was Liberal MP for Cumberland North (now Penrith and the Border) from 1935 until 1950 and came from a wealthy and prominent local Liberal family; his father had been an MP. Roberts was a passionate internationalist, and was a powerful advocate for refugee children in the Spanish civil war. His parliamentary career is coterminous with the nadir of the Liberal Party. Roberts joined the Labour Party in 1956, becoming a local councillor in Carlisle and the party's candidate for the Hexham constituency in the 1959 general election. I am currently in the process of collating information on the different strands of Roberts' life and political career. Any assistance at all would be much appreciated. *John Reardon; jbreardon75@hotmail.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.*

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.*

ORGANISER PA

HERBERT GLADS

By Lawrence Iles

Reading Cooper's wearisomely dull entry in the old *Dictionary of National Biography* on the youngest son of Victorian Prime Minister William Gladstone, one could be forgiven for thinking that Herbert Gladstone's career was one of effortless progression: from Modern History Lecturer at an Oxford college, to Liberal Chief Whip, Home Secretary and first UK Governor-General of the new South African Union, with a fine end as an active Liberal Viscount, staunchly protective of his father's good name. Indeed, the Whig politician Robert Lowe, who supported both of Herbert Gladstone's first two parliamentary candidacies, even thought him future prime ministerial material.[1]

R EXCELLENCE

STONE (1854–1930)

But with this flattering impression, much contemporary and subsequent opinion begs to differ. Pioneering Liberal Party historian Roy Douglas, in an acerbic series of observations, accused Gladstone of being both too 'high-principled' and too secretively and cunningly base as regards his 1903 Liberal–Labour pact, which gave Labour its first opportunity to grow.[2] For his part, the Tory politician Henry Chaplin castigated Gladstone for being a 'chip off the old block' in his ability to be 'casuistical' in appearing to agree with both sides of an argument simultaneously. Chaplin was not the only contemporary to compare Gladstone unfavourably with his father. Joe Biggar, a leading Irish Nationalist MP, told the Leeds branch of the United Irish League that their local MP would be 'nothing' without his father's name; and Lloyd George once described Gladstone as living proof of the 'Liberal doctrine that quality and intellect were not hereditary'.[3]

If nothing else, all these verdicts show that, in Cooper's own inadequate assessment, Gladstone was a 'hearty controversialist'. Yet neither Herbert Gladstone's autobiography, *After 30 Years* (1928), nor his official biography, *Herbert Gladstone: A Memoir* (1932), by the former Liberal MP, Sir Charles Mallet, do justice to the subject's controversial side.[4]

(Left) Herbert Gladstone in 1906.

If we go beyond these books and consider his public utterances, faithfully recorded by the newspapers of the day, and the papers of the Leeds Liberal Party for the period 1880–1910 when he sat in the Commons, new light can be shed on the career of this often unfairly maligned figure.

What emerges from using such sources for the first time is a very different politician from his illustrious father. Herbert Gladstone was very much a twentieth-century politician, particularly in terms of his organisational abilities, which helped the Liberal Party achieve its landslide victory in 1906 and a significant, if short-lived, measure of revival in 1923.

Before surveying how Gladstone contributed to these achievements, it is worth considering the impression left by Cooper that, as a result of his name, Gladstone was a shoo-in for all the high offices of state he held. The *Leeds Mercury* in 1880 had welcomed him as their MP on 'condition' that he obtained for the town the 'eminence' of national office. Yet in reality his role as Chief Whip nearly twenty years later was his first major post, and his local organiser, Alderman Joseph Henry, had to be persuaded that this office was of any real importance. Fortunately, as Neville Masterman, the biographer of Gladstone's ill-fated predecessor Tom Ellis, has shown, the office had recently become more important as a result of Ellis' insistence on both financing it more effectively and extending its consultative role to encompass all kinds of radicals beyond Westminster's cliquish clubbery. What was lacking, however, was flair and drive and, in terms of repairing this deficiency, Gladstone's flamboyant determination was to prove ideal.[5]

Out of office, Gladstone had been increasingly frustrated at the very deliberate minimisation of his talents for innovatory leadership. He had contemplated leaving Liberal politics altogether, especially after he survived the 1895 general election with a majority of only ninety-seven votes, amid allegations of treating aimed at his wealthy Tory opponent. Before he became

Chief Whip in 1899, senior Liberals had deliberately overlooked Gladstone for fear of courting the accusation of nepotism.[6]

Gladstone had been an unpaid Junior Lord of the Treasury during his father's second term of office from 1880 to 1885, and in the short-lived 1886 administration he was made Financial Secretary to the War Office, serving as deputy to Campbell-Bannerman as Secretary of State for War. He did slightly better in the 1892 Liberal government, serving as Asquith's Under-Secretary at the Home Office. Nonetheless, sheer administrative hard work was all that was expected here too. To his anger, when he tried to use his own initiative, in favour of the new spirit of social, interventionist Liberalism, his reputation as a hard worker who toed the party line did not help him. The party's Publications Department, under James Bryce, declined to print an article of Gladstone's criticising opposition by the National Liberal Federation to the payment of salaries to MPs. The article was instead published in the far more elite *Albemarle* magazine.[7]

Politically frustrated, and married, in 1902, to a socially conservative, rich, southern English property heiress, it was hardly surprising that, in his later career in the Home Office and as Governor-General of South Africa, Gladstone's progressive outlook was mellowed by the conservative outlook of the British political establishment. He had been taught to obey unimaginatively, even if this was contrary to his progressive principles. Asquith, who privately considered him lazy, wanted Gladstone out of the Home Office when he replaced Campbell-Bannerman as Prime Minister in 1908, and was glad to install Churchill in his place.

In South Africa his rule was regarded by right-wingers as fair and resolute in his manner of dealing with recalcitrant, anti-British, Dutch residents, and with strikers on the railways. This view was not shared by those on the left, who recalled Gladstone's pro-labour and pro-Boer stance in the past. The *New Statesman*, in 1914, critically reviewed all his published official correspondence as Governor-General, which showed that he had vigorously restricted workers' right to strike and other civil liberties. Charles Masterman, initially a protégé of Gladstone's, was attacked from both the left and right in by-elections at the time because of the way in which workers, often immigrants from the UK, were being treated.[8]

Senior Liberals had deliberately overlooked Gladstone for fear of courting the accusation of nepotism.

Despite the later disappointment of Gladstone's career, in the period when he served as Chief Whip he exerted a good, modernising effect on his father's faction-ridden, old-fashioned party. Trevor Lloyd, in a 1974 survey of Gladstone's fundraising and candidate support activities, has shown that working with very little money (he often had to borrow from, or plead with, his elder brother Henry and the right-wing northern Liberal Barran family) Gladstone kept the party in good shape during a period of considerable political difficulties.[9]

The main controversy affecting the party at that time was Ireland. Indeed, in a 1927 article on the Whips' Office, penned for the *American Political Science Review*, Gladstone claimed that this island's future status was the primary political issue of his lifetime. He blamed Lord Richard Grosvenor, the anti-home rule Liberal Chief Whip of the 1885–86 period for sowing the seeds of partition. While this is more than a little unfair to Grosvenor, the 1927 article sheds some light on Gladstone's attitude towards the issue with which he is now most closely identified.[10]

When he first stood, unsuccessfully, for the Commons in Tory Middlesex in 1880, Gladstone had indicated that, 'while no home ruler', dealing with injustice in Ireland was his passion. By the summer of 1885 (August, if his memoirs are to be believed) he was a convinced home ruler and was categorical that he was pushing his father in the same direction. Indeed, contrary to Cooper, it should now be irrefutably stated that the so-called Hawarden Kite incident (Hawarden Castle being the Gladstones' home), in which the Liberal former premier was 'flown' publicly for the first time as a home ruler, instead of being a supposedly accidental conversation between his youngest son and reporters, was a deliberate act, at least by Herbert Gladstone, if not necessarily his father. As contemporaries realised, ranging from reluctant home rule Whig Lord Granville, with his fulminations against 'the Leeds plotters', to anti-home rule Joseph Chamberlain, this briefing was not in the least bit accidental.[11]

The Leeds Liberals had long been planning a pre-emptive strike against the domination of the National Liberal Federation by the Chamberlainite Birmingham radicals. The trouble was that, until Irish home rule was thrust into prominence by the new Parnellite Home Rule League, both Leeds radicals like Gladstone and moderates like *Leeds Mercury* editor T. Wemyss-Reid, lacked a credible radical issue with which to discredit Chamberlain and the new municipal socialist radicals, or to gain the allegiance of older laissez-faire radicals like Henry Labouchère and Charles Bradlaugh. This was because Gladstone found much of Chamberlain's NLF programme 'inspiring'.[12] He agreed with its redistributionist focus on aristocratic and capitalist wealth. As late as 1885 Chamberlain himself expressed the view that, were it not for William Gladstone, he would consider Herbert a good radical influence upon the party. In old age, Herbert Gladstone sought to play down some of the more collectivist and economically left-wing implications of his support for home rule. In his memoirs he implies that he shared his father's private hope that the Tories, under the future Liberal defector Lord Carnarvon, might have offered home rule themselves.

This was not what Gladstone or his Leeds Liberal allies intended to achieve at the time. For one thing, Joe Biggar and other Parnellites had done their work so well in swinging the votes of what E. D. Steele has shown to be a huge Irish electorate in Leeds over to Carnarvon-type imagined Tory allies that three out of five Leeds seats went Tory in 1885. Indeed, only with great difficulty did the wealthy West Leeds iron and steel magnate, James Kitson, the future first Lord Airedale, manage to dissuade the pro-Irish Gladstone from opting to fight East Leeds, then, as now, the poorest of the workers' constituencies. A good thing too, as that constituency did indeed temporarily go Tory in 1886, only later to be rescued when Gladstone helped a long time home-ruler, L. Gane, win the seat back.[13]

Ideologically, Gladstone revealed his intentions in a remarkable series of nationwide speeches in 1886, which *The Times* found socially threatening, but which were to become staples of his arguments as Chief Whip, and show his modernising intent for Lib-Labbery. In a speech to 3,000 Liberals in Leeds, he gave two principal reasons why British Liberalism had to support Irish home rule. Firstly, he said that all human history had largely shown that 'wealth, intelligence and education', let alone 'property' in its own right, had been against most political and social reforms for the relief of ordinary people, who were expected, instead, just to know their place. Secondly, he argued that Ireland's grievances were of an 'anti-landlord' nature, and accordingly home rule was in the tradition of the struggle for the Magna Carta. In essence, as his fellow Leeds Liberal MP, the distinguished academic chemist Sir Lyon Playfair, was to put it, the cause of British social Liberalism and Irish nationalism were one. And, sure enough, not only did Gladstone campaign on such lines all over the country in every election from 1886, but he personally raised £1,000 to enable Henry Labouchère to hold a similar such rally in 1886, when the national party refused to fund it. Gladstone also promised that, if Ireland's woes could be fixed, justly, then the Liberals would be the providers of economic justice for all British working people.

Later, in 1900 and 1906, Gladstone was to agree with the Liberal right that home rule was not necessarily a Liberal priority compared with the preservation of free trade. But he always made clear, as a stalwart for home rule, that some day he expected its delivery as, without it, a great deal of Liberal social reform would never be secure. Indeed, for all of the scoffing from *The Times* that there was no link between Ireland and economic issues in the rest of the country, the right were well aware of the linkage between the two issues.[14]

The second big controversy of Gladstone's political career concerned the extent to which the 1906 government was to pursue the social reforms advocated by the New Liberals even though, as Masterman was to admit, Campbell-Bannerman was not much of a social reformer himself. Cooper, in his *DNB* sketch, dismissed many of Gladstone's social reforms as Home Secretary, such as children's courts, as being tinged by too much bureaucratic collectivism. Yet features of today's legal system, from the probation service to effective workers' compensation rights, began with Gladstone. Indeed, while no socialist, Gladstone simply disagreed with his father's Peelite aversion to positive government action.[15]

Remarkably, too, he disagreed with many of his wealthy Liberal backers, both at local and national level, even though, as Dr Russell has shown, just twenty of them provided two-thirds of the Leeds Liberals' revenue in the crucial 1906 contest. At local government level, Leeds Liberals were already engaged in pacts against socialists with the local Tories, to Gladstone's annoyance.[16]

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Gladstone went against the grain of Yorkshire Liberals at this time. As early as the 1890s he was asking his agent, John Mathers, to put aside his aversion to interventionist legislation and survey whether his constituents favoured new shop legislation to enforce a work relief half-day, as the Leeds Co-op stores already did on Wednesdays.[17] Legislation to this effect was placed on the statute book in 1912. As Home Secretary, Gladstone was responsible for the legislation that introduced an eight-hour day for miners, which was unpopular with coal-owners such as the Pease family in Yorkshire. And, earlier, as Under-Secretary at the Home Office he presided over the first major increase in the safety inspectorate for small workshops.

All of this interventionist Liberalism was intentional on Gladstone's part, and long preceded New Liberal theoretical manifestos such as those from Richard Haldane, Ernest Jones or the writings in journals such as the *Contemporary Review* and *Nineteenth Century*. In one of his very first speeches as Liberal candidate for Middlesex, Gladstone had criticised Disraeli's social legislation as being merely 'permissive' and a pale reflection of municipal liberalism. Later, in his sustained efforts to support a specific Liberal-Labour class group of MPs within the Liberals' orbit, Gladstone strongly defended the manner in which many in that group had supported the Salisbury government's social legislation.[18]

Gladstone's views on, and conduct of, broader Liberal–Labour relations can now be put in their proper context. As with his semi-collectivist approach to economic questions, Gladstone's Lib-Lab pact of 1903, the secretive nature of which has long been overstated, was publicly presaged in earlier speeches. In a long speech to Liberal constituency agents at a turn-of-the-century Nottingham National Liberal Federation AGM, Gladstone berated the failure of local upper-middle-class Liberal Associations to

Herbert Gladstone in 1882.

adopt working-class candidates. More privately he bemoaned their equal failure to fund more 'university men ... intellectuals' of poor finances as 'progressive' candidates. He was no doubt thinking of the report from Home Counties Liberal Federation organiser Will Crooks that, in places like Kent, too many middle-class Liberals were just ambitious 'crooks', merely interested in candidacies and party status to further their local professional careers.[19]

But how far did Gladstone actually want to go in promoting an independent Labour Party and the emergence of socialism separate from the Liberal Party? In reality, his attitude was not mistakenly over-generous, as Dr Douglas and Jeremy Thorpe allege in Douglas's 1971 book. In 1892, during a by-election campaign in the Barkston Ash constituency, Gladstone made it clear that, in his view, the Liberals, for the foreseeable future, remained the primary legitimate vehicle for working-class progress.[20]

In Yorkshire, however, Gladstone was faced with the fact that in Leeds's neighbouring city, Bradford, the 'Alfred Illingworth' dynasty was firmly in charge. These Liberals, all employers, were opposed to any Labour representation altogether. Gladstone told Campbell-Bannerman, on seeing the 1906 Yorkshire returns, that he was not surprised when 'Alfred Illingworth Liberalism' was dealt a formidable blow, by the election in the city of the ILP's Fred Jowett, whom Gladstone considered to be a 'really good man'. Jowett had campaigned on a municipal programme of free school meals and medical inspection that the local Illingworth Liberals fought against tooth and nail.[21]

None of this should suggest that Gladstone was totally unconcerned about the growth on his own Leeds patch of separatist socialism, but he took a realistic, even empathetic, view of Labour's development outside the Liberal Party. His West Leeds constituency president, Alderman Joseph Henry, called by Campbell-Bannerman, admiringly, the 'Duke of Wellington' for his command of the city's Liberalism, did at this time think in terms of a three-party struggle in the city. He kept the crucial Holbeck ward entirely Liberal until as late as 1908; regularly berated Gladstone for neglecting the poorest West Leeds wards like Wortley where, indeed, Labour did grow; and secured an intellectual, Quaker, left-wing activist Liberal, T. Edmund Harvey, as Gladstone's successor as MP in 1910.

Henry counselled that the Liberals should take the fight to Labour, using real constituency surgery work and evidence of the progressive policies implemented by the government. Gladstone was persuaded to part with a £1,000 debenture to establish a popular, radical Liberal newspaper, the *Leeds Daily News*, to counteract the Harmsworth-owned *Mercury*, which had drifted to the Liberal imperialist right and, later, to semi-Tory humour and ridicule of working-class people.[22]

In a similar vein, Gladstone also sought nationally to control and moderate separatist socialism, not 'snuff it out'. The supposedly secret 1903 pact had been explicitly argued for on these grounds by Gladstone in more than one speech years before. The pact itself was largely negotiated between Gladstone's secretary, Jesse Herbert, and Ramsay Macdonald, who had family links with Gladstone and had once served as private secretary to former Liberal front-bencher Thomas Lough.

Not only was the pact overwhelmingly in the Liberals' favour, as it tapped into nearly £1,000 already given to the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) by the trade union movement, but it concentrated the thirty Labour 'straight fights' against the Tories heavily in Roman Catholic and Anglican working-class Lancashire. In this area, Liberal Associations had, too often, become ineffectual adjuncts of cotton-mill and laissez-faire elites, and Labour candidates could, more credibly than nonconformist Liberals, straddle the divisions over education.

Gladstone was insistent that the LRC do its utmost to curtail rogue, independent socialist candidates from undertaking senseless three-party fights that would only benefit the Tories. Yet, it took all Ramsay Macdonald's personal skills, publicly and privately, to stop Labour left-wingers in Leeds from promoting a candidacy of their own against the Liberal Chief Whip. They were inspired by the knowledge that Gladstone had been working to mount a Liberal challenge against Labour in East Leeds, their best prospect. They probably would have been more intransigent if they had known that Gladstone's two closest advisers, Henry and Kitson, had both been pressing him to push the East Leeds Liberals into fighting both the other parties.

Despite the inevitable opposition of many local Labour and

Liberal Associations, Gladstone pushed through his strategy: and it worked, far better than historians have acknowledged, especially considering that it helped the Liberals bounce back from the general election defeats of 1895 and 1900. Of course, the Liberals were also helped by Joseph Chamberlain's protectionist crusade, which not only alienated free-trade Unionists like Churchill, but destroyed the unity of the Tory and Liberal Unionist parties, except in the West Midlands, where the Chamberlain family continued to keep a tight rein on their otherwise declining party.

Gladstone's approach to party management was more cautious and tactful than that of Chamberlain, and he sought out the fulcrum on which the various elements of the Lib-Lab electorate was balanced. On Irish home rule and anti-socialist Liberalism he veered, as we have seen, to the expedient left. But with the Boer War, he had a more difficult problem, and once again his *DNB* biography is simplistic in the extreme in arguing that Gladstone preserved the party balance by supreme tact, and that, although his sympathies were with Campbell-Bannerman, Gladstone 'preserved a complete neutrality within the party'. In fact, he avoided dispute by steering the party more towards its jingoistic elite right than towards the left. Although he joined the anti-war Liberal League Against Aggression, this body was never as opposed to all forms of British dominion in South Africa as, say, either the ILP or the Liberal Forwards group. He made two particularly controversial statements during the 1900 general election campaign. Firstly, during the course of the election, he admitted that his party could not satisfactorily offer, in the national interest, an alternative government. He appealed to the electorate to vote on domestic issues that were not, he claimed, ones fevered with war emotion. Secondly, Gladstone proclaimed that the party would accept temporary annexation of the Transvaal. This elicited fierce, but unavailing, protest to Campbell-Bannerman, against this very un-Gladstonian approach, by the ageing ex-Peelite Lord Ripon, who professed himself to be horrified.[23]

But while this was indeed contrary to his own radical conscience – he had told Campbell-Bannerman privately that the Tories' excuse for the war, that they were protecting British subjects in the two invaded Boer republics, was completely bogus – he refused to allow the party to debate the Boer War, just cause or not. Instead, he occupied himself with trying to restrain the separatist activities of Liberals associated with the former Prime Minister Lord Rosebery, such as Asquith, Haldane and Grey. He did this in a way which seemed, to Campbell-Bannerman, to endorse the trio's extreme imperialism. His attendance at a dinner for Rosebery in Leeds in 1902 brought howls of wrath from Campbell-Bannerman, to which Gladstone replied that he had thereby kept an eye on Rosebery's wilder impulses. If he had not gone, Rosebery and the Liberal imperialists, rather than the Leeds Liberals, would have taken over the event; and anyway, the Boer War was far too popular with the workers, let alone north Leeds middle-class imperialist MPs like Barran, for such events to be ignored.

But while Campbell-Bannerman's latest biographer argues that all this proves disloyal weakness on Gladstone's part, in fact it was to save Campbell-Bannerman's bacon when he later became Prime Minister. Not only did Gladstone's give-and-take tactic help Campbell-Bannerman retain control of the Liberal machine in the country, he was also able to foil the Relugas plot, in which Asquith, Grey and Haldane tried to push Campbell-Bannerman into the Lords on the eve of his entering 10 Downing Street. Through his long friendship with Asquith, Gladstone was able to act as the negotiating intermediary when the right-wingers presented their ultimatum. Skilfully, he detached Asquith from the others. It was Gladstone's sheer strength of character which gave the Liberals national coherence by 1906, although some of his own radical ideals were sacrificed as a result.[24]

But Gladstone's ideas could be fostered in other ways, and the second prong of his strategy was to promote young graduates, often the new semi-collectivist Liberals, into candidacies, so as to develop in the party his own ideals. Even after the First World War, when his views had mellowed, it was the loss of many of these men to Labour that most pained him. A by-no-means untypical case of Gladstone's sponsorship is that of Charles Masterman. A former Cambridge don with limited means from journalism and a sometimes intellectually over-acerbic temperament, Masterman was backed by Gladstone at crucial times of his sometimes hazardous New Liberal career, in particular with financial support when he stood for Dulwich in 1904 and when he faced a challenge from anti-socialist Liberal shopkeepers before being elected for West Ham North in 1906.[25]

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Lamentably, though, for the long-term legacy of the Liberal Party, Gladstone can, and must, be held culpable for not dealing effectively with the women's enfranchisement question. Gladstone, like the twice-married Asquith, did not take women's politics seriously. His wife, and other Gladstone women, preferred to be politically active in the socially elitist, fund-raising Women's National Liberal Association rather than the more radical, pro-suffrage Women's Liberal Federation. The correspondence between Joseph Henry and Gladstone shows the fear strong political women induced in both men, when the suffragettes started systematically to disrupt Gladstone's public meetings.

As Home Secretary, Gladstone was responsible for the policy of force-feeding gaoled women suffragettes and publicly defended

it as humane and harmless. To protests from many Labour and Liberal MPs, Gladstone repeatedly denied any ill-treatment of these brave women. By 1909 only local Women's Liberal Association members were being admitted into his supposedly open constituency meetings.

It seems Gladstone did begin to realise the damage this issue was causing to his party, which led him publicly to suggest to his own senior government colleagues that commitment should be offered in support of women's suffrage. In the face of opposition from Lewis Harcourt and others, however, he meekly retreated.[26] It is surely no exaggeration to say that the treatment meted to women by Gladstone and many of his colleagues played into the hands of the Labour Party once women were given the vote after 1918.

On returning from the governor-generalship of South Africa, Gladstone was persuaded out of retirement to help organise and raise funds for the Asquithian Liberal Party. He became their chief national organiser, making public speeches and writing 'first principles' statements of policy for regional papers and the *Liberal Magazine*, against Lloyd George perfidy in Ireland, against pacts with the Tories, and, of course, against any violation of free trade.

He helped more lively spirits like Masterman write on a twice-weekly basis for the Cadbury and Starmer press against the Lloyd George coalition; and he helped recapture all but the Welsh party machine from the Lloyd Georgeites, thus encouraging Lloyd George and Churchill to consider forming their own 'National Liberal' organisation. Gladstone, in return, was attacked by them for being like an 'extinct volcano' in not having any new policy ideas.

However, his last political role was as the Asquithians' conscience, for which he has not, hitherto, been awarded proper credit. In the 1922 general election, the Asquithian Liberals narrowly but decisively defeated their rival Lloyd Georgeite National Liberals in terms of the numbers of MPs returned. In the 1923 election, the precariously reunited Liberals secured over 100 MPs, a feat never to be repeated by any third party during the rest of the century. But Gladstone's intention of fielding a full slate of candidates in most constituencies in the subsequently disastrous 1924 contest was wretchedly, in his embittered view, frustrated by Lloyd George's refusal to fund the idea. Since Gladstone had persistently criticised the Lloyd George Fund as immoral it is perhaps not surprising that Lloyd George declined to hand it over to Gladstone to spend on a swathe of hopeless candidates.[27]

With the well now dry for Liberalism, Gladstone returned to his favourite hobby, gardening, in his wife's properties in southern England and at Hawarden. His few remaining political interventions concerned the support he and his wife gave to the League of Nations. He died on 6 March 1930 at home in Hertfordshire.

Herbert Gladstone's place in Liberal politics deserves to be more thoroughly examined, especially given that his papers are all to be found, catalogued, in the British Library. His most major contribution was encapsulated in a remark in the *American Political Science Review* in 1927, that for the Liberals to remain a major party, their leaders needed to keep in touch with ordinary people beyond the Westminster hothouse. His modern detractors should perhaps be asking themselves whether the Liberals would have been able to implement a progressive agenda from 1906 if he had never been Chief Whip.

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1 *Leeds Mercury*, 8 April 1880.
2 Douglas, R., *History of the Liberal Party* (London, 1971) especially the introduction. Gladstone's skills as a propagandist are, later, justly praised, p. 15.
3 *The Times*, 22 September 1900 (Chaplin); *Leeds Mercury*, 11 April 1882 (Biggar); and Rowland, P., *Lloyd George* (London, 1975), p. 581.
4 Cooper, W., 'Gladstone, Herbert John', in Weaver, J. (ed.), *Dictionary of National Biography 1922–30* (Oxford, 1953 – originally 1935) (hereafter DNB), p. 338; the Gladstone and Mallet books were both published in London; for the Gladstone quote, see British Library, H. Gladstone MSS (hereafter HG MSS), 41,216, letter to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, 20 January 1900.
5 *Leeds Mercury*, editorial, 7 April 1880; HG MSS 46,036, letter from J. Henry to H. Gladstone, 14 April 1899; Masterman, N., *The Forerunner: Tom Ellis* (London, 1976 – originally published 1972), p. 238.
6 Ratcliffe, G., *Sixty Years of It: Being the Story of My Life and Public Career* (London, 1935, privately printed), p. 94 on the 1895 election; Ramm, A. (ed.), *The Political Correspondence of Mr Gladstone and Lord Granville 1876–86*, Vol. 1 (London, 1962), p. 368, letter from Granville to W. Gladstone, 9 May 1882, on nepotism.
7 Gladstone, H., 'The Liberal Party and Labour Questions', *The Albemarle Magazine*, February 1892; later that year he gave an interview to the Paris newspaper *Le Gaulois* on his ideal Liberal programme in which both the payment of MPs and the limitation of workers' hours were the main questions to be addressed, after Ireland.
8 Anon, 'The South African Strike', *New Statesman*, 13 June 1914, p. 11. The election addresses and speeches of Masterman's opponents at by-elections in 1911 and 1914 include references to how the Liberal government had allowed Gladstone to mistreat the rights of emigrant white subjects of the Empire in labour disputes.
9 Lloyd, T., 'The Whip as Paymaster: Herbert Gladstone and Party Organisation', *English Historical Review*, Vol. 89, No. 253, October 1974, pp. 785–811. For further information on Liberal finances at this time see Searle, G., 'The Edwardian Liberal Party and Business', *English Historical Review*, January 1983.
10 Gladstone, H., 'The Chief Whip in the British Parliament', *American*

Political Science Review, August 1927, pp. 519–28.

11 Fitzmaurice, Lord, *The Life of George Leveson Gower, Second Earl Granville (1815–91)*, Vol. 2 (London, 1905) for Granville to Lord Derby, 27 December 1885; and HG MSS, 46,041, T. Wemyss Reid to H. Gladstone, 9 December 1885.

12 *The Times*, 11 October 1900.

13 Steele, E. D., 'The Irish presence in the north of England 1850–1914', *Northern_History* (1976), pp. 229–32; HG MSS, 46, 041, J. Kitson to H. Gladstone, 21 February 1885.

14 *The Times*, 4 May 1886; Wemyss-Reid, T., *Memoirs and Correspondence of Lyon Playfair* (London, 1899) p. 342; Hind, R., *Henry Labouchere and the Empire 1880–1905* (London, 1972), p. 127.

15 DNB, p. 337.

16 Russell, A., *Liberal Landslide: The general election of 1906* (London, 1973), p. 39.

17 HG MSS, 46,039, J. Mathers to H. Gladstone, 26 September 1889 and 13 September 1891.

18 *The Times* 20 March 1880 and 11 October 1900.

19 Bealey, F., 'A Note: Negotiations between the Liberal Party and the Labour Representation Committee before the General Election of 1906', *University of London Institute of Historical Research Bulletin* (1958); *The Times*, 30 March 1900 (Nottingham NLF); Poirier, P., *The Advent of the British Labour Party* (New York, 1958), p .260, letter from Gladstone to Crooks, 21 March 1905.

20 *The Times*, 11 July 1892.

21 HG MSS, 41,215, H. Gladstone to H. Campbell-Bannerman, 16 January 1906.

22 Ibid., 46, 036, J. Henry to H. Gladstone 25 May 1905, 9 April 1907, and 13 October 1908.

23 DNB, p. 337; nearly all Gladstone's speeches and published statements during the 1900 election moved the Liberals' position on the war closer to that of the government – e.g. see *The Times*, 13 October 1900; HG MSS, 43, 543, Ripon to Campbell-Bannerman, 16 September 1900 and Wolf, L., *The Life of the First Marquis of Ripon*, Vol. 2 (London, 1921), p. 28.

24 For more on the Relugas plot see McCready, H., 'Home Rule and the Liberal Party 1899–1906', *Irish Historical Studies*, XIII, September 1963, pp. 316–48.

25 See Iles, L., 'Victories for the Left: The British General Election Debates of 1906 and 1945', *University of Illinois Urbana Microfilms Series*, MA History dissertation, August 1982, from p. 100 and Iles, L., *A Handlist of the Papers of the Rt Hon. Charles and Lucy Masterman 1873–1977* (Edgbaston, 1987).

26 See Pearson, H., *Labby: the Life and Character of Henry Labouchere* (London, 1945), p. 225; Samuel, H., *Memoirs* (London, 1945), p. 195; Fulford, R., *Votes for Women* (London, 1958); Wingfield-Stratford, E., *The Victorian Aftermath 1901–14* (London, 1933), p. 323; Raeburn, A., *The Militant Suffragettes* (London, 1973); and, for Harcourt's attitude, see *The Times*, 15 February 1909.

27 Much of this section is drawn from the *Liberal Magazine* and *Lloyd George Liberal Magazine* for the era; also useful is Cowling, M., *The Impact of Labour 1920–24* (Cambridge, 1971), which is predictably sympathetic to the more right-wing post-World War One Gladstone.

LETTERS

Election 2005

I would like to follow-up Neil Stockley's thoughtful report of the History Group meeting ,'Election 2005 in historical perspective' (*Journal of Liberal History* 50).

First, I should make my own stance, as the 2005 candidate for the Windsor constituency, clear. I believe the last general election was a missed opportunity for our party. We had two unpopular main parties and this was a situation where we, as the third political force, should have come strongly through the middle. Neil's summary of the Blackpool fringe meeting gives the game away when he reports all the speakers as saying, 'we had made more than steady progress.' 'Steady progress' in the context of this election, and for a party purportedly on the up, is not good enough.

As he analyses what happened, Neil muses on the intractable problem of why the Liberal Democrats made serious inroads in Labour-held constituencies (up 7.7%) but hardly any impact, in general, in areas which had a sitting Tory MP (up a mere 0.6%). He seeks answers to an electoral conundrum and this letter attempts to help that search by proposing two possible reasons for the disparity.

As we went into the general election many middle-class voters in the 'blue' parts of England (such as Windsor) seemed suspicious of our Council Tax policy, whilst others absolutely hated our approach on income tax. (Incidentally, in historical terms, have the Liberals ever been a high tax party?) These people hated our higher earners' tax proposal not because they were currently earning £100,000 themselves, but because they intended one day that they would, i.e. they felt we were challenging their aspiration to do better in life.

The second reason we fared badly against the Tories was very clear on the doorsteps. When asked, 'Who will you be voting for?' the answer, invariably, was, 'Not Tony Blair.' These voters then implemented their strong dislike of the Prime Minister on the day by following the precept of the old Arab proverb – 'My enemy's enemy is my friend'. By this light they wanted above all to vote for the party that was most opposed to the leader of New Labour. Since the Lib Dems were seen as 'neither left nor right' (or as Neil says, equally damningly, 'either left or right') many reluctantly felt they had to vote Tory. However, and this is the point, they weren't really Tory – and probably still aren't!

So the message about 2005 from Tory constituencies in the South-East (like Windsor, which has never had anything other than a Conservative MP) is simple. Our tax policies were wrong and we were perceived as too bland in terms of opposing the Prime Minister. By such mischance are great opportunities lost.

Antony Wood

1906: 'BLISS

Lecture on the 1906 election and the government that followed; by Kenneth O. Morgan.

Kenneth O. Morgan, who delivered the lecture reprinted here, hosted by the Corporation of the City of London (together with the Liberal Democrat and Labour History Groups), Guildhall, 7 February 2006.

A hundred years ago to the very day, the crofters and fishermen of Orkney and Shetland made their way through the darkness to cast their votes in the general election. The constituency had not elected a Conservative since the general election of 1835 so it was no surprise when 79 per cent of the voters cast their vote for the Liberal, J. C. Wason. What was totally astonishing was that he was (according to my calculations!) the 401st Liberal MP returned.

Spread out over four weeks, the excitement began on 11 January with two Liberals elected for Ipswich ('Ipswich leads the way' read the placards). A sequence of Unionist (i.e. Conservative) disasters followed thereafter. The 'Portillo moment', the Southgate of 1906, came very early with the defeat on 13 January in North Manchester of Arthur Balfour, only five weeks previously the Prime Minister; he had to find sanctuary in that citadel of unregenerate Conservatism, the City of London. In fact, the Liberals captured all eight seats in Manchester, including Winston Churchill, a recent convert, in North West Manchester. Only three members of the former Unionist Cabinet survived – Akers-Douglas, Arnold-Forster and Austen Chamberlain. To the Liberals' 401 should be added the 29 members of the newly-formed Labour Party and 83 Irish Nationalists, so the effective normal government majority was over 350. The Tories lost 245 seats and ended up with only 157. It is impossible to assess the swing with any precision – there were 114 uncontested seats, and there had been 245 in the previous election, the 'khaki' election held during the South African War in October 1900. Where there is a comparable result, the swing seems to have been around 12 per cent, greater than those of 1945 or 1997. Peter Snow, thou shouldst have been living at that hour!

SFUL DAWN'?

Contemporaries noted that something really dramatic was happening. Many of them focused, as would have been natural in 1906, on religion. The 1906 election, with over 200 nonconformists returned to parliament, was the greatest triumph of the chapels over the Church of England since the time of Cromwell. Great chapels like Whitefield's Tabernacle on the Tottenham Court Road became in effect Liberal committee rooms, with charismatic organisers like Whitefield's Congregationalist minister, Silvester Horne (father of a famous radio comedian). For the chapels, it was not so much an election as an epiphany. There was much talk of Children of Israel and the Promised Land, with particular reference to church schools and 'Rome on the rates'. Religion had a particular impact in nonconformist Wales, where the much publicised 'revolt' of the county councils, led by Lloyd George, against the 1902 Education Act, was reinforced by the huge religious revival of 1904–5, 'y diwygiad mawr' in Welsh, a media-conscious event of messianic intensity. In Wales, the Unionists, like a famous British entry in the Eurovision song contest, scored *nul points*.

But the nonconformists were to be disappointed clients of the Liberal victory. In the longer term, much the more significant aspect was that the general election marked the first great direct impact of the working class in British politics. Balfour saw the Liberal Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, as 'a mere cork dancing on a torrent which he cannot control … It is an echo of the same movement which has produced massacres in St. Petersburg and riots in Vienna … .' A few days later, on 12 February 1906, there followed what was clearly the most important outcome of the general election. The Parliamentary Labour Party was formed. Its twenty-nine MPs consisted very largely of trade unionists, many of Lib-Lab views, but also included important socialists like Ramsay MacDonald, Philip Snowden, Fred Jowett and Keir Hardie, the member for Merthyr Boroughs who had brought the Labour alliance into being six years earlier. Hardie was elected chairman by fifteen votes to fourteen. In January 1909, after a vote amongst the Miners' Federation, the twenty-nine were joined by a further fourteen miners' MPs, elected in 1906 as 'Lib-Labs'.

It has been rightly pointed out that the advent of Labour was hugely assisted by the secret election pact or 'entente' with the Liberals in 1903 under which Labour had a free run against the Unionists in around thirty seats. It was a pact much helped by the existence of two-member seats where Labour could run in double harness with a Liberal, as MacDonald did in Leicester, Snowden in Blackburn and Hardie in Merthyr Tydfil. But too much has been made, in my view, of excessive Liberal generosity. With the growing strength of Labour in 1903, with Arthur Henderson winning Barnard Castle against a Liberal, the Liberal whips had not much choice but to do a deal. The outcome benefited both sides, financially and politically, and created the pre-war Progressive Alliance.

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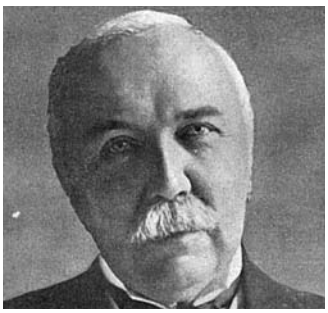
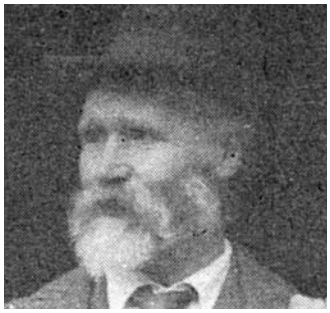
The background to the election was one of deep national anxiety. The dismal war in South Africa in 1899–1902 proved to be, as Kipling famously wrote, 'no end of a lesson'. It demonstrated diplomatic isolation overseas, growing poverty, class division and inequality in the cities at home. The gospel of Empire was irretrievably tarnished by the deaths of at least 28,000 Boer women and children in British concentration camps on the Rand. The memorial plaques of hundreds of tiny children, perishing under the age of five, on the walls of a former concentration camp near Pretoria, which I saw in 2000, are a permanent stain on the name of Britain. Henry Campbell-Bannerman described these camps as 'methods of barbarism' – three words that changed the politics of a generation. There is an interesting parallel with the Progressive reform movement in the United States at this time. There, too, after an imperialist war with Spain in Cuba in 1898 and the cruel suppression of 'insurgency' in the revolt in the Philippines, Americans turned inwards from the vainglorious imperialism of a 'splendid little war' to political corruption and social injustice at home. The great American 'muckraking' journalists and writers, like Lincoln Steffens, Ida Tarbell, Ray Stannard Baker or Upton Sinclair, paralleled the British journalism of exposure at the same period.



The victors of 1906: Campbell-Bannerman, Asquith, Lloyd George, Hardie.

The brash façade of Edwardian baroque barely concealed this anxiety. It was a time of explosive cultural and intellectual energy that went far beyond the nationalist confines of Elgar's pomp and circumstance. Edwardian literature was galvanised by social protest – especially with problems of the city and the status of women. H. G. Wells is an outstanding example here in novels such as *Tono Bungay*, *The New Machiavelli* and *Ann Veronica*. Shaw, Galsworthy and many others also illustrate the social concerns of the Edwardians. It was also a heyday of the 'higher journalism' in the great weekly and fortnightly reviews and the national press. The 'two Hobs', Hobson and Hobhouse, are the great exhibit here. J. A, Hobson, later to join the Labour Party but at the time a leading New Liberal ideologue much admired by Lenin, helped to detach the idea of collectivism and an empowering state from the tarnished creed of empire. L. T. Hobhouse, for many years a leader writer on C. P. Scott's *Manchester Guardian*, was a pioneer of modern sociology. It was the high noon for the political public intellectual and man of letters. Literary giants like John Morley, James Bryce and Augustine Birrell were actually in the Liberal cabinet. The 401 Liberals MPs included eminent authors like Hilaire Belloc and A. E. W. Mason of *Four Feathers* fame, and the distinguished historian, G. P. Gooch, member for Bath.

At the same time, we should not overdo the high-minded elitiism of the Liberal victory. There was also much low-level populism in the Liberal campaign, long before Lloyd George laid into the House of Lords as 'five hundred ordinary men chosen at random from amongst the unemployed'. There were highly personalised attacks on Joseph Chamberlain and 'sleaze' linked to the arms deals of the South African War – 'While the Empire expands, the Chamberlains contract'. There were rhetorical attacks on 'Randlords' and 'Landlords', and on the 'small loaf' that would result from Tariff Reform. It was claimed that the Tories would drive us back to the Hungry Forties. Most discreditable of all was the racism – the Liberals' campaign against 'Chinese Slavery' (indentured non-union Chinese workers on the Rand) made much use of Oriental stereotypes. It chimed with trade-union fears of capitalist bosses bringing in non-unionised 'free' blackleg labour at home and the role of freebooting employers like the appalling Lord Penrhyn in his slate quarries in Caernarfonshire.

So the election campaign was not a model of moral rectitude. But it was also a great and momentous event to which the historian should respond. It embodied what Karl Marx called the sense of historic necessity. It is right that we should celebrate it tonight. Perhaps we shall celebrate it again shortly when the statue of Lloyd George is placed next to that of Winston Churchill in Parliament Square. Just as Churchill's statue was once targeted by anti-capitalist demonstrators, it is nice to think that Lloyd George's may be at some time by the pheasant-shooting branches of the Countryside Alliance.

Are there similarities between the election victories of 1906 and of 1997? (I set 1945 aside since it was conducted in the special circumstances of wartime.) Of course, there are clear differences. In 1997 Tony Blair emphasised personal leadership and the cult of the 'new'. His first major speech as party leader in 1994 used the word 'new' thirty-seven times. In 1906, by contrast, the Liberals campaigned as a team, and took up distinctly Old Liberal themes – free trade, Little-Englandism, the rights of nonconformity, the '"unholy trinity" of the bishop, the brewer and the squire'.

Again in 1997 the forty-four-year-old Tony Blair emphasised that he and his country were 'young' (a theme now picked up by the forty-year-old David Cameron). In 1906 the Prime Minister, Campbell-Bannerman, was sixty-nine and spent several weeks, if not months, of the year taking the waters in the agreeable German spa of Marienbad. In fact, 'C.B.' was at first a forceful and decisive leader. He led his cabinet from the left of centre and with much confidence – 'if the tail is wagging the dog, the party is the dog and I am the tail'. He crushed Balfour at the outset in debate in 1906 with his memorable rebuke, 'Enough of this foolery'. He pushed for early self-government in South Africa (in fact, a highly disadvantageous move as far as the blacks of Cape Colony and Natal were concerned, as Hardie and the Labour Party pointed out). He endorsed the Labour Party's view on trade union reform, rather than the opinion of his own Attorney-General. The result was the 1906 Trade Disputes Act, the so-called Magna Carta of labour, guaranteeing them financial immunity from damages in industrial action

and which, after being reinforced by Michael Foot at the employment department in 1974–5, survived largely intact until the regime of Mrs Thatcher.

But there were also clear similarities between 1906 and 1997. First, in each election there was a background of Conservative division and decline. In the 1990s it was all about Europe. In 1906 it was about Empire. The moral impetus of Empire was severely diminished, as Kipling himself pointed out. 'Methods of barbarism', a phrase suggested to Campbell-Bannerman by that wonderful woman, Emily Hobhouse, who documented the evils of the concentration camps in South Africa, created a new mood of revulsion, though it was the methods of the war rather than its ostensible purposes that generated most criticism, unlike Iraq in 2003. In addition, Joseph Chamberlain in 1903 destabilised his party with his crusade for protective tariffs and imperial preference. In response, free trade, the gospel of Cobden and Bright and Gladstone, embraced the whole range of Liberal (and Labour) values – cheap food and raw materials for consumers, full employment for workers, a vision of world prosperity and peace.

Secondly, in both 1906 and 1997 there was a uniform swing all over the country. There was a big swing to the Liberals in Lancashire, which had been since the 1870s a stronghold of Protestant Toryism. Even in Chamberlainite Birmingham, where all the seats were just about held by the Unionists, there was a 12 per cent swing. Fifteen of the twenty-two Unionist-held seats in London were captured. Rural seats in England, hardly ever, or never, Liberal before, were won. Celtic pluralism was much exploited. There were big Unionist losses in Scotland, the one area to swing to the government in the khaki election of 1900. In Wales, there was a clean sweep, with the Conservatives losing every seat, as in 1997 and 2001. The Liberal cause here, as we have noted, was boosted by the great religious revival and also perhaps by the ever famous rugby victory over the New Zealand All Blacks at the Arms Park on 16 December 1905, which evoked fanciful comparison with the Welsh bowmen at Agincourt.

Thirdly, both the Liberals and New Labour won three elections, the Liberals also winning both elections in 1910, though far more narrowly. They stayed in office as a single-party government for nearly ten years, until the first wartime coalition emerged in May 1915. Both the Liberals in 1906 and Labour in 1997 established not just a government but a hegemony.

And finally, both governments were dominated by two men. Today it is Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. Then it was Herbert Asquith and David Lloyd George. There were other big figures in the 1906 government, of course: Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary, R. B. Haldane, Secretary for War, John Morley, Secretary for India. There were also one or two makeweights like 'Lulu' Harcourt and John Burns. But Asquith and Lloyd George were the giants. They were certainly not socially or educationally on the same wavelength. It was a contrast between a wealthy product of City of London School and Balliol College, Oxford, and a relatively poor product of the shoemaker's home in Llanystdumwy who never went to university and left school at fourteen. This contrast is reflected in Roy Jenkins's suitably patrician biography of Asquith, the work of another Balliol man, of course. Asquith did not greatly like either Lloyd George himself or the Welsh in general – 'I would sooner go to hell than to Wales' he once observed. L.G. would sometimes make derisive comment on Asquith's addiction to brandy and women, though he also spoke often with affection of his old leader. As someone once said to me about another powerful partnership, Jim Callaghan and Michael Foot, 'they were not best buddies' personally. Asquith was a convert to Anglicanism, Lloyd George was a Campbellite Baptist, an outsider in religion as in politics. There was also a much greater political gulf between them than between Blair and Brown today, with Asquith the Liberal Imperialist in 1900 and Lloyd George the 'pro-Boer'.

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But what a tremendous partnership they were, and over so long a period! It is a great error to read back the split between them in 1916–18 to the pre-war years. Lloyd George and Asquith were not Bevan and Gaitskell, still less Cain and Abel. Their great qualities were complementary – Asquith judicious and clear-headed, Lloyd George charismatic and visionary. Asquith foreshadowed his government's reform programme while Chancellor with his budget of 1907 and its new taxation of unearned incomes, and he also introduced old age pensions, which Lloyd George carried on to the statute book. His famous words, 'wait and see', implied a threat to his opponents, not a symbol of indolence. In April 1908, when Campbell-Bannerman left office to die, and Asquith became Prime Minister and Lloyd George his Chancellor, the pace and tone of public life changed dramatically. Asquith went along with all Lloyd George's radical reforms. They worked together in brilliant combination over the 1909 People's Budget and the 1911 Parliament Act which permanently clipped the powers of the Lords. There was no serious political gulf between them until the coming of military conscription in the winter of 1915–16. The key moment came with the Marconi scandal in 1912, when Lloyd George (along with Rufus Isaacs, shortly to become Lord Chief Justice) was seen to have bought shares from a wireless telegraphy company in contract with the British government. Lloyd George, who actually lost money on the Marconi shares transaction, could well have gone with ignominy. But Asquith backed him up to the hilt. He fought Marconi hard on totally partisan lines. Asquith

wanted to remain Prime Minister, he despised the Tories, he recognised Lloyd George as his greatest asset, and he played to win. The Liberals, with their Labour and Irish allies, took a tough partisan approach throughout (none more so than Lloyd George's close ally, Winston Churchill) and Lloyd George survived, eventually to supplant Asquith himself. Nor were Lloyd George's sexual peccadillos a political problem; in any case, Asquith, with his remarkably frank disclosures to Lady Venetia Stanley, was hardly less vulnerable on that ground himself. Tabloid revelations belonged to a later age.

There was one great difference between the two governments of 1906 and 1997. Gordon Brown has said: 'We are at our best when we are boldest'. In fact, on most issues, the government of 1906 was much the bolder, almost recklessly so. Setting Iraq on one side, the Blair government has clearly been the bolder on overall constitutional policy, with Lord Irvine's influence of central importance. Both governments had to grapple with the problem of the House of Lords. Asquith in 1911 limited the powers of the Lords over delaying or blocking government measures, but ignored its composition. (Lloyd George actually feared a remodelled House of Lords dominated by the reactionary 'glorified grocers' of Liberalism.) Tony Blair's government has done the reverse. Overall, Labour since 1997 has had a far more sweeping programme of reform, especially over Scottish and Welsh devolution. In 1906 devolution was not significantly on the agenda: though a Scottish home rule bill did make sluggish progress, the main emphasis was on working through an expanded Scottish Office. In Wales, the main theme was disestablishment of the Church of England, but (unlike Ireland in 1869) disestablishment was an alternative to home rule, not a precursor to it. Welsh and Scottish national sentiment focused on greater equality within the Empire, not exclusion from it, as was the case in Ireland.

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But in all other domestic areas, the 1906 Liberals pressed on with the greater radicalism. They had said very little about social reform in the general election. But under Asquith's regime from 1908 there was far more momentum. Indeed, Asquith's third term, from December 1910, was actually the most radical and effective since it saw, among other things, the passage of both the Parliament Act and the National Insurance Act in 1911. This radical impetus was almost wholly due to David Lloyd George. He had little to say on social matters in 1906 and the Labour leader reasonably observed that he had 'no settled opinions' on them at the time. He told the Welsh National Liberal Federation then that the workers were quite as much interested in church disestablishment and temperance and land reform as they were in social reform. But by the summer of 1908 there was a mighty change, and he transformed the public agenda. He had until the end of 1910 a tremendous ally in Winston Churchill, almost his disciple and a humane and reforming Home Secretary with a keen interest in such unfashionable topics as prison reform and the treatment of juveniles. But most of Asquith's government – McKenna, Runciman, Simon, Harcourt, various peers – were pretty much of a dead loss on social welfare. Lloyd George stood alone as a unique link between the Old Liberalism of civic equality and the New Liberalism of social reform. He alone recognised the need for more radical momentum and the ways in which this might be achieved.

The turning point was his visit to Germany in August 1908 to look at Bismarckian welfare programmes (a great episode, to be contrasted with his catastrophic later visit to Germany in 1936 to see Hitler at Berchtesgaden). In the autumn and winter of 1908–09 he discussed a planned strategy with Churchill and C. F. G. Masterman, author of *The Condition of England*. There was an immediate need to deal with a financial shortfall – a crisis in local government finance, funding old age pensions and the expensive construction of Dreadnought battleships. But he also sought a new platform for social welfare in the long term.

He aimed boldly to seize the initiative from the tariff reformers. On welfare, the Tories said that 'the foreigner will pay' through tariffs being levied, an idea which Churchill effectively ridiculed. Lloyd George, and his radical journalist friends, replied that 'the rich will pay', echoing the egalitarian argument of Leo Chiozza Money's *Riches and Poverty* (1905). There was, therefore, a commitment to redistribution through the taxation system, unusual, almost unique, in our history. Its new direct taxes, not the land taxes, were the most important feature of his 1909 People's Budget. He and Churchill, with other colleagues, pressed on with labour exchanges for the labour market, trade boards for 'sweated' trades, a minimum wage for miners and others, and policies for children in relation to health and nutrition.

Above all there was his epoch-making National Insurance Act of 1911, a comprehensive system of health insurance and a preparatory system of unemployment insurance. It aroused controversy – Labour members like Hardie and Lansbury did not endorse its contributory method and called it a poll tax. But it offered a new vision of social policy, indeed of social citizenship, and it was the launch pad of Attlee's welfare state forty years later.

This was a distinguished, if angry and often confused, phase of policy-making. Of course, spin-doctors and media figures were in Downing Street in 1911 as they were in 1997 – Lloyd George, with his close links with editors and journalists in Fleet Street, was the most media-conscious figure of his time. But there were also great intellectuals and planners like Seebohm Rowntree, the Webbs and William Beveridge, a key man in the agenda for social policy in 1908 as he was to be so memorably in 1945.

There was something else underlying Edwardian progressivism and Lloyd George's policies – fear of Labour. After all, the Liberals were capitalists, for all their humanity. They were backed by coal-owners and ship-owners and textile magnates. They feared the long violent strikes of 1910–12 with the use of military and the loss of life in places like Tonypandy and Llanelli. There was an underlying fear of the growth of trade union power anyway, violent or not. This was a great worry for the Labour Party too. Keir Hardie himself, always on the left, urged that they should use the state, not destroy it. Even so, accommodating Labour, through protecting the unions' political levy, the payment of MPs, a miners' minimum wage and other measures, was a continuing priority for the Liberal government. Lloyd George declared that if they did not continue to promote an advanced social programme, they would play into the hands of the socialists of the ILP.

At any rate, there was plenty of energy within the government down to the late spring of 1914. Lloyd George's 1914 budget, with its rating of site values and higher direct taxes, was the most radical and redistributive of the lot. It ran into severe procedural difficulties in the Commons which dented his reputation as a minister, but it still emerged as a bold, redistributive measure which focused on the unearned income and the residual estates of the rich, idle and otherwise. He continued to work with radicals like Masterman, C. R. Buxton and C. P. Scott, editor of the *Manchester Guardian*. Seebohm Rowntree was his great intellectual policy adviser. An important political ally was Dr Christopher Addison, a famous university medical professor in earlier life, along with Addison's fellow East End MP, William Wedgwood Benn, father of Tony Benn, of course. Both later joined the Labour Party. If one considers Isaac Foot alongside Wedgwood Benn, it may indeed be seen how the modern Labour left was literally the child of Edwardian progressivism. With Addison, Lloyd George worked on areas left out in earlier social reform measures – education, including technical education, housing reform, the rural poor, and extending health centres in a way that might have anticipated Nye Bevan's National Health Service. He told Addison they should dream dreams, though base them on existing realities. The government's ninth year in power was one of its most creative.

George Dangerfield's famous book, *The Strange Death of Liberal England*, has seen this government as fundamentally doomed. Certainly it was brought to a shuddering halt by the advent of war. Dangerfield, however, highlights domestic issues – the campaign of the suffragettes for votes for women, the great labour 'unrest', the crisis over Ireland. His book is brilliantly written and highly entertaining. But very few historians pay much heed to its argument now. The suffragettes were surely declining in political impact in 1914 through their own divisions, even if things would change fundamentally later on. The industrial relations troubles seemed even more a problem for the Labour Party, committed as it was to constitutionalism, and were anyhow petering out in 1914. Irish home rule was undoubtedly intractable, perhaps insoluble, an abiding commitment for Lloyd George thereafter, until he achieved the longest-lasting settlement there in the Irish Free State treaty worked out with Sinn Fein in December 1921.

In the long term, in my view, Edwardian Liberalism was likely to decline. The electorate was going to expand, bringing many more poorer voters on to the register along with all women, and this might well have disadvantaged the Liberals fatally. They were already struggling politically. Their tally of seats had fallen from 401 to 272 by the end of 1910 and by-elections had reduced it further since then. No one much suggested PR then – usually the demand of losing parties. There were serious losses to the Conservatives, or Ratepayers, in local government such as the serious loss of the London County Council by the Progressives in 1907. Arguments for traditional free trade would be harder to sustain as the economy changed and relied less on exporting staple industries like coal, textiles and shipbuilding. Nonconformity, even to a degree in Wales, was now something of a fading force. More generally, Liberals, champions of the free market, could not ultimately accommodate the politics of class.

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But these things hadn't happened yet. The Tories under Bonar Law might have been favourites to win a 1915 general election, but they still had their troubles over food taxes and Irish home rule. The Liberals' electoral pact with Labour was still in being and there were even suggestions that Ramsay MacDonald might enter a Liberal government. There was still a mood of prosperity and peace. The economy looked robust with 1913 a particularly strong year for coal and record exports from Cardiff and Newcastle. There had been no war. The 1906 Liberal government had not invaded other countries. Lloyd George was still their greatest asset, still dominating political life.

At the Mansion House on 17 July 1914, two and a half weeks after the assassination at Sarajevo, he spoke of the world scene with guarded optimism: 'the sky has never seemed more relatively blue'. Eighteen days later, Britain engaged in a world war, following the invasion of Belgium. Progressive Liberal England suddenly collapsed for ever. The Liberals were to be a supreme casualty of total war. No longer would they be a party of power. It would never be glad, confident morning again.

Lord Kenneth Morgan has been one of Britain's leading modern historians for over thirty years, and is known especially for his writing on Welsh history, Lloyd Geroge and the Labour Party; he was made a life peer in 2000.

REVIEWS

Friends and allies

Ian Hunter (ed.): *Winston and Archie: The Letters of Sir Archibald Sinclair and Winston S. Churchill* (Politico's, 2005)

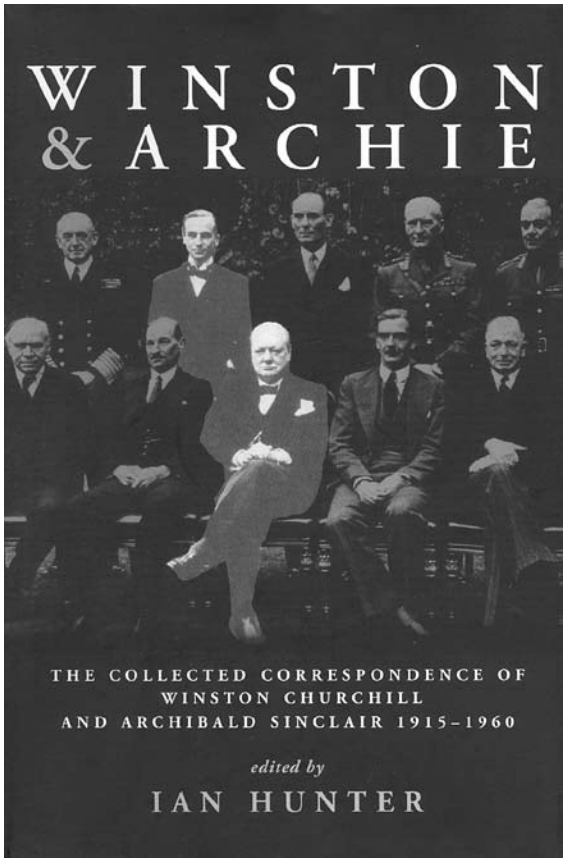
Reviewed by **Richard Toye**

The publication of the private and official correspondence of Winston Churchill and Archibald Sinclair is greatly to be welcomed. During the First World War, Sinclair was Churchill's aide-de-camp when the latter served for a few months in the trenches after the apparent collapse of his political career. From 1919–22, Sinclair again assisted Churchill, first at the War Office and then at the Colonial Office. After the collapse of the Lloyd George coalition, he remained loyal to the Liberal Party, becoming its leader in 1935, whereas Churchill reverted to the Tories. However, in 1940 Churchill appointed Sinclair as Secretary of State for Air. Sinclair left the coalition government at the end of the European war, narrowly lost his seat in the ensuing general election, and took little part in politics thereafter. The letters cast light on what was for both men a significant relationship and, to a lesser extent, also provide evidence about the fate of Liberalism.

It should be noted that a number of the most interesting letters have been published before, in the companion volumes to the official biography of Churchill. However, this does not diminish the value of the book under review. Some of the First World War letters are extraordinarily raw and unguarded, and are well worth re-reading. In June 1915, having been moved from the Admiralty to a sinecure position, Churchill poured out his heart to the younger man (they had first met prior to the war): 'I do not want office, but only war direction: that perhaps never again. Everything else – not that. Everything else – not that. At least so I feel in my evil moments. Those who live by the sword – ... I am profoundly unsettled: and cannot use my gift.' This level of candour suggests that Churchill at this time placed almost unlimited trust in Sinclair.

The letters for the immediate post-war period are, in emotional terms, considerably less revealing. This is a natural consequence of the change in their relationship, from comrades-in-arms to minister and private secretary. The correspondence takes on an official character, with Sinclair doing the bulk of the writing. The material is nonetheless important, especially in relation to British intervention in the Russian Civil War. Sinclair was as an enthusiast for the 'Whites', as Churchill was. There was a hint of anti-Semitism in the men's attitude towards the Bolsheviks. It must be said in their defence, though, that they repeatedly urged restraint on the leaders of the Whites, in (often unsuccessful) attempts to prevent pogroms.

The letters for the 1923–39 period are amongst the most valuable in the book, although they are by no means voluminous. A couple in particular stand out. The first of these is Sinclair's of 16 January 1929. This was an extended commentary on Churchill's draft of *The Aftermath* (the volume of his book *The World Crisis* dealing with the immediate post-war period). Churchill was Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time, and a general election was in the offing. Sinclair, who as a Liberal was of course a political opponent, urged him not to give hostages to fortune. In particular, he warned him not to print an exchange of telegrams dating from 1919 in which Lloyd George (now the leader of Sinclair's own party) had urged restraint upon his errant War Secretary. Sinclair wrote: 'I cannot help thinking that it must have been the need … of justifying your apparent opposition to Lloyd George's copybook maxims which has led you to denounce with a strength of language which strikes me as perhaps a little excessive the policy which the Allies finally did adopt.' Interestingly, in Sinclair's private papers there is a draft of this letter containing a passage not quoted in this edition. In it, Sinclair observed that Churchill's pursuit of his controversy with Lloyd George 'has led you into a greater condemnation of the policy which was pursued



than you would at the time have thought justified or than you could now easily reconcile with your responsibilities for it as a Cabinet Minister and Secretary of State for War' (Thurso Papers II 85/3, Churchill College, Cambridge). Clearly, as regards self-censorship, Sinclair practiced what he preached.

Some letters from Churchill in 1931 cast important new light on his thinking about the Liberal Party as it entered its all-but-terminal phase. In the autumn of that year the party divided in three. Lloyd George and a tiny group of followers remained outside Ramsay MacDonald's newly formed National Government. Within the government there were two Liberal factions, one led by Herbert Samuel and the other (the Liberal Nationals) by John Simon. Churchill, in an undated letter, urged Sinclair to 'ruthlessly detach' himself from the Samuelites 'and establish solid Tory or Simonite connections'. Sinclair ignored this advice, and in September 1932 resigned from the government, along with the other Samuelite ministers, against Churchill's advice. The resignations were in protest at the government's confirmation of its abandonment of free trade. This issue seems to have been the crucial factor in Sinclair's attachment to Liberalism. It is difficult to see what, apart from this question, divided him from moderate Conservatives.

The Second World War correspondence is again of the largely official variety, but is no less fascinating for that. Churchill's style as Prime Minister was to prod away at his subordinates in an attempt to expose organisational weaknesses and stimulate action. This approach had defects as well as virtues. If he fell on a snippet of information without understanding its full context, he could fire off memoranda demanding explanations from his subordinates, which would force them to waste valuable time justifying themselves. It is not hard to understand why both Sinclair and Churchill at times felt frustrated with one another, although, perhaps inevitably given his superior literary skill, it was the latter with whom this reviewer ended up sympathising most. 'I am very glad to find that you are as usual completely satisfied', Churchill wrote sardonically on 29 September 1940, in relation to a point he had raised earlier about bombing targets. 'I merely referred the Foreign Office telegram to you in order to test once more that impenetrable armour of departmental confidence which you have donned since you ceased to lead an Opposition to the Government and became one of its pillars. Either you must have been very wrong in the old days, or we must all have improved enormously since the change.'

This volume … forms an at times touching record of a political friendship.

Sinclair did not forfeit Churchill's confidence but he was no longer in his innermost circle. The slim post-war correspondence is full of expressions of affection but there is not much of substance. Sinclair was ennobled by Churchill as Viscount Thurso in 1952, but almost immediately suffered a major stroke. Although he outlived Churchill by five years, he was not able to take an active role in the House of Lords. This volume – on which the editor, Ian Hunter is to be congratulated – is a worthy testament to Sinclair's earlier importance to British politics. It also forms an at times touching record of a political friendship.

***Richard Toye** has published widely on many aspects of modern political history. His next book,* Lloyd George and Churchill*, will be published by Macmillan in 2007.*

The strategy of the centre

Stephen Barber: *Political Strategy: Modern Politics in Contemporary Britain* (Liverpool Academic Press, 2005)

Reviewed by **Richard Holme**

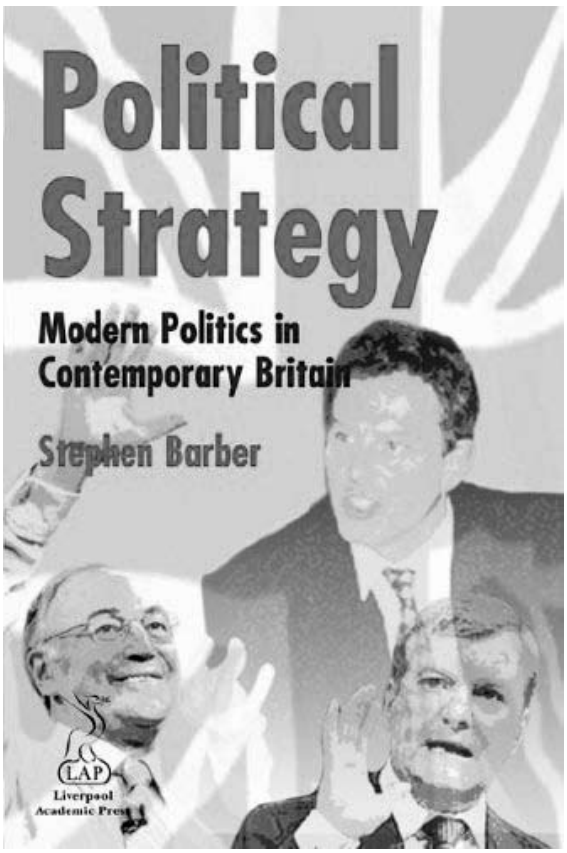
This is an ambitious and unusual book, which ventures well outside the usual terrain of political publishing – memoirs and biographies, electoral studies and analyses of issues and identities.

Stephen Barber's chosen turf is strategy, the planned shaping of the political battle to achieve long-term goals and eventual victory. The military vocabulary is appropriate. Although there is scarcely a corporation or NGO, or indeed any other institution worth its salt nowadays, which does not boast a strategy, the inspiration and terminology – complete with 'missions', 'objectives' and 'battle plans' – comes from war. Indeed, Mr Barber quotes the fourth-century *Art of War* by Sun-Tzu in his first chapter.

In the decades after the Second World War, this battlefield jargon, translated back from the front into civilian life, increasingly infused every competitive marketplace, no doubt giving a macho thrill to the men in grey flannel suits, dreaming Walter Mitty-style that their 'counter-attacks' with 'targeted saturation advertising campaigns' on the toothpaste or toilet tissue markets put them in the swashbuckling tradition of General Patton.

And the master plan, the big picture, which would ensure that effort would not be wasted nor valuable resources dissipated, was, of course, the strategy.

For some time, politics seemed relatively immune to the strategic approach, content to bumble along from crisis to crisis, election to election,



swinging between the twin poles of personality and policy with, in recent years, an increasing emphasis on presentation.

In the US, however, from the Kennedy campaign in 1960, right through to the current 'battlefield' of 'red' and 'blue' states, there has, of course, been an increasing use of military analogies in elections – and the same drum-beat has been heard here. There may also be a case to argue that what could otherwise be classified as electoral tactics has developed into longer-term strategic approaches. What else is the twenty-year re-positioning of the Republican Party, and with it the whole US political scene, to the evangelical right, but a comprehensive strategy?

In contrast, political parties in the UK, particularly the Conservative and Labour Parties, fortified by class, tradition and ideology, have been in the business of 'being' rather than 'becoming'. They have been simply 'there' rather than in any way having to define a project. However, in recent years, the progressive dealignment of British politics, with a dwindling 'donkey' vote and a growing 'consumer choice' vote, has changed that to a marked degree. The Thatcher years – with the dilemmas she posed for her successors – and the construction of the New Labour 'project' have both been outstanding examples of party strategy, involving repositioning, rebranding and redeployment. Barber deals with both, with extensive interviews with some of the key actors.

Liberal Democrat readers, however, may find the later part of the book particularly interesting. Barber has a very long chapter, 'The Strategy of the Centre', which is what he calls his case study. In this he deals with the formation of the SDP and its breakaway from Labour, the building of the Alliance, the trauma of merger, Paddy Ashdown's 'equidistance' in time for the 1997 election, the coalition manoeuvrings with Tony Blair and New Labour and Charles Kennedy's reversion to constructive opposition.

Recent history is notoriously difficult to get into perspective but Barber marshals his case study well. At times I felt like a drowning man with my life floating before my eyes. His sources include Shirley Williams, Charles Kennedy, and I have to confess, myself. Shirley and I were frank, Charles more guarded. Whether I should have been quite so outspoken, about David Owen for instance, if I had realised that the mild-mannered author intended to turn what had sounded like an interesting but very academic thesis into a mainstream political book I am not sure but, in the great tradition of Edith Piaf and Norman Lamont, 'Je ne regrette rien'.

In particular I stand by my judgement that if, at the 1987 election when we fielded the notoriously tense 'nightmare ticket' of the two Davids, the SDP and Liberals had instead fought in matrimonial terms as a happily engaged couple on their way, at a seemly interval after the election, towards conjugal bliss in a permanent union, it would have made the crucial difference. If we had performed a few percentage points better and got ahead of Labour, not only would the subsequent debacle of the collapse of the Alliance have been avoided but momentum would have been restored to a flagging proposition. Barber records that the main Labour aim at this election was 'not coming third' and the fissiparous Alliance gave them material help to achieve this aim. Playing those 'what if' games makes me wonder if the price might have been offering David Owen the crown. On second thoughts … !

More generally, Barber is interesting on the Downsian model of rational choice by voters and of parties which compete via opinion polling and match their policies to its results. It is clearly a model which has its limits, since parties are not new brands. Each has its own history and values, even if ideology is nowadays more plastic – I recall one of our best-read columnists inviting me to breakfast at the Ritz in 1995 to tell me that if only the Lib Dems would come out as anti-Europe we could sweep the country.

Yet whatever the limits of Downsian theory, it is patently obvious from the last two elections that all three parties are conducting the same attitude research among the same voters in something like one hundred target constituencies. The views of several hundred thousand potential swing voters are played back to the campaign managers who amplify them through the megaphone of the election. The resulting concentration on a handful of issues is an impoverishment of the electoral process in what after all is a diverse electorate of millions with a multitude of other preoccupations and interests.

The author devotes a chapter to focus groups. It contains immortal words from Philip

Gould, the Pharaoh of focus groups: 'The mystique surrounding them is ridiculous: they are simply eight people in a room talking.' It sounds so cosy; but of course they are talking to Tony Blair, via Philip Gould. The ultimate manifestation of what Lord Butler called 'sofa government' perhaps. I am sure there are cabinet ministers who wish they were listened to so attentively.

This is a book which I can recommend. A slight unevenness and a distant whiff of footnotes are more than compensated for by some interesting new source material and an unusual and worthwhile perspective.

Lord Holme of Cheltenham is a former President of the Liberal Party, advisor to David Steel and Paddy Ashdown, manifesto coordinator of the 1992 Liberal Democrat election campaign and chairman of the 1997 campaign.

New guide to political archives

Chris Cook: *The Routledge Guide to British Political Archives: Sources since 1945* (Routledge, 2006)

Reviewed by **Dr J. Graham Jones**

Students of twentieth-century British political history have long been accustomed to turn to the now well-worn series of five volumes of *Sources in British Political History*, edited by Dr Chris Cook (formerly Head of the Modern Archives Unit at the London School of Economics), published between 1975 and 1985. Those volumes have proved extremely useful guides over the years, but they did contain a number of inaccuracies and inconsistencies. This new volume, covering the period from the end of World War Two almost to the present, is to be warmly welcomed and fills a distinct gap, as new archives are becoming available to the researcher almost daily. The volume is notably easy to use and impressively comprehensive in scope. It covers a total of more than two thousand non-governmental archives.

The text is conveniently divided into two sections: individual politicians and political activists; and organisations, institutions and societies that have exercised a bearing on British political and public life since 1945. The section on individuals – running to more than a thousand entries – gives brief career details, a concise summary of the scope and contents of their surviving papers, details of restrictions on access (although these have now sometimes been superseded by the application of the Freedom of Information Act, 2003, which came into effect in January 2005), the National Register of Archives reference number of the catalogues, and references to other and fuller published accounts of the papers like Hazlehurst and Woodland's invaluable *Guide to the Papers of British Cabinet Ministers*. The section on organisations and societies gives helpful potted histories of the bodies in question and some account of their internal structure. These include a large number of political parties, trades unions and pressure groups. Very valuable, too, are the numerous cross-references and additional snippets of helpful information. The standard of accuracy in the individual entries is extremely high and reflects meticulous preparation on the part of the compiler and his assistants.

The vast majority of the archives covered in this volume are of course in public repositories, but it also includes entries for some important archive groups which remain in private hands such as those of Winnie Ewing and Baroness Falkender. There is sometimes a somewhat strange imbalance in the nature of the entries. Important political figures like Geoffrey Howe, William Whitelaw and Harold Wilson receive very brief entries, while little-known politicians and activists are given fairly extended accounts. The entries on the national archives of the major political parties and organisations like the TUC, the NUM and CND are especially full and helpful.

The volume is notably easy to use and impressively comprehensive in scope. It covers a total of more than two thousand non-governmental archives.

Generally, the guide is very comprehensive. Welsh archives are certainly very well represented. The only really important omission from the holdings of the Welsh Political Archive at the National Library of Wales is the extensive papers of Lord Goronwy-Roberts. Other significant archives not included from among the holdings of the NLW include the records of the Association of Welsh Local Authorities and the papers of Cynog Dafis MP, Ron Evans (the local constituency agent to Aneurin Bevan and Michael Foot) and Robin Reeves. Among more recent accessions which do not feature in the book are the papers of Roderic Bowen MP and those of Lord Crickhowell. It is, of course, inevitable that any reference volume of this kind begins to date as soon as it is published.

There are a few strange observations too. The archive of Lord Edmund-Davies is described as 'a large collection of papers' (p. 66) and that of Sir Rhys Hopkin Morris as 'a substantial collection of correspondence and other papers' (p. 142). Both of these archive groups are, in fact, very small and relatively disappointing. The much more extensive archive of the papers of Lord Elwyn-Jones is described as 'reportedly closed' (p. 68) which is not the

case. These, however, are very minor quibbles, and the general standard of accuracy (and indeed recency) of the entries throughout the volume is very high.

One final grouse – the price of the volume (although a handsome tome) at £125 is extremely high. Few individuals are likely to fork out for this volume, and even libraries, ever-conscious of making the best use of their precious book funds, are likely to think twice.

In conclusion, however, it is an obligation to welcome this invaluable guide most warmly. It will undoubtedly prove an invaluable research tool to all those working in the field of post-1945 British political history. Once again the prolific Dr Chris Cook has placed us all in his debt. One looks forward eagerly to the promised major companion volume on European archives during the same period which is already in active preparation.

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

Who votes for the Liberal Democrats? And why?

Andrew Russell and Edward Fieldhouse: *Neither Left nor Right? The Liberal Democrats and the Electorate* (Manchester University Press, 2005)

Reviewed by **Duncan Brack**

One of the more notable developments in political studies in recent years has been a revival of interest in the Liberal Democrats. Whereas ten years ago there was still only one short history of the party available, now there are three, with one more to come soon. Similarly, whereas papers on Liberal politics at academic conferences were a rarity in the early 1990s, nowadays there are often several. *Neither Left not Right* is another component in this revival of studies of political Liberalism: a heavyweight analysis of the electoral support of the Liberal Democrats in the 1997 and 2001 elections.

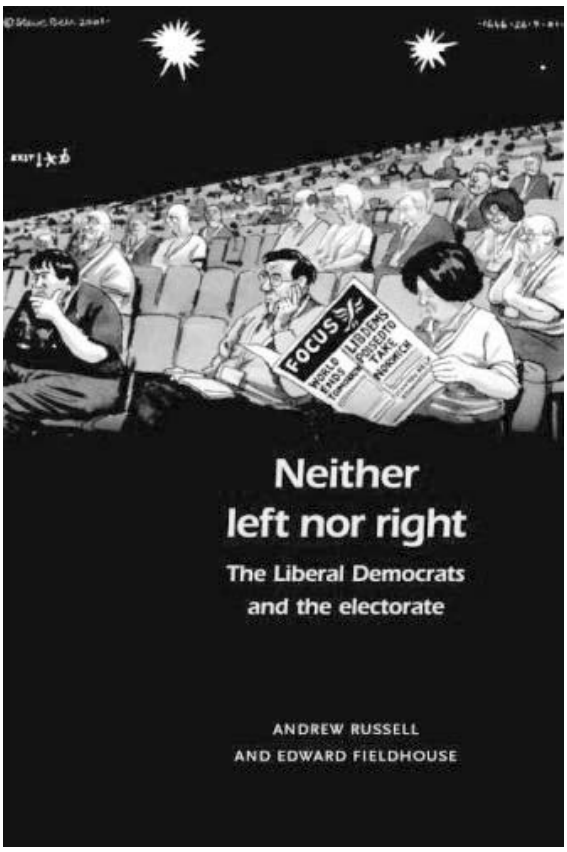
The book starts with a basic history of the party from its origins in the nineteenth century. Unfortunately these first two chapters are not up to the standards of the rest of the book, including very little about what the party actually did when it was in power (something of an occupational hazard of political scientists, as opposed to historians), a very uneven treatment of topics like community politics, and a number of rather obvious errors, including claiming the merged party came into existence in 1989 (rather than the actual date of 1988) and stating that Lib Dems no longer control Liverpool (while they have done continuously since 1998).

The other two introductory chapters, on the structure of the party and on the tension between grassroots and leadership, based partly on an extensive series of interviews, are rather better. Russell and Fieldhouse bring out well the strength of the party in its local activist base, and the attitudes that tend to follow (I particularly liked the quote from the election agent who claimed that 'If ever we lose our ability to embarrass the leadership as a party, even when we are in government, then we won't be the Liberal Party I joined' (p. 74)), and the divergence between local and central views, particularly over Europe. They are also clear, however, about the growing professionalism of the central organisation, and the key role played by Paddy Ashdown's hyperactive leadership in reconstructing the party after merger.

Russell and Fieldhouse bring out well the strength of the party in its local activist base, and the attitudes that tend to follow.

The bulk of the book, however, is given over to a detailed analysis of the profile of Lib Dem support in the electorate, from socioeconomic, geographical and issue-based points of view, and party strategy in seeking to maximise its support in the 1997–2001 period. This includes a series of case studies of individual constituency campaigns in areas chosen to reflect different levels and histories of Liberal support: Devon North, Montgomeryshire ('heartland'); Colchester, Sheffield Hallam ('expanding heartland'); Bridgwater, Cheadle (Conservative–Lib Dem marginals); and Aberdeen South and Oldham East & Saddleworth (Labour–Lib Dem marginals). On the basis of all this, the authors examine a number of hypotheses which can help to explain the basis and growth of Liberal Democrat electoral support.

The 'alternative opposition' hypothesis rests on the party's historical record as an anti-Conservative party, best placed to do well where Labour are weakest ('Conservatives are the opposition, Labour the competition'). This is borne out in some of the case studies, and supported by the fact that Lib Dem voters tend to resemble Labour supporters much more than they do Conservatives in their social and geographic backgrounds. Pursuing this line of reasoning leads the authors to highlight the difficulty of trying to win Conservative seats while opposing Conservative views, and they conclude that 'clashes with the Conservatives remain the vital electoral battleground for the Liberal Democrats in the



run-up to the next election [i.e. 2005]' – which that election in the end disproved. The authors suggest that the party should 'move outside the constraints of the left–right spectrum … promoting a set of distinctive policies that can be seen as both centrist and radical' (p. 254). Easier said than done.

The 'credibility gap' hypothesis suggests that the party always struggles to overcome the problem of not being seen as a likely victor of election campaigns; the book reprints the 2001 poster which highlighted how people said they would vote if they actually thought the Lib Dems could win in their area (the result being a landslide Lib Dem victory). The case studies highlight how local campaigns can steadily build credibility, winning local council seats, achieving second place in general elections, squeezing the third party … and so on. The book highlights in this respect the value of gaining local councils (though sometimes this can be a double-edged sword) and, especially, of concentrated local campaigning.

The 'creeping Liberalism' hypothesis looks at how 'the success of the Liberal Democrats can spread like a virus throughout regions', with success in one seat having a knock-on effect in adjacent seats. This is partly a variant of the 'credibility gap' argument, but the authors also stress how campaigning techniques can be taught and transferred between activists from adjacent local parties.

The 'dual identities' hypothesis rests on the argument that although in most cases the party is organisationally quite decentralised, in fact it is possible for the leadership to exercise a quite considerable degree of power; as the authors comment, 'it is genuinely difficult to characterise the Liberal Democrats as either a top-down or 'bottom-up organisation' (p. 257). From an electoral point of view, this suggests that local parties have a good deal of freedom to emphasise – and possibly change – policy to fit the local context.

Finally, the 'issue-based mobilisation' hypothesis highlights how, much more than the other parties with their residual basis of class support, Lib Dems have to struggle to convince voters on the basis of individual policy positions; a penny on income tax for education is given as the prime example, but local instances are also drawn from the case studies.

Clearly there is something in all of these hypotheses, but it's a shame that the book came out in early 2005, just before last year's election instantly disproved some of its arguments – notably the statement that 'analysis of constituency marginality after the 2001 general election showed that the party was again not in a good position to make serious gains from Labour at the next general election' (p. 196). The entire 'alternative opposition' argument really needs to be revisited in the context of an increasingly vulnerable and increasingly right-wing Labour government, and a Conservative Party whose support appears now to have bottomed out and be rising. On the other hand, the 2005 result strongly supported the 'issue-based mobilisation' hypothesis, with Lib Dem support rising particularly strongly amongst Muslim voters and amongst students and those working in higher education (the latter trend is already identified in the book), on the back of Lib Dem opposition to the war in Iraq and to tuition fees.

The 'dual identities' hypothesis could also usefully be revisited, partly in the context of the weaker Kennedy leadership (much of the book's stress on strong central leadership relates to the Ashdown era) but also in relation to the feeling, shared by political commentators and many Lib Dems alike, that the party's lack of a strong central message to tie together some individually popular policies actually held it back; perhaps the dual identity is now as much a hindrance as a help?

All of which is an argument for a second, updated, edition, which could perhaps expand the case studies to include some of the seats newly won from Labour in 2005 – but in the mean time this book is a fascinating read. That's not to say it's an easy read – for those unfamiliar with statistical analysis techniques, parts of it can be heavy-going, and it's shame the publishers seem to have saved on costs by not bothering to employ an editor or a proof-reader. For those seeking to understand the development of the electoral basis of Liberal Democrat support over the last decade, however, and to gather much information about how the party organises itself and fights its campaigns, *Neither Left Nor Right* is invaluable.

Duncan Brack is Editor of the Journal of Liberal History.

ARCHIVES

'The radicals and thinkers of British politics?'[1]
Sources in the Manuscripts Division of the National Library of Scotland for the study of the Liberals and Liberal Democrats*

by **Alan R Bell**

When Paddy Ashdown suggested that Jo Grimond had been able to establish the Liberal Party as the party of the 'radicals and thinkers of British politics' he was praising the man who had begun to turn the fortunes of an ailing party around. Grimond himself had asserted that the Liberals had to be more than 'a brains trust standing on the sidelines of politics shouting advice to the Tories and Socialists alike', and had worked extensively to make the party modernise; in his mind it was 'a question of get on or get out'.[2]

To the readers of this journal this may seem like old information. However, it is impossible to test the assertions of Ashdown and Grimond without the manuscript sources that are held in repositories around the country. How does the scholar decide whether Liberal policies are either radical or thoughtful without testing their evolution by returning to the documents that the party, its branches, and its members have left behind?

The Manuscripts Division of the National Library of Scotland has a particularly rich group of collections relating to the Liberal Party and its politicians, and the holdings here represent the best starting point for the scholar of Scottish Liberal history. The earliest accession of party material was in 1978 when the library purchased an agenda book and some minute books of the Scottish Liberal Club (1936–53). This purchase was augmented the following month by the formal deposit of the papers of the Scottish Liberal Club (1879–1953), helping to establish a very good run of records for that body in one institution.

The accession of the records of the Scottish Liberal Party proper took place in 1999. Through the good offices of the Secretary of the Scottish Working People's History Trust, the Scottish Liberal Democrats took the decision to deposit their archive with the Manuscripts Division of the National Library of Scotland. This decision meant that the records of the Liberal Party would be properly represented in the collection of Modern Political Manuscripts in the Library, allowing researchers to access the archives of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Association, the Scottish National Party, the Scottish Liberal Party, and the finest collection of labour and trade union records in Scotland, in the same place.[3] The decision to deposit the party archive in the National Library of Scotland was taken in conjunction with the Sub-Librarian (Special Collections) at Edinburgh University Library. Although an earlier deposit of Scottish Liberal Party papers had been made to that institution, it was felt that that the party archive would be more appropriately housed as part of the Modern Political Manuscript collection at the National Library of Scotland. The papers of the other parties provided a context for the Scottish Liberal papers, and, moreover, the National Library of Scotland already had extensive holdings of the personal papers of many Liberal politicians (of which more below). Therefore, the entire collection, comprising the material previously at Edinburgh University Library and further material from the headquarters of the Scottish Liberal Democrats at Clifton Terrace in Edinburgh, was brought to the National Library and a potential split in the archive was avoided.

The Manuscripts Division of the National Library of Scotland has a particularly rich group of collections relating to the Liberal Party and its politicians.

The collection of Scottish Liberal Party papers is a particularly fine one, covering the whole range of party organisation and administration for the period of the manuscripts (1877–1959). The main run of minutes is included in the collection, as is further material on the Scottish Liberal Club, but, interestingly, papers of sub-groups of the party are also present. Therefore researchers can access information on the Scottish Women's Liberal Federation, the Scottish Liberal Free Trade Committee and the Scottish Reform Club, to give three examples. A further large collection of Scottish Liberal Party and Scottish Liberal Democrat material was deposited with the Manuscripts Division of the library in 2002. Although these papers are, as yet, unlisted, they represent a continuation from the previous accession and contain papers from the party's Scottish Executive, the Scottish Young Liberals, a large amount of photographs of the party's candidates for various elections, and further papers of the Scottish Liberal Club.

The principal accession of Scottish Liberal Party papers also has some material on local branches of the party. This had presumably been sent to the headquarters of the Scottish Party at some point and, therefore, became part of the main party archive. Iain Hutchison has suggested that local party papers can 'give an unrivalled glimpse

into regular party work, and reveal aspects otherwise undetectable [from wider national material]'.[4] The East of Scotland Liberal Federation, the Dumbartonshire Liberal Associations, the Midlothian Liberal Association, and the Haymarket Ward Liberal Association are all represented within the main collection and may offer the researcher an alternative perspective on issues discussed at a national level. Moreover, these are not the only local Liberal Party papers held by the National Library of Scotland. In 1985 the papers of the South Edinburgh Liberal Association (1885–1922) were placed with the Manuscripts Division by that body, with a further deposit (1924–73) taking place in 2001. In the same way as the papers of the Scottish Women's Liberal Federation are held as part of the accession of the Scottish Liberal Party's papers, the papers of the South Edinburgh Women's Liberal Association are within the accession of the South Edinburgh Liberal Association's papers. There could be considerable scope for research that compares the relationships, policies and actions of these women's groups at local and national level, and between different areas of the country.

The National Library of Scotland was also able to purchase a small collection comprising a minute book, a cash book, and a small number of letters of the Kinross-shire Liberal Association (1889–1931) in 1987. Furthermore, the Manuscripts Division was presented with the minute books and other papers of the Buteshire (1892–1918), Kilmarnock (1901–23), and Ardrossan (1908–29) Liberal Associations in 2002. These records from the local Associations help to improve the geographic spread of the finest collection of Liberal Party material in Scotland.

No discussion of sources such as this would be complete without mention of the papers of the Liberal politicians which are also held by the Manuscripts Division. Hutchinson has argued that 'it is curious that the party which almost sank into extinction [in the twentieth century] has the best sample of backbenchers' records [available to researchers]'.[5] Arguably, the collections in the National Library of Scotland surpass this statement. At all levels of politics represented in the papers held by the Library, from cabinet ministers to party activist, Liberals feature.

If researchers are inclined to test Paddy Ashdown's assertion in the title … the papers held in the National Library of Scotland represent the best place to start.

Perhaps the most high-profile collection is that of Archibald Philip Primrose, the 5th Earl of Rosebery, whose papers were presented to the National Library of Scotland in 1966 by Lord Primrose (later 7th Earl of Rosebery). The collection primarily concerns Rosebery's political correspondence (1869–1927) and was used extensively by the Marquess of Crewe in his biography Lord Rosebery, (London, 1931). However, to mention Rosebery should not be to underplay the quality of the other papers of Liberal politicians in the collection. To return to the subject of the quote which provides the title for this index, the collection of diaries, speeches, articles and other papers (1950–83) of Jo Grimond, deposited in 1983, represent an interesting way to analyse the work of the man who is credited with the resurrection of the Liberal Party. The large amount of personal and family correspondence in the papers of Viscount Haldane could provide interesting perspectives on this Liberal statesman. Lord Russell-Johnston's papers could provide a way for historians not only to analyse the Liberal influence on British politics, but also at a European level. Moreover, to concentrate purely on the Liberal politicians could be said to somewhat miss the point. Perhaps the influence of Liberal politics at a local level could be considered through the papers of people like John J. Reid, who was the Secretary of the Midlothian Liberal Association and whose letters (1877–84) concern the affairs of the Association from its formation until Reid's resignation in 1880, with particular emphasis on the famous Midlothian election campaign of 1879–80, when W. E. Gladstone was the successful candidate.[6]

The Manuscripts Division of the National Library of Scotland has been able to ensure excellent coverage of the written record of Liberal politics in Scotland. Furthermore, through the good offices of various individuals and the party itself, this coverage has been achieved without major difficulties. If researchers are inclined to test Paddy Ashdown's assertion in the title, or wish to analyse the role of women in Scottish Liberal politics, or how the Scottish Liberal Party has evolved and organised itself, or wish to return to Gladstone's Midlothian campaign, or indeed wish to study a multitude of other subjects regarding the Liberals in Scotland, the papers held in the National Library of Scotland represent the best place to start.

The following list includes all the major accessions regarding the Liberal Party in the Manuscripts Division of the National Library of Scotland divided into four categories: national party papers; local party papers; personal papers; and other papers relating to the Liberal Party. Each entry has a short note about the collection and its reference number which is prefixed by one of the following: MS; Acc; or Dep. Should you require any further information on the collections, some of our inventories are now available online. The easiest way to access these is through our 'index to Modern Political Manuscripts in the National Library of Scotland', which can be found at http://www.nls.uk/catalogues/online/political-mss/index.html. Please do not hesitate to contact the staff of the Manuscripts Division directly should you have any questions.[7]

ARCHIVES

1. National party papers

- SCOTTISH LIBERAL CLUB: Dep.275 and Acc.7107. minute books and house committee minutes books, 1879–1953.
- SCOTTISH LIBERAL PARTY and SCOTTISH LIBERAL DEMOCRATS: Acc.11765 and TD.3023 [this second reference is a temporary number until collection is listed and will change]. minutes and other papers regarding the East of Scotland Liberal Association, the Scottish Liberal Association/Federation, Scottish Women's Liberal Federation, Scottish Reform Club, General Election Addresses, Dumbartonshire Liberal Associations, Scottish Liberal Party Council and Executive, Midlothian Liberal Association, Scottish Liberal Free Trade Committee, J. M. Hogge Collection, Scottish Liberal Club, Geoffrey Taylor Collection, Haymarket Ward Liberal Association, Scottish Young Liberals, 1874–c.1987.

2. Local party papers

- BUTESHIRE, KILMARNOCK AND ARDROSSAN LIBERAL ASSOCIATIONS: Acc.12089. minutes and other papers 1892–1929.
- KINROSS-SHIRE LIBERAL ASSOCIATION: Acc.9491. minute book, cash-book and some assorted letters and papers, 1889–1931.
- SOUTH EDINBURGH LIBERAL ASSOCIATION: Acc.9080 and Acc.12038. minutes and papers including minutes of the St Cuthberts Ward Committee and the South Edinburgh Women's Liberal Association, 1885–1973.

3. Personal papers

- GRIMOND (Joseph (Jo)), later Baron Grimond, Liberal MP for Orkney and Shetland 1950–1983: Dep.363. diaries, articles and reviews, speeches and correspondence, 1952–1983.
- GULLAND (John W.), Liberal MP for Dumfries Burghs 1906–1918, Hon. Treasurer of Scottish Liberal Association, Hon. President Young Scots Society, Secretary to Scottish Liberal Committee in House of Commons 1906–1909, Junior Lord of the Treasury and Scottish Whip 1909–1915, Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury 1915–1917: Acc.6868. correspondence, 1894–1927.
- HALDANE (Richard B.), later Viscount Haldane of Cloan, Liberal MP for Haddingtonshire 1885–1911, Secretary of State for War 1905–1912, Lord High Chancellor of Great Britain 1912–1915 and 1924 (Labour): MSS.5901–6019, MSS.20001–20260. a large collection of letters and other papers including papers of other family members.
- JOHNSTON (D. Russell), later Lord Russell-Johnston, Liberal MP for Inverness 1964–1983, Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber 1983–1997 (Liberal Democrat after 1988): Acc.11682. papers in process of listing, not normally available – please contact Manuscripts Division.
- McLAREN (Duncan), Liberal MP for Edinburgh 1865–1881: MSS.24781–24784. correspondence, 1827–1880.
- McLAREN (John), later Lord McLaren, Liberal MP for Wigtown District 1880, Edinburgh 1881, Lord Advocate 1880, Lord of Session Scotland 1881, Lord of Justiciary 1885: MS.24785, MSS.24789–24803. correspondence including some letters of Duncan McLaren, 1841–1909.
- MURRAY (Alexander W. C. O.), later Viscount Elibank, Liberal MP for Midlothian 1900–1905 and 1910–1912, Peebles and Selkirk 1906–1910, Chief Liberal Whip 1909–1912: MSS.8801–8804. correspondence 1895–1920.
- MURRAY (Arthur C.), later Viscount Elibank, Liberal MP for Kincardineshire 1908–1918, Kincardineshire and West Aberdeenshire 1918–1923: MSS.8805–8824. correspondence, photographs, diaries, notes and other papers, 1909–1962.
- PRIMROSE (Archibald P.), later Earl Rosebery, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs 1886 and 1892–1894, Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury 1894–1895: MSS.10001–10216 and MSS.10250–10253. political correspondence and papers including papers regarding the Liberal League, 1860–1927.
- REID (John J.), advocate, the Secretary of the Midlothian Liberal Association: MS.19623. collection of letters concerning the Association, 1877–1884.

4. Other papers relating to the Liberal Party

- GRIMOND (Joseph (Jo)): Acc.12123. research papers of Michael McManus used in production of biography McManus M, Jo Grimond: Towards the Sound of Gunfire, (Birlinn, Edinburgh, 2001).
- YOUNG SCOTS SOCIETY: Acc.12097. typescript copy of article Elder R I, 'The Young Scots Soci-

ety: a Lost Liberal Legion', published in EDIT: Edinburgh University Graduates' Newsletter, (Spring 2002), and the *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* (Liberal Democrat History Group, Issue 36, Autumn 2002).

Alan R Bell MA hons, is a Manuscripts Curator at the National Library of Scotland with particular responsibility for the Modern Political Collections.

* This list deals solely with the modern Liberal period and omits Whig politicians. The National Library of Scotland does have extensive holdings on Whig politicians (for example in the Minto collection) and researchers should contact staff for advice.

1 Paddy Ashdown cited in P. Joyce and G. Sell, 'Jo Grimond', in D. Brack (ed.), *Dictionary of Liberal Biography* (Politico's, London, 1998), p. 153.
2 Jo Grimond cited in Joyce and Sell, 'Jo Grimond', p. 153.
3 Since the deposit by the Scottish Liberal Democrats took place, the Manuscripts Division of the National Library of Scotland has accepted the deposit of the papers of the Scottish Green Party, further enhancing the coverage of the Modern Political collections.
4 I. G. C. Hutchison, 'Archival Sources for the Study of Scottish Political History in the nineteenth and twentieth Centuries: a survey', in *Scottish Archives: The Journal of the Scottish Records Association* (Scottish Records Association, Vol. 4, 1998), p. 38.
5 Hutchison, 'Archival Sources', p. 36.
6 Gladstone's Midlothian campaign of 1879 was described by the Checklands as 'the first "whistle-stop" election campaign: Mr Gladstone took politics to the people in a new way, haranguing local Scottish crowds from train windows and vast civic gatherings in public halls', O. Checkland and S. Checkland, *Industry and Ethos: Scotland 1832–1914* (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 2nd edn 1989), p. 77. As well as the papers of John Reid, researchers should also note that John McLaren played a role in the Midlothian campaign.
7 Manuscripts Division, National Library of Scotland, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh, EH1 1EW, Tel: 0131 226 4531, Fax: 0131 466 2811, Email: manuscripts@nls.uk, Web Site: http://www.nls.uk

Liberal Democrat History Group meetings programme 2006–07

See back page for next two meetings.

Yellow Book versus Orange Book – Is it time for a New Liberalism?

A hundred years ago, the Liberal landslide victory in the 1906 election opened the way for a period of radical social reform based on the social-liberal ideology of the New Liberalism.

British Liberalism changed decisively from its nineteenth-century Gladstonian inheritance of non-interventionism in economic and social issues to accepting a much more activist role for the state, exemplified by the introduction of graduated income tax, old-age pensions and national insurance. With a few exceptions, the party adhered to this social liberalism throughout the remainder of the century.

In 2004, the authors of the *Orange Book: Reclaiming Liberalism* challenged this 'nanny-state liberalism' and argued that the Liberal Democrats needed to return to their nineteenth-century heritage and 'reclaim economic liberalism' .

Which way now for the Liberal Democrats? What can we draw from the lessons of history? Debate the question with **Paul Marshall**, co-editor of the *Orange Book* and its successor, and **Ed Randall**, co-editor of the *Dictionary of Liberal Thought*.

12.45, Wednesday 20 September 2006
Library, Hilton Metropole Hotel, Brighton

A Hundred Years On: The 1906 Landside in Perspective

This one-day conference seeks to re-evaluate the impact of the 1906 landslide victory. It will focus on the key electoral issues, from human rights to economics, and assess why it all went wrong thereafter.

Speakers include: **Vernon Bogdanor, Ewen Cameron, David Dutton** and **Ian Packer**.

10.00 – 4.30, Saturday 21 October
Robinson College, Cambridge

Cost: £25 (£15 for students and over-60s)

For further information, including up-to-date information on speakers, please contact **Dr Eugenio Biagini** (efb21@cam.ac.uk; Robinson College, Cambridge, CB3 9AN).

The *Dictionary of Liberal Thought*

Postponed from September, this meeting will see the launch of the History Group's latest publication.

The aim of the *Dictionary of Liberal Thought* is to provide an accessible guide to the key figures, concepts, movements, factions and pressure groups associated with the ideas of the British Liberal Party (and SDP and Liberal Democrats) from the seventeenth to the twenty-first centuries.

The *Dictionary* will also cover representative major thinkers from the wider international tradition of liberal thought.

8.00pm, Friday 2 March 2007 (date and time provisional)
Harrogate (fringe meeting at Liberal Democrat spring conference)

A Liberal Democrat History Group fringe meeting

THE SUEZ CRISIS

Fifty years ago, in July 1956, the Egyptian president, Colonel Nasser, nationalised the Suez Canal to the anger and frustration of the British and French governments, who were the majority shareholders.

Prime Minister Eden reached a secret agreement with France and Israel to provoke hostilities through an invasion of Sinai by Israeli forces, using this as a pretext for Anglo-French military intervention in Egypt. The decision to send British troops to occupy the canal zone led to the downfall of Eden and represented what one historian of the Liberal Party has called a watershed for Jo Grimond and his party. Fifty years on, two leading contemporary historians re-examine the impact of Suez for the opposition parties.

Speakers: **Peter Barberis**, Professsor of Politics at Manchester Metropolitan University and author of *Liberal Lion*, a biography of Jo Grimond, and **Brian Brivati**, Professor of Contemporary History at Kingston University, author of a biography of Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell. Chair: **Richard Grayson**.

7.00pm, Monday 3 July 2006
Lady Violet Room, National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, London SW1

An Institute of Historical Research / Liberal Democrat History Group informal colloquium

LANDSLIDE!

The 1906 election and the legacy of the last Liberal governments

The general election of 1906 has often been seen as a watershed in the history of British politics. It marked the beginning of the radical Liberal governments of 1906–14 and the breakthrough of the Labour Party into mainstream politics.

The centenary of the 1906 election marks an important opportunity to re-evaluate both the period and its long-term political legacy. Sessions will cover: • The New Liberalism • The nature of Liberal government • Elections and political management • Policy formation and development • The Land question • Liberals and Labour • The social conscience and Liberal individualism • Where did the New Liberals go? The modern legacy • The 1906 centenary: revival or requiem?

All welcome. Contact: Dr James Moore, Centre for Metropolitan History, Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU; james.moore@sas.ac.uk.

Saturday 1 July 2006
Institute of Historical Research, Malet Street, London