

# LIBERAL POST-WAR BY-ELECTIONS

# THE INVERNESS

The by-election victories at Torrington in 1958 and Orpington in 1962 confirmed that the Liberal Party's recovery from its low point of the 1951 general election – only about a hundred candidates, only six of whom were elected – was under way. But when did the recovery start, and was there an identifiable turning point? Fifty years on, **Alun Wyburn-Powell** examines how the Liberals' little-remembered 1954 by-election near-miss at Inverness marked a step-change in the Liberal Party's electoral fortunes.

**T**HE 1951 election is widely accepted as the low point in Liberal general election performance. It saw the party's lowest share of the total vote, lowest number of candidates and a fall in the number of MPs elected to its lowest level at a general election.<sup>1</sup> At the following general election in 1955 the average share of the vote per Liberal candidate increased slightly, to 15.1 per cent from 14.7 per cent. Fewer deposits were lost in 1955, despite an increase of one in the number of candidates. All six Liberal MPs who fought the 1955 election were returned – the first election since 1929 when the party did not suffer a net loss of seats. These figures suggest that a recovery may have started between 1951 and 1955.

### **The 1951 general election and its aftermath**

The Liberals had entered the 1951 general election with nine seats; five were held, four were lost and one new seat was captured, resulting in a new low of only six. The party had only been able to field 109 candidates and, of these, only 45 were fighting the same seat as in 1950. The severe pruning of the number of Liberal candidates, from the

broad front of 475 in 1950, inevitably meant a drastic reduction in the total number of votes cast for the party. The Liberals' share of the vote collapsed to 2.5 per cent, down from 9.1 per cent in 1950. The party polled only 730,556 votes, compared to 2,621,548 in 1950.

The most high-profile casualty among the Liberal MPs at the 1951 election was the party's Deputy Leader, Megan Lloyd George, who lost Anglesey to Labour by 595 votes, after having represented the constituency without a break since 1929. Emrys Roberts lost Merioneth, also to Labour. The other two losses were both to the Conservatives: Edgar Granville lost Eye in Suffolk, having represented the constituency since 1929, and Archibald Macdonald lost Roxburgh and Selkirk, only eighteen months after first capturing the seat. The Liberals' one gain in the 1951 election was at Bolton West, won by Arthur Holt. Here a pact had been agreed with the Conservatives, who did not contest the constituency in return for the Liberals' standing aside in neighbouring Bolton East.

In 1951 only eleven Liberal candidates managed to achieve second place. Even this figure flattered the real achievements

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and gave little optimism for future breakthroughs, as four of them were the sitting Liberal MPs who had been defeated. Another two, Frank Byers and Dingle Foot, were former Liberal MPs from earlier parliaments attempting to return.<sup>2</sup> Another, Violet Bonham Carter, came second out of two in Colne Valley, where the Conservatives had stood aside. Only four other Liberal candidates managed second place in 1951. John Halse achieved this in Honiton, but was over 17,000 votes away from victory. Roy Douglas came 15,595 votes behind the Labour victor in Bethnal Green, a constituency which had been represented by a Liberal MP, Sir Percy Harris, as recently as 1945. Stuart Roseveare came slightly closer, but was still nearly 10,000 votes adrift of being elected in Bodmin – the constituency which had been held by Dingle Foot's father, Isaac, for the Liberals until 1935. Lastly, John Junor, the journalist, achieved a strong showing in Dundee West in the absence of a Conservative opponent, gaining over 25,000 votes but still falling 3,306 short of victory.

The Parliamentary Liberal Party which emerged after the 1951 election could hardly have claimed to represent a broad

cross-section of society: it comprised five lawyers and a hosiery manufacturer.<sup>3</sup> All were men; half were Welsh. Only one of the Liberal MPs, Jo Grimond, had faced a Conservative opponent at the election. In the space of six years and three general elections all except one of the MPs had changed. The party leader, Clem Davies, was the only Liberal MP who had sat continuously in the Commons since before 1945 and he had only returned to the Liberals in 1942, having been outside the party for eleven years, as an Independent and, before that, a Liberal National.

## Any hope for the future?

In the aftermath of the 1951 general election, Clem Davies wrote: 'Curiously, I am less depressed today than I was in 1945 or 1950. I cannot give a reason for this. It is just a state

of mind and may be quite illogical. However, there it is.'<sup>4</sup> But Davies' curious statement may have been based on more than mere wishful thinking. His own position as party leader had, perversely, been strengthened by the bad result of the election.<sup>5</sup> For the first five years of his leadership from 1945, his predecessor, Archie Sinclair, had been expected to return to the Commons and retake the helm. Sinclair was by now extremely unlikely to stage a comeback, having failed to regain his seat in 1950 and then not having stood again in 1951. The 1951 election had removed from the Commons the three left-wing MPs who had been most vocal in their opposition to the party's leadership and direction – Megan Lloyd George, Edgar Granville and Emrys Roberts. Megan Lloyd George's and Violet Bonham Carter's defeats

Election date	Number of Liberal candidates	Number of Liberal MPs elected	Liberal share of total vote (%)
1945	306	12	9.1
1950	475	9	9.1
1951	109	6	2.5
1955	110	6	2.7
1959	216	6	5.9
1964	365	9	11.2

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By-elections contested by Liberals, Tories and Labour 1945-1959				
By-election date	Constituency	Liberal share of vote (%)	Change in Liberal share of vote from last general election (if fought) (%)	
14 Nov 45	Bromley	11.3	-9.7	
15 Nov 45	Bournemouth	19.5	-3.4	
19 Nov 46	Bermondsey	22.6		
11 Sep 47	Liverpool Edge Hill	4.4		
25 Sep 47	Islington West	16.0		
27 Nov 47	Howdenshire	10.5	-4.4	
27 Nov 47	Edinburgh East	10.1		
4 Dec 47	Surrey, Epsom	7.5	-4.7	
28 Jan 48	Glasgow Camlachie	1.2		
11 Mar 48	Croydon North	9.4	-9.4	
8 Dec 49	Bradford South	6.3	-8.1	
30 Nov 50	Bristol South East	8.1	-1.4	
6 Feb 52	Bournemouth East	10.1	-1.5	
6 Feb 52	Southport	9.5	-5.5	
13 May 53	Sunderland South	5.3		
30 Jun 53	Abingdon	7.1		
19 Nov 53	Holborn & St Pancras	2.3	-1.7	
3 Feb 54	Ilford North	7.9	+1.4	
30 Sep 54	Croydon East	8.0		
21 Dec 54	Inverness	36.0		
15 Dec 55	Torquay	23.8	+9.6	
14 Feb 56	Hereford	36.4	+11.6	
14 Feb 56	Gainsborough	21.6		
1 Mar 56	Walthamstow West	14.7		
15 Nov 56	Chester	12.1	+0.4	
29 May 57	Edinburgh South	23.5		
27 Jun 57	Dorset North	36.1	+3.7	
12 Sep 57	Gloucester	20.1		
24 Oct 57	Ipswich	21.5		
5 Dec 57	Liverpool Garston	15.2		
12 Feb 58	Rochdale	35.5		
27 Mar 58	Torrington	38.0		
12 Jun 58	Ealing South	17.2	+7.6	
12 Jun 58	Weston-Super-Mare	24.5		
12 Jun 58	Argyll	27.5		
20 Nov 58	Aberdeenshire East	24.3		
29 Jan 59	Southend West	24.2	+9.2	
9 Apr 59	Galloway	25.7		

removed the potentially disruptive prospect of the daughters of Asquith and Lloyd George sitting together as Liberal MPs. The newer MPs were more amenable to being managed as a party,<sup>6</sup> and the Liberal MPs' voting patterns after 1951 began to show a much higher consistency

than had been the case in the previous parliaments.<sup>7</sup>

Immediately after the 1951 election Clem Davies turned down an offer of a cabinet post and a coalition. The offer came from Churchill, who had narrowly won the election. Churchill had several coinciding

motives for making the offer. He was indebted to Clem Davies for the part he had played in Chamberlain's downfall in May 1940, which had cleared the way for Churchill's premiership. Churchill wanted to shore up his parliamentary majority of eighteen seats and was keen to bring the Liberal Party into his government. He also hoped to include the sons of Asquith and Lloyd George in his team. Former Liberal MP, Gwilym Lloyd-George,<sup>8</sup> had by then become a Conservative MP and was appointed Minister of Food, but Cyril Asquith, a lawyer, rather than a politician, declined the Woolsack on health grounds. Although Clem Davies realised that Churchill's offer would almost certainly provide his last opportunity to serve in government, he knew that it would not be in his party's interests to accept. Davies was desperately tempted but decided to decline, as long as his party managers agreed with his decision.<sup>9</sup> Davies called a meeting of his twelve most senior colleagues, explained the position to them and left the room while the group debated the decision. Eleven of the twelve felt that Davies should decline the offer. Only Violet Bonham Carter was minded to press for acceptance.<sup>10</sup> It later became clear that, in addition to her personal admiration for Churchill, she also believed that she would have been offered a junior ministerial post.<sup>11</sup>

In 1951 the Liberal Party could have been taken over by the Conservatives or have been obliterated, but instead it survived this testing time intact. After Clem Davies' renunciation of Churchill's offer, the divisive debate within the Liberal Party over potential pacts was calmed.<sup>12</sup> However, no immediate signs of recovery followed. Figures for the party's share of seats won in local elections fluctuated between 1951 and 1953, but if there was a trend, it was still downwards.<sup>13</sup> Post-war

opinion poll ratings from Gallup show a fluctuating pattern from month to month with the Liberal share of the vote generally around the 10 per cent mark.<sup>14</sup> However, if a running average of the polls is taken to smooth out short-term variations, there is a discernible downward trend from 1945 to 1954. Between 1955 and 1956 there is a slight upturn, which accelerates from 1956 to 1958. From the (not very reliable) party membership records, it appeared that membership continued to fall, probably reaching its lowest point in 1953, before beginning to recover.<sup>15</sup> There was also firmer evidence that this reflected a real recovery. This can clearly be seen from the Liberals' by-election performance.

**Post-war by-elections**

After the war, the Liberal Party's decision on whether or not to contest a by-election usually depended on the vagaries of local conditions and personalities. By-elections routinely went by default, due to problems such as a derelict local constituency organisation, or its total absence, lack of funds, lack of a candidate or the selected candidate 'saving her energy for the general election'.<sup>16</sup> The Liberals only contested about one by-election in five between 1945 and 1955. Some hopeless contests were joined, resulting in embarrassments such as sixth place out of six with just 1.2 per cent of the votes in Glasgow Camlachie in January 1948. The following month, Air Vice-Marshal Bennett, a former Liberal MP, lost his deposit at Croydon North and in Holborn and St Pancras South the party polled 2.3 per cent of the vote in the November 1953 by-election. However, despite the disorganised pattern of by-election participation, a clear trend in the results is discernible.<sup>17</sup>

The pattern which emerges is one of a continuing slide in post-war Liberal support, until a sudden change in fortunes in

1954. The first indicator of the change in the trend appears in the result of the Ilford North by-election in February 1954. At first sight the Liberals' performance in obtaining 7.9 per cent of the vote does not look impressive. However, this was the first time in a post-war by-election contested by all three main parties that the Liberals improved their share of the vote compared to the previous general election.<sup>18</sup> No other by-election since the war had shown this – the previous ten had all shown a decline. But from this date onwards, in every single one of the next twenty-four by-elections fought by the Liberals, Labour and Conservatives, where all three parties had contested the previous general election, there was an improvement in the Liberals' share of the vote. Ilford showed a slight, but significant shift in the trend, but before the year was out, there was to be a dramatic step-change in performance. The event which marked the change was the Inverness by-election of December 1954.

**Turning point – Inverness by-election 1954**

In 1954 the constituency of Inverness contained just under 51,000 electors, spread over an area of 4,000 square miles, stretching from the county town of Inverness in the east right across to the west coast and including the Isle of Skye and surrounding smaller islands. However, half of the electorate lived in the town of Inverness or its immediate surroundings. The constituency was described in *The Times* as a land of deeply religious 'Free Kirk' tradition, where coal and bread were expensive but fish and game were cheap, and a crofter's cottage could be bought

for £20. Topical issues in the constituency at the time were the problems of depopulation, transport and midges.<sup>19</sup>

The by-election was called at short notice by the Conservatives, whose sitting member had resigned. Conservatives used the label Unionist, rather than Conservative, in Scotland at the time. Their incumbent MP was Lord Malcolm Douglas-Hamilton. 'Lord' was a courtesy title: he was the third son of the thirteenth Duke of Hamilton and not a member of the House of Lords. He had first been elected to the Commons in 1950 and was re-elected in 1951, but in 1954 he resigned his seat, causing the by-election. No Liberal had stood in Inverness at the 1951 general election and the Unionists had beaten Labour by over 10,000 votes.

Lord Malcolm Douglas-Hamilton's resignation had been anticipated within his party. The *Inverness Courier* reported that in 'December 1952, following differences of opinion with the Inverness-shire Unionist Association, Lord Malcolm intimated that he would not be seeking re-adoption as the Association's candidate at the next General Election, and in April 1953 he severed his connection with the Association'.<sup>20</sup> Lord Malcolm's first marriage, to Pamela Bowes-Lyon, had been dissolved and he had remarried. His new wife, Mrs Natalie Paine, was an American widow.<sup>21</sup> Although still committed to raising funds for investment in the Highlands, Lord Malcolm was spending an increasing proportion of his time in the US and, having decided to leave parliament before the next general election, he had telephoned from New York to apply for the Chiltern Hundreds.

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1951 Inverness general election result		
Lord Malcolm Douglas-Hamilton	Unionist	22,497
TA Macnair	Labour	12,361
Unionist majority		10,136

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successor Unionist candidate had been in place for eighteen months; the 36-year-old Eton and Sandhurst educated Lt Col. Neil Loudon Desmond McLean. He had seen military service in Egypt, Syria, Turkey and the Balkans. His wife was the daughter of a Yugoslavian shipping magnate.<sup>22</sup> McLean had moved up from Gloucester Square in London to a new home outside Beaulieu, ten miles west of Inverness.<sup>23</sup> He had local connections and as a youth had lived at Aviemore.

The last day for nominations was set as Saturday 11 December 1954, with polling on Tuesday 21 December. The short notice and mid-winter timing of the by-election were designed by the Conservatives to wrong-foot their opposition. The amount of time available for the campaign was further curtailed, as all parties felt obliged to observe a Sunday moratorium on electioneering, out of respect for local religious sensitivities.

The short notice of the poll certainly disadvantaged Labour, who did not have a candidate in place. The Labour contestant from the previous general election, a bookseller named Alexander Macnair, had resigned his candidature shortly before the by-election was called, citing business and financial pressures. Once the contest was announced he changed his mind and offered to stand again, but was rejected by his party in favour of Dundee engine driver and union official William Paterson. Macnair, resentful at the dismissal of his offer to fight again, complained about the 'rigging of the selection of candidates, the selling of nominations to union funds' and 'nepotism'. He threatened to stand as an independent and at a public meeting raised the possibility that Lord Malcolm Douglas-Hamilton might be 'waiting outside with his Highland Fund to induce him to go forward as an example of private enterprise'. In the event, Macnair's threats turned out to be hollow. He did

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not receive such an offer and he did not put himself forward, but reports of the disunity in the Labour ranks appeared in the press. His successor as Labour candidate, Paterson, had further difficulties in presenting a united Labour front when he was questioned about his support for the dissident former Labour minister, Nye Bevan, who was by now openly in conflict with his party leader, Attlee. Paterson claimed to have admiration for Attlee and Bevan, but went on to say that he was 'Proud that the Labour Party had men who would defy the whip, and take the risk of expulsion'.<sup>24</sup>

By contrast, the Liberals quickly managed to agree on an excellent candidate – John Bannerman, a gregarious, Gaelic-speaking broadcaster, potato developer<sup>25</sup> and former Scottish Rugby international, whose mother was from the Isle of Skye. He managed the estate of the Duke of Montrose and also ran his own farm on the shores of Loch Lomond. Bannerman had contested neighbouring Argyll in 1945 and had stood in Inverness at the 1950 general election, when he had come third, 8,033 votes behind the winning Unionist and 3,213 votes adrift of the second-placed Labour candidate. Although Bannerman had not fought the 1951 election, he was the only one of the three by-election candidates who had previously contested Inverness.

The Unionists drew their main support from Inverness town. Labour had pockets of support in the smaller towns of Kinlochleven and Fort William. But in the outlying areas of the constituency the voters tended to empathise with the kilt-wearing, Gaelic-speaking Liberal candidate. However, Bannerman later recalled that there were times when he doubted if his kilt was an asset. When he was campaigning in Inverness town he felt he encountered some prejudice against his attire and when he was introduced to bee-keeping he found that

a kilt offered limited protection against stings!<sup>26</sup> During the election campaign Bannerman became suspicious over undue influence being exerted on voters when he came across tenants who had their postal votes organised for them by their Unionist-voting landlords. One Liberal supporter told Bannerman that 'the lady' was getting a postal vote for her 96-year-old mother and 'she was afraid it would be Tory'. Her aged mother was completely unaware of the election.<sup>27</sup> Bannerman based his campaign on his support for home rule and increases in old age pensions.

Prior to Lord Malcolm Douglas-Hamilton's election in 1950, the constituency had been represented in parliament for twenty-eight years by the independently minded National Liberal, Murdoch Macdonald.<sup>28</sup> During the by-election campaign Bannerman was accused by the Unionists of 'trying to give the impression that he is a National Liberal because of his support of Sir Winston Churchill'.<sup>29</sup> In fact, in 1950 the retiring Murdoch Macdonald had discussed the idea of Bannerman's succeeding him as a National Liberal candidate, but Bannerman had chosen to stand as a Liberal. Bannerman and Macdonald were still friends, but Macdonald objected to Bannerman's support for home rule and instead sent a message of support to the Unionist candidate, McLean.

The Earl of Home and Patricia Hornsby-Smith came to the constituency to address meetings on behalf of the Unionist candidate, as did Guy Senior, who had resigned as Chairman of the Inverness Liberal Association earlier that year.<sup>30</sup> Labour sent Margaret Herbison and Malcolm Macmillan to support their candidate. John Bannerman received support from within the Liberal Party in the form of Frank Byers and Jo Grimond.<sup>31</sup> To broaden his appeal (and adding to the confusion over party labels) Bannerman also had the

1954 Inverness by-election result		
NLD McLean	Unionist	10,329
JM Bannerman	Liberal	8,998
W Paterson	Labour	5,642
Unionist majority		1,331

National Liberal, Sir Andrew Murray,<sup>32</sup> and the Leader of the home rule campaign, the Scottish Covenant, Dr John McCormick, to speak on his behalf.<sup>33</sup> The three candidates each addressed an eve-of-poll meeting at a local cinema. The venues had been selected by drawing lots. The Liberals went to *La Scala*, Labour to the *Playhouse* and the Unionists occupied the *Empire*.

So remote were some of the 102 polling stations that by the time the ballot boxes had all been brought to Inverness for the count, the result could not be announced until 23 December at the earliest.<sup>34</sup> Newspapers could therefore not carry the results until Christmas Eve.<sup>35</sup> Even this timetable relied on reasonably good weather. In fact, for mid-winter in Highland Scotland, the weather remained relatively good during the campaign. Generally the candidates had managed to reach most of their planned campaign meetings in schools, village halls and other local venues, although on one occasion the Unionist candidate had become stuck in a snowdrift near Loch Ness. Polling day dawned stormy, but the wind abated later in the day and the ballot boxes made their journey on time.

John Bannerman's energetic and charismatic campaign contributed to the highest Liberal share of the vote (36.0 per cent) in any by-election contested by all three parties since 1932. Bannerman gathered a total of 8,998 votes to come second, falling only 1,331 behind the Unionist candidate and pushing Labour into third place.

### Inverness – fifty years on

Unfortunately for the Liberals, the announcement of the Inverness result on Christmas Eve meant that they received relatively little national publicity for their good performance. The headline in the Christmas Eve edition of the *Inverness Courier* read 'Unionist Victory in Inverness-shire – Labour at Foot of Poll'; but coverage in Inverness had generally been low-key. Throughout the campaign, reports on the by-election had to share a page in the local press with stories with headlines such as 'Inverness Rabbit Show' and 'Baker's eve-of-wedding Mishap'.

The Conservatives dismissed their weakened showing at the polls, partly blaming it on the weather and the size of the constituency. They drew the conclusion that 'the result shows neither a resurgence of the Liberal Party nor support for Home Rule' and that 'much of the Liberal vote is a personal vote'. They blamed the Liberals for spreading stories 'to the effect that McLean is a Roman Catholic, which he is not; and that he has been involved in a divorce case, which he has not'. He was also seen as 'not yet well known and he is not yet very familiar with local conditions and local problems'. The party further concluded that 'Some people in the habit of voting Labour switched their vote to Bannerman when they realised that the Labour candidate could not win'.<sup>36</sup>

In the aftermath of the by-election, the Conservatives' conclusions did appear superficially justified; after all, they had won. However, the size of the constituency was in fact more likely to have favoured the Unionists, whose support was concentrated in the town of Inverness and

whose supporters had a higher level of car ownership than their rivals. Their point about Labour voters switching to the Liberal candidate was recognition of tactical voting. It was also an implicit acknowledgement that some people locally believed that the Liberal candidate, unlike his Labour rival, did have a chance of winning, implying at least some measure of a Liberal revival.

Within the entrails of the Inverness by-election were the seeds of serious future threats, from which the Conservatives were to suffer and their opponents to benefit. Rising levels of car ownership among their opponents and increased use of radio and television election campaigning deprived the Conservatives of their earlier car-owning advantage. The Conservative Party was to suffer in the following decades from the effects of growing support for home rule, later translated into support for the Scottish National Party and a rise in support for the Liberals and Labour. The 1950s marked the beginning of a long-term decline in Conservative support in Scotland. In 1954 the Conservatives and Labour each held thirty-five Scottish seats, with the Liberals holding only Orkney & Shetland. At their lowest ebb in the 1997 general election the Conservatives failed to win any Commons seat in Scotland.<sup>37</sup>

Inverness turned out not to be just a flash in the pan for the Liberals, but rather an enduring step-change in their by-election performance. Before Inverness, the Liberals' average share of the vote in the nineteen post-war by-elections fought by all three parties was 9.3 per cent. In the following nineteen by-elections, starting with Inverness, the party's average share of the vote nearly tripled to 25.2 per cent. After Jo Grimond succeeded Clem Davies as Liberal leader in November 1956, the pattern of by-election results established by the party at Inverness

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continued. The Liberals' average share of the vote in by-elections in Clement Davies' last two years in office, from Inverness to the end of his leadership, was 26.5 per cent. Under Jo Grimond the comparable figure for his first two years was virtually unchanged at 24.7 per cent.

The reasons for the initial improvement in the by-election results from 1954 to 1956 included a combination of high-quality candidates standing in potentially promising Liberal territory, supported by an improved party organisation and an initial slight shift in public opinion towards the Liberals. The recovery was sustained from 1956, even though by-elections occurred in generally less promising seats for the Liberals. The reasons for this included Jo Grimond's reinvigoration of the party leadership, the problems faced by the Conservatives after Suez and a further improvement in Liberal opinion poll ratings.

In March 1958 a 38 per cent share of the vote at Torrington – just 2 per cent more than that achieved at Inverness – was sufficient to deliver the Liberals' first post-war by-election victory. The Liberals' average share of the vote in all by-elections during Grimond's leadership remained fairly consistent at 22.8 per cent, but during his tenure further gains were made at Orpington in 1962 and Roxburgh, Selkirk & Peebles in 1965.

John Bannerman went on to contest and narrowly lose two further elections in Inverness, reducing the Tory majority still further in 1955, followed by two contests at Paisley. Although he failed to be elected to the Commons after a total of eight attempts, he did eventually enter Parliament as Lord Bannerman of Kildonan in 1967, though he died less than two years later. However, family persistence paid off when his daughter, Ray Michie, won Argyll & Bute for the Liberals in 1987, at her third attempt. Russell Johnston succeeded John Bannerman as

the Liberal candidate for Inverness and won the seat in 1964, holding it at the following eight elections, until his retirement. As a result of boundary changes, parts of the 1954 constituency of Inverness now fall within Charles Kennedy's seat of Ross, Skye & Inverness West. The general pattern for the party to perform better in by-elections than in the preceding general election has held true since Inverness and has resulted in thirty by-election victories in the past fifty years, up to and including Dunfermline & West Fife in February 2006.<sup>38</sup>

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- 1 When the Liberal MP Sir Rhys Hopkin Morris died in 1956, the total number of Liberal MPs was reduced to five. At the resulting by-election in Carmarthen, Megan Lloyd George, who had left the Liberal Party and joined Labour in 1955, contested the seat for Labour and won.
- 2 Frank Byers was contesting his former seat of Dorset North and Dingle Foot, former Liberal MP for Dundee, was fighting Cornwall North.
- 3 Clement Davies, Jo Grimond, Roderic Bowen, Rhys Hopkin Morris and Donald Wade were lawyers and Arthur Holt was the hosiery manufacturer.
- 4 Letter from Clement Davies to Gilbert Murray, 16 November 1951, Clement Davies Papers, J/3/67, National Library of Wales.
- 5 Alun Wyburn-Powell, *Clement Davies – Liberal Leader* (Politico's Publishing, 2003), pp. 205–06.
- 6 Rhys Hopkin Morris, although apt to be very inflexible and sometimes difficult, was always polite and did not indulge in plotting against the party leadership.
- 7 Matt Cole, *Analysis of Voting Records of Liberal MPs 1951 to 1959*, unpublished research paper, Birmingham University.
- 8 By this time he included a hyphen in his surname.
- 9 Interview: author with Stanley Clement-Davies, 18 May 2002.
- 10 Letter, Lady Violet Bonham Carter

to Clem Davies, 2 October 1956, Clement Davies Papers, J/3/83, National Library of Wales.

- 11 Mark Pottle (ed.), *Daring to Hope: Diaries and Letters of Violet Bonham Carter 1946–69* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1996), p. 386.
- 12 Local electoral pacts between the Liberals and Conservatives continued into the 1960s in Huddersfield and Bolton.
- 13 David Butler and Jennie Freeman, *British Political Facts 1900–60* (Macmillan, 1964), p. 193.
- 14 *Ibid.*, pp. 133–135.
- 15 John Stevenson, *Third Party Politics since 1945* (Blackwell, 1993), p. 37. According to Alan Watkins in *The Liberal Dilemma* (Macgibbon and Key, 1966), pp. 71–82, the party's General Director, Herbert Harris, reported 'that in 1954 party membership had gone up by 50 per cent'. However, it is not clear on what basis this claim was made, or if it referred to the number of new members joining or to the total membership.
- 16 Liberal Party Executive, Minutes 14 January 1955, Liberal Party Papers, British Library of Political and Economic Science, London.
- 17 By-elections which were not contested by all three parties are excluded from the calculations. Only Kensington South in November 1945 and Carmarthen in February 1957 are thus excluded. Information extracted from Chris Cook and John Ramsden, *By-elections in British Politics* (Macmillan, 1973).
- 18 This change does not appear to be accounted for by extraneous factors such as significant changes in support for the other major parties, or by the changes in the base figures at successive general elections.
- 19 *The Times*, 11 December 1954, p. 3.
- 20 *Inverness Courier*, 3 December 1954, p. 5.
- 21 *Highland News*, 4 December 1954, p. 1.
- 22 *Inverness Courier*, 7 December 1954, p. 3.
- 23 Conservative Party Records, Bodleian Library, CCO 1/10/567/1.
- 24 *Inverness Courier*, 10 December 1954, p. 7.
- 25 The Arran Banner potato was named after him.
- 26 John Fowler (ed.), *Bannerman: The Memoirs of Lord Bannerman of Kildonan* (Impulse Books, 1972), p. 90.
- 27 *Ibid.*, pp. 107–108.
- 28 Macdonald had been elected as a Liberal in 1922, had joined the Liberal Nationals in 1931, but had withdrawn from the Liberal National group in parliament in 1942, whilst remaining in the party.
- 29 *Inverness Courier*, 17 December 1954, p. 7.
- 30 *Inverness Courier*, 7 December 1954, p. 3.

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- 31 *Inverness Courier*, 10 December 1954, p. 7.
- 32 Murray was described in the local press at the time as a 'National Liberal'. He had in fact previously been a National Liberal, but had been 'Unionist' prospective parliamentary candidate for Central Edinburgh in 1951. He had then been adopted as an 'independent' candidate by the Leith Liberal Association in 1954. He later became a Vice-President of the Scottish Liberal Party and 'Liberal' candidate for Leith in 1959. Entry by Mark Egan in *Dictionary of Liberal Biography*, ed. Duncan Brack, (Politico's, 1998), p. 274.
- 33 *Highland News*, 18 December 1954, p. 5.
- 34 *The Times*, 6 December 1954, p. 8.
- 35 In Scotland Hogmanay was a more significant festival than Christmas. Local newspapers appeared on 25 December in Inverness, but not in England.
- 36 Conservative Party Records, Bodleian Library, CCO 1/10/567/2, Memo of telephone conversation between Col. Blair, Political Secretary of the Unionist Party of Scotland and the Prime Minister's Secretary.
- 37 In 1997 the Scottish Nationalists won six, the Liberal Democrats ten and Labour fifty-six seats.
- 38 Including seats captured by Liberal, Liberal Democrat and SDP candidates, but excluding seats which were retained at by-elections.

## 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](http://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 against 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@tinonline.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. *Clr 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.** Particularity 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 pacifist 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.*