

motivated mainly by a sense of duty. As Tregidga notes, in relation to one of his 1917 letters to Eleanor, this could sometimes stray into pomposity. The letter – written at a time when Acland was thinking of giving up Parliament – runs: ‘I possess, as you do, somehow such a very large amount of general competence that I don’t think I should for long be without pretty useful and honourable work.’ His industriousness and lucidity may have been admirable, but he is not a figure for whom it is easy to feel warmth.

The personal aspect of the Aclands’ life is not well represented in this volume. For example, in 1924 their daughter Ellen was killed in an accident at the age of ten. This must have been a shattering blow to both of them, and Eleanor wrote a book of commemoration. Yet they did not write about their pain in their letters to each other; or at least no such letters are published here, perhaps not having been preserved. The editor was obviously powerless to do anything about this deficiency. A more legitimate cause for complaint is that there are no documents here relating to either the first four or the last ten years of Acland’s parliamentary career. A quick search of the National Register of Archives suggests that

potentially relevant material does exist, at least for the 1930s, for example in the papers of Basil Liddell Hart.

If the book is not quite as comprehensive as it might be, it is nonetheless interesting and valuable. Tregidga’s wide-ranging introduction is a model of clarity, showing the relationship between Cornish issues and the national picture in a highly effective way. One aspect of Acland’s life that it does not mention is that in 1921 he became the first Vice-President of the Exmoor Pony Society. (His forebears had done much to save the ponies from extinction.) In some ways Exmoor ponies are like the post-1918 Liberal Party – hardy, lovable, difficult to manage, and really quite small. It would be nice to extend the analogy and to say that Francis Acland played a seminal role in the preservation of both, but although in both cases he did his bit, this would not really be true. Although apparently dutiful where the Society was concerned, he seems to have been even less interested in ponies than he was in politics.

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scene. James Moore’s book is therefore a valuable corrective, detailing the development of Liberal politics at municipal level during the period 1886–95 and showing how local Liberal politicians developed an increasing commitment to schemes of social improvement – promoting everything from improved sewerage systems to public libraries.

The author focuses on Liberal Party organisation in Manchester and Leicester, the former of totemic significance for nineteenth-century Liberalism, the latter having some claim to be the capital of Midlands Liberalism after the defection of Joseph Chamberlain’s Birmingham following the 1886 Home Rule split. He shows how the Third Reform Act of 1885 acted as a trigger for a challenge by radicals to the control by local oligarchies of local Liberal organisations. This was particularly so in the selection of parliamentary candidates, where both Leicester and Manchester saw bitter contests for the Liberal nomination between patrician figures favoured by the local establishment and more populist candidates with a strong following among party activists. Although the latter were not always immediately successful, the battles over selection brought about, over time, a greater democratisation of party management.

A similar process took place in municipal politics. In both Manchester and Leicester, local government politics had become, by the 1880s, something of a cosy club, divorced from popular politics. In the former, appointments to the aldermanic bench created a bias within the council chamber in favour of moderates rather than radicals, while in Leicester, overwhelming Liberal domination of the Town Hall meant that local elections were not vigorously contested, with the

Municipal Liberalism 1886–1895

James R. Moore: *The Transformation of Urban Liberalism* (Ashgate, 2006)

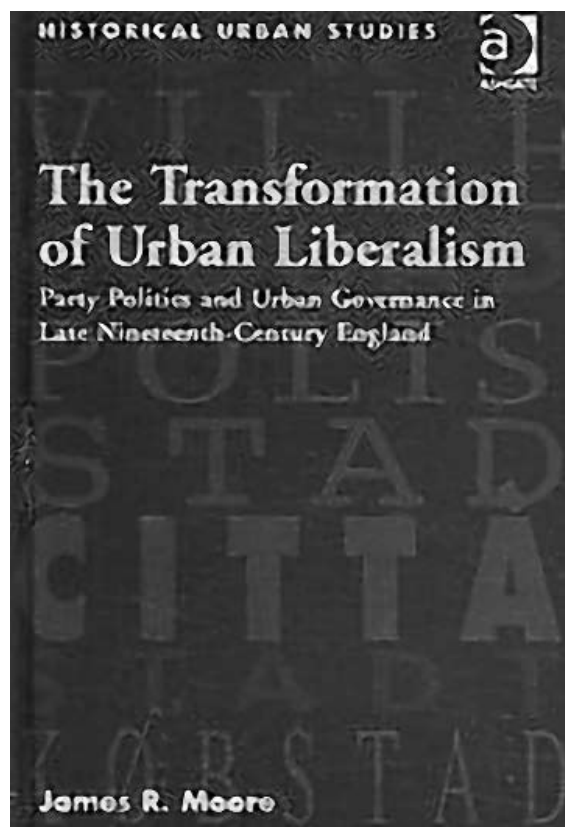
Reviewed by **Iain Sharpe**

THE STUDY of late-Victorian Liberalism has been dominated by parliamentary politics and intellectual movements, largely to the exclusion of local and municipal perspectives – perhaps no

wonder given the richness and variety of Liberal thought, the dominant presence of William Gladstone at the head of the party, and the battles among the party leaders after his departure from the political

local Liberal Association having little involvement in the organisation of council election campaigns. During the late 1880s and early 1890s, this was to change.

An important catalyst for the radicalisation of municipal politics lay in the ultimately successful battles in both centres to expand town and city boundaries. Here, Dr Moore challenges the conventional view that the suburbs were havens of 'Villa Toryism' – Conservative bastions within more radical urban areas. In particular, he points out that the lack of amenities within newly built estates meant that suburban residents were often keen for more active local government. The expansion of both Leicester's and Manchester's boundaries led to a strengthening not of Conservatism but radicalism, with Liberal councillors, often with more progressive views than many of their party colleagues, representing suburban wards. Suburban residents were often enthusiastic supporters of 'gas-and-water socialism'.



Dr Moore demonstrates how little significance the Home Rule crisis of 1886 and the Liberal Unionist schism had for Liberalism at municipal level. In Leicester, for example, there was greater concern among local Liberals with the campaign against the compulsory vaccination programme that was being enforced by the local board of guardians than with the debates in Parliament on the Home Rule Bill. For some time after the Home Rule split, Liberal Unionist councillors found themselves in a rather ambiguous position – still willing to co-operate at municipal level with erstwhile colleagues on local issues and reluctant to enter into full alliance with the Conservatives. As a result, in neither Leicester nor Manchester did Liberal Unionism emerge as a significant force.

Likewise, the advance of Labour during these years was slow and inconsistent. Although Labour candidates were occasionally successful in individual council wards, ILP candidates in the working-class constituency of Manchester North-East and in Leicester finished bottom of the poll in 1895. In terms of municipal representation, Liberal organisations seemed more willing to embrace measures that would bring material benefits for the working class than to adopt working-class candidates. This was a problem across the country at parliamentary level, as cash-strapped Liberal associations sought candidates who could pay their own expenses, and it is interesting that Dr Moore's research suggests a similar problem in achieving working-class representation at municipal level.

The period 1886–95 has been considered by some historians as one of stagnation for the Liberal Party – possibly the beginning of the death throes of Liberal England. Dr Moore's book demonstrates that it

remained a vibrant and increasingly radical force in at least two of England's important urban centres. In that sense this is a well-researched and closely argued book that adds significantly to our understanding of late-Victorian Liberalism.

Where I have doubts, however, is with the conclusions the author draws about the impact of this radicalism on the Liberal Party's national fortunes. He sees it as contributing to a revival of Liberalism after the trauma of 1886 and paving the way for the so-called New Liberalism of the Edwardian era. But in fact left-of-centre parties are often less electorally successful when under the strong influence of radical activists. And of course this was a period of electoral failure for the Liberal Party. The 1892 general election produced an unconvincing victory for the Liberals and the party lost the two subsequent elections by landslide majorities. Even in Manchester, despite the vibrant radicalism that Dr Moore identifies, by the end of the period covered by this study, the Liberals held just one of the city's six parliamentary seats.

Gladstone's adoption of the 1891 'Newcastle Programme' was done under a degree of duress and was felt by many of his colleagues, including his son Herbert, to have been a mistake. On the contrary, one of the significant factors in the party's revival after 1902 was its deliberate eschewal of a radical programme that gave hostages to fortune and alienated moderate voters. The party establishment consciously distanced itself from past commitments on Home Rule and temperance. Instead, it tried to project a moderate image in order to win back voters who had been lost to the Unionist parties. Instead of specific legislative commitments, the party leadership stressed the importance of Liberal ministers

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exercising their own judgement rather than being beholden to a radical programme. Even if the author is right that 'moderate' Liberalism was in decline at local level by 1895, surely it was precisely a reassertion of

moderate Liberal values that guided the party back to power in 1906.

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Morgan and Emyr Price, in their work on the young Lloyd George and the Liberal Party in Wales in the late nineteenth century. The important contributions of other historians to our understanding of a complex movement still regrettably lie buried in unpublished doctoral and masters' dissertations.

Some of the themes discussed in Mr Hughes's impressive volume are fairly well known. These include the discussion of Alfred Thomas's ambitious 'omnibus' measure, the National Institutions (Wales) Bills of 1891–92, T. E. Ellis's highly contentious decision to accept the position of junior whip in Gladstone's fourth administration in July 1892, and the steps which led to the famous meeting at Newport in January 1896, an event which heralded the ignominious collapse of the entire *Cymru Fydd* movement. Even so, the author has marshalled a great deal of new evidence to embellish his well-written narrative. Other themes covered in this volume

Wales of the future

Dewi Rowland Hughes, *Cymru Fydd* (University of Wales Press, 2006)

Reviewed by **Dr J. Graham Jones**

THIS SLIM but significant volume, published in the Welsh language, is to be warmly welcomed. *Cymru Fydd* was a patriotic movement, literally 'Wales of the future', known in English as 'Young Wales', formed at London in 1886, primarily by emigré Welshmen, on the model of Young Ireland, its programme appearing 'a manifesto against old age'. It conceived its nationalist mission in terms of a native cultural and linguistic tradition, and was based largely on the Welsh intelligentsia. Its most prominent members included mediaeval historian John Edward Lloyd, Oxford don and litterateur Owen M. Edwards, journalist Thomas Edward Ellis (who became Liberal MP for his native Merionethshire in 1886), and barrister W. Llewelyn Williams (in 1906 to be elected the Liberal MP for the Carmarthen Boroughs), the last named asserting that the *Cymru Fydd* movement was concerned with 'true politics'.

The second branch of the society was formed, significantly, at Liverpool, but the movement was notably slow to put down roots in Wales; the branch established at Barry in 1891 was the first bridgehead in south Wales. Thereafter branches were set up in many parts of Wales, often closely

linked with the traditional organisation and personnel of nonconformist Liberalism. The movement had published its own journal, *Cymru Fydd*, since January 1888, and it won the backing of the Welsh popular press, particularly of the veteran Thomas Gee in *Y Faner*, and of the youthful David Lloyd George, elected MP for the Caernarfon Boroughs in April 1890. Initially a cultural and educative movement, *Cymru Fydd* became, under the influence of T. E. Ellis and Lloyd George, a political campaign, Ellis underlining 'the necessity of declaring for self-government'. Home Rule thus became central to the *Cymru Fydd* programme, while Michael D. Jones and others even intended it to oust the Liberal Party and become an independent Welsh national party. A new nationalist journal, *Young Wales*, was launched in January 1895.

Yet *Cymru Fydd*, although highly significant, has tended to be somewhat neglected by historians. The last time a monograph was devoted to the movement was more than sixty years ago when William George, brother of Lloyd George, edited the volume *Cymru Fydd* (1945). Much valuable work on the movement has been undertaken since then by scholars, notably Kenneth

