

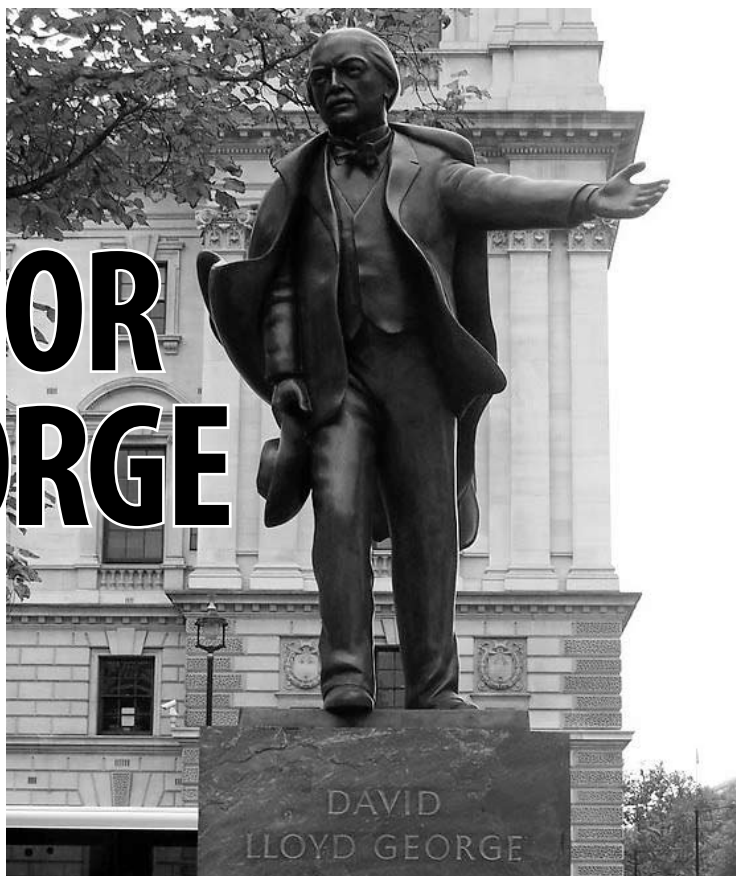
York Membership reports on the unveiling of the statue to David Lloyd George, Liberal Prime Minister 1916–22, in Parliament Square.

A STATUE FOR LLOYD GEORGE

THE GREAT and the good put aside political differences, at least for a few hours, to unveil a statue of Liberal Leader and Prime Minister David Lloyd George late last year. The weather might have been suitably Welsh, but the drizzle failed to dampen the proceedings at the event in Parliament Square on Thursday 25 October, when the £350,000 statue to the ‘Welsh Wizard’ was unveiled by the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall in front of Royal Welsh bandmen.

‘In the course of a decade, David Lloyd George established himself as one of the greatest social reformers and war leaders of the twentieth century’, said Prince Charles. ‘And though he never forgot his Welsh roots, it is as a national and international statesman that he will best be remembered.’

The official party included Prime Minister Gordon Brown and former premiers Margaret Thatcher and John Major. Prince Charles was Patron of the Appeal Trust Committee formed to commission the statue in recognition of Lloyd George’s contribution to public life. Also present were acting Liberal Democrat Leader Vince Cable, leadership candidate Chris Huhne (who last year told the *Journal of Liberal History* that his political hero was none other



than Lloyd George – see *Journal* 57) and Conservative Leader David Cameron.

The unveiling of the statue – designed by Welsh sculptor Professor Glynn Williams – was organised by the David Lloyd George Statue Appeal Trust following a long campaign to erect a fitting memorial to one of Britain’s greatest premiers.

The Patrons of the Trust included the Prince of Wales, Paddy Ashdown, Betty Boothroyd and John Major. The trustees included Michael Heseltine, Emlyn Hooson, Lord Morris of Aberavon (the former Labour MP) and Dick Newby. The late Ted Heath and Jim Callaghan had also been trustees until their deaths.

‘It’s been a long time in the making, but it’s there now’, said Professor Williams at the unveiling of the eight-foot-tall bronze statue, which stands on Welsh slate between two statesmen who were close to Lloyd George – Field Marshal Jan Smuts, and his friend and sometime political rival Winston Churchill.

After the statue’s unveiling, guests withdrew to the Methodist Central Hall for a champagne reception attended by the Prince of Wales and Sir John Major among others.

Perhaps fittingly, given the controversy he attracted in life, the unveiling of Lloyd George’s statue itself proved controversial, even though it took place more than sixty years after his death. On the day of the unveiling, a letter in *The Daily Telegraph* signed by Nobel Prize-winning playwright Harold Pinter and left-wing journalist John Pilger attacked the bombing by British war planes of the Middle East during Lloyd George’s premiership, which they claimed made ‘today’s celebration of Lloyd George’s legacy highly topical and disgraceful’.

But rubbishing their attack, the historian Kenneth O. Morgan surely spoke for Lloyd George supporters everywhere when he observed, ‘Lloyd George was a great radical and a democrat who deserves to be honoured’.