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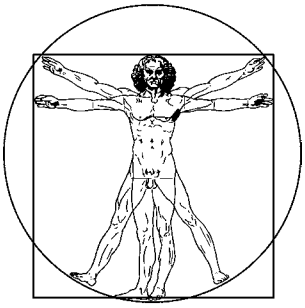
Liberals in wartime



Liberal Democrat History Group

Publication announcement

Coming into Focus

The transformation of the Liberal Party 1945–64

The survival of the Liberal Party after 1945 is one of the most surprising phenomena in modern British political history. By the late 1940s, the Party's lingering death throes seemed to be reaching their conclusion. With only a handful of parliamentary seats and no message to offer the electorate, the flame carried by Gladstone and Lloyd George was nearly extinguished. But the Liberal Party clung on and then revived in the 1960s.

Coming into Focus, published by VDM Verlag Dr. Muller Aktiengesellschaft & Co. KG, provides new perspectives on the survival and revival of the Liberal Party after 1945. It shows how the independence of Liberal associations, the recruitment of Liberal activists in the late 1940s, and the Party's strength in local government in northern England were important reasons for the Party's survival.

A new wave of recruitment after 1955, inspired by Jo Grimond's leadership, facilitated the Liberal revival, but a key factor was the development of early forms of community politics in a number of towns and cities in England and Scotland. This led to an explosion in the number of Liberal councillors, particularly in suburban areas. Not only was the Party saved, but the foundations for the modern Liberal Party and its successor were laid.

About the author

Mark Egan was educated at University College, Oxford and completed his doctorate on the grassroots history of the Liberal Party in 2000. He is a regular contributor to the *Journal of Liberal History* and has also recently completed a book on the history of pilotage on the River Tyne.

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Liberal Democrat History Group

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

For more information, including historical commentaries, details of publications, back issues of the *Journal*, and archive and other research sources, see our website at: **www.liberalhistory.org.uk**.

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RADICAL

AND THE LIBERAL PARTY DUR

Radical Action was an influential pressure group within the Liberal Party during the Second World War. It questioned the necessity for the wartime electoral truce, campaigned enthusiastically in support of the Beveridge Report, and urged the party leadership to fight the post-war general election as an independent entity. Unlike Common Wealth, Radical Action did not break free from the existing party structure, but remained within the Liberal Party. It played a major role in preserving the independence of the party after 1945 and in arguing for social liberalism at a time when economic liberals were in the ascendant. **Mark Egan** tells its story.[1]

During the Second World War, the main political parties agreed to suspend the normal contest for seats in Parliament and on local councils. Well observed at first, the truce increasingly came under challenge from independents of various hues and the newly created Common Wealth Party. Radical Action – originally known as the Liberal Action Group – was formed by Liberals who wished to break the truce. Supported by a number of party activists, including a number of sitting MPs and 'rising stars', Radical Action also campaigned successfully to keep the Liberals out of a post-war coalition. The group had a significant influence on the Liberal Party's attitude to the Conservative Party and helped ensure the party's survival as an

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ING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

independent entity in the post-war era.

Radical Action was also a manifestation of the ideological dispute within the party which was not finally resolved until the era of Jo Grimond's leadership after 1956. The Liberal Party of the 1940s was predominantly concerned with free trade, sound money and 'ownership for all', all right-wing themes, particularly in the context of the political debate of the time. Radical Action organised conferences at which different visions of Britain's economic and social development could be discussed and it campaigned vigorously in favour of the Beveridge Report.

Radical Action played a major role in preserving the independence of the party after 1945.

Formation

The Liberal Action Group (LAG), the precursor of Radical Action, was formed on 19 July 1941, following the failure of the Liberal Assembly even to debate a motion calling for the end of the party truce then in operation in both national and local politics. The moving force behind the group was Donald Johnson, then prospective Liberal parliamentary candidate for Bewdley, who had persuaded the Bewdley Liberal Association to sponsor the resolution opposing the truce. The resolution was opposed by the leadership of the party, placed last on the Assembly agenda and was not reached before the Assembly concluded. A small group of mostly young attendees of the Assembly met to discuss what had happened and agreed to form a group 'whose common aim will be to activate and energise the Liberal Party both as regards policy and organisation'.[2]

Johnson was a rebel who stood against the 'social climate of prestige, family, tradition, subservience, moral cowardice and anything which militated against political independence'.[3] He had stood as an independent candidate at Liverpool Wavertree in a by-election in February 1935, criticising both major parties for their attitudes towards the international situation. He out-polled the Liberal candidate in Liverpool but came third and was persuaded that he had to join a political party in order to gain a wider hearing for his point of view. He had family ties with the Liberal Party and he respected their clear support for the League of Nations and for rearmament. Consequently, he accepted an invitation to become Bury's prospective Liberal parliamentary candidate in August 1935. Johnson was to

remain a Liberal Party member for eight years (he later become a Conservative MP) and throughout that period he raged against the sloth and inactivity which he felt characterised the leadership of the party, at both national and local levels.

Two factors influenced Johnson's decision to form the LAG. First, Johnson contrasted the lethargy of the Liberal organisation with the enthusiasm with which he felt the electorate would receive a progressive political programme. Johnson resigned his candidature at Bury, after polling a disappointing third in the 1935 election, because he felt that the local Liberals did not relish his energetic approach to the role. He was later involved with the Oxford Liberal Association and urged Ivor Davies to fight the 1938 Oxford by-election even after the party leadership had advised the local Liberals to back the left-wing independent, A. D. Lindsay. He was unimpressed by the state of the Liberal Association at Bewdley, but polled 36 per cent of the vote in a by-election there in 1937 and this, combined with other by-election results at the time, persuaded him that the party did have a future if it was better organised and embraced a more radical programme. Between June 1937 and July 1939 the Liberal Party contested 12 of the 45 by-elections held and polled an average 36.2 per cent of the vote, although only four of these contests were three-cornered. In 1940, independent challengers to Conservative seats at by-elections polled an average of 22.2 per cent between them; in 1941 their average poll was 31.7 per cent. These results suggested that the Liberal Party could still attract anti-Conservative votes, in certain circumstances, and that it might be profitable for the party to challenge the wartime truce.

Secondly, at the outset of the war, Johnson began formulating a set of radical policies for the post-war era aimed at preventing the rise of fascism in the UK, but found that as a lone voice he was unable to promote his scheme effectively. Johnson's ideas were set out in a memorandum he sent to the Director General of the Ministry of Information, Sir Walter Monckton, and the Liberal leader, Sir Archibald Sinclair, and which he later expanded into a book, *Safer than a Known Way*. Sinclair expressed no interest in Johnson's ideas and Johnson began to make contact with other Liberals who felt similarly that the Liberal hierarchy ought to be more receptive to new thinking.

The Liberal Action Group originally comprised a small number of mostly young Liberal candidates.

Membership and organisation

The Liberal Action Group originally comprised a small number of mostly young Liberal candidates. Two MPs were involved from the start – George Grey and Sir Richard Acland – but neither played a major role. Acland had already established his own New Liberal Economic Policy Committee which was devoted to the principle of common ownership and opposed to the 'Unrestricted Profit Motive'. Acland was rapidly disengaging from the Liberal Party and in September 1942 formed his own party, Common Wealth. Johnson and Acland remained in touch, however, and Johnson sent Acland some of the LAG's policy resolutions. During 1942, Acland told Johnson, 'I feel the gap between us is closing'[4] – but it never did.

The original LAG membership was just 27, but by the first formal meeting of the group, a two-day conference at the National Liberal Club in November 1941, membership had risen to 50. This was described as a 'bare number on account of the group distribution through the country'.[5] A five-shilling subscription fee was proposed, and associate membership conditions were discussed. The group had a secretarial board, comprising Johnson, J. A. Paton Walker and Frank Rodgers. Johnson appears to have been the most active of these, circulating his own papers on the 'Rights of Man', international affairs and the economic outlook. At the November meeting a standing committee was formed, to deal with day-to-day problems. Honor Balfour, one of the founding staff of *Picture Post* and later to become an eminent journalist with *Time* and *Life* magazines, was made secretary. This committee, later known as the group's executive committee, met at the Park Lane offices of Everett Jones, a prominent member of the group.

Johnson's leadership of the LAG ended in September 1942, after the group failed to back a motion to the Liberal Assembly which again urged the abandonment of the electoral truce (of which more below). However, the group continued to expand and on 8 September 1942 Lancelot Spicer was elected chairman. Wilfrid Roberts, MP for North Cumberland, had originally been approached to fill this new position. His pro-Republican stance during the Spanish Civil War had marked him out as left-leaning but his close involvement with the Liberal Party Organisation precluded, in his view, acceptance of the post.[6] Spicer was the chairman of a paper company and the son of Sir Albert Spicer, a Liberal MP before 1918. He had joined the LAG at the start and Johnson said of him, 'no other tiger had growled more fiercely at the very mention of 'action' than had Lancelot Spicer'.[7] It was agreed at this time to increase the group's membership to 100 and to consider the possibility of employing a full-time secretary. Funds could not be found for this in 1942, so two honorary secretarial assistants were engaged. In August 1944 Wilfrid Roberts asked Spicer whether the group

was taking on a full-time organiser, but nothing came of this initiative.[8] Funds were found for premises and staff in December 1944, in anticipation of the general election. The group received two substantial donations which enabled it to rent a room at 346 Abbey House, Victoria Street, London and take on a secretary.[9] However, this situation can only have lasted until the general election, after which the organisation was drastically reduced.

The LAG's activities continued in the same vein as before, despite the change of leadership from Johnson to Spicer. Discussion papers and long policy resolutions continued to be debated, Spicer wrote upwards of eighty such papers himself, and there were occasional conferences at the National Liberal Club. A conference was held there over the weekend of 5–6 December 1942, for example.[10] Spicer reported that no fewer than five MPs (Clement Davies, Tom Horabin, George Grey, Megan Lloyd George and Wilfrid Roberts), five members of the Liberal Party executive committee and seven members of the party council were now members of the LAG. Donald Johnson attended the conference, as did Elliott Dodds, the editor of the *Huddersfield Examiner* and a prominent Liberal, generally thought to be on the right of the party; Harold Stoner, the editor of the *Liberal Magazine*; Lady Louise Glen-Coats, one of the senior figures in the Scottish Liberal Party; and Philip Fothergill, treasurer of the group, and later President of the Liberal Party. Also in attendance, although not as a member of the LAG, was Thomas Balogh, later a member of Harold Wilson's 'kitchen cabinet'. The group attracted some major figures from the Liberal establishment, which enhanced its credibility; but, as we shall see, not all of those claimed as members were active participants.

During 1943 the group met at three-monthly intervals, and Spicer reported in October 1943 that the group's membership was 80.[11] Johnson noted in his autobiography, *Bars and Barricades*, that the group changed its name to Radical Action as a result of Spicer assuming the organisation's chairmanship.[12] However, the name was not used in correspondence by Spicer until May 1943.

Objectives

The LAG's original aim – to activate and energise both the Liberal Party's policies and its organisation – was capable of a number of different interpretations and the group's focus changed over time, depending on who was most actively involved in its work. Throughout the 1941–45 period, however, the group was mostly concerned with three issues within the Liberal Party: the party's electoral strategy, its social and economic policy, and its internal organisation and activity in the constituencies.

The electoral truce

The issue which provided the immediate spur for the formation of the LAG was the electoral truce. The idea of suspending political competition during the war predated the commencement of hostilities and was agreed without opposition by all the main political parties, eventually including even the Communist Party. This had not stopped a plethora of independent candidates contesting by-elections, the first significant challenge being in June 1940 when an independent Conservative, Sir Cuthbert Headlam, gained over 70 per cent of the vote at Newcastle North. Liberals started to take notice of these independent challengers during 1941, when Noel Pemberton-Billing stood at four by-elections within seven months and came close to winning at Dudley. Donald Johnson's opposition to the truce stemmed from his frustration with the prosecution of the war, and wartime propaganda in particular, and from the government's failure to articulate a vision for post-war Britain. 'The time was ripe for the political entrepreneur who could stake a claim in the unexplained territory of anti-Party truce sentiment', he wrote later.[13] Johnson did not suggest that the Liberal Party should break the truce in order to gain a party political advantage, but he did believe that individual Liberals, and like-minded independents, could challenge the Conservatives and win.

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However, the LAG did not follow a united course on the issue of the truce. A few members, notably Johnson, J. E. Emlyn-Jones, Ivor Davies and Honor Balfour, did challenge the truce, both by argument and by standing at by-elections. However, the group as a whole adopted a less clear-cut position. Spicer, writing in July 1942, commented that the 'political truce is probably a necessity',[14] and argued that the party whips should between them agree a government candidate to stand at by-elections, against independents if need be. This was a plea to get 'more vigorous members of the community' or, in other words, more Liberals, into Parliament, and was unlikely to interest the two major parties. At the 1942 Liberal Assembly Emlyn-Jones proposed a motion hostile to the truce, but Spicer wrote later that both he and Johnson had agreed to withdraw the LAG's support for it.[15] Spicer claimed that the motion, which was debated during the Assembly's final hour, gained 'considerable support', but he himself did not vote for it. Emlyn-Jones was the only LAG member to

associate himself publicly with the motion.

There were several reasons why Liberals felt uneasy about the existence of the truce. The 1935 Parliament, which sat throughout the war, was the same body which had approved Chamberlain's appeasement policy and which had failed to tackle unemployment, until rearmament finally began in earnest. There were legitimate questions to be asked about the prosecution of the war effort, especially after the fall of Singapore in early 1942; there were also those who disliked Churchill because of his record, for example his part in the Gallipoli expedition, or were suspicious of his demagogy. Spicer noted four criticisms of Churchill in 1944, including his 'mastery of words' and his 'delight in the game of war'.[16] At heart many Liberals felt that good government required good opposition and that without intelligent opposition the government's prosecution of the war and its deliberations on post-war politics would both suffer. Thomas Lodge summed up this strand of Liberal opinion in stating that the 'principles of democracy are absolute, and as valid in war as in peace.'[17]

However, most Liberals also admitted that there was force in the counter-arguments put forward by Sinclair and his Liberal colleagues in the government. Sinclair made it clear to LAG members, at a dinner held in March 1942, that if the party was to break the truce the Liberal ministers would be required to leave the government.[18] It would clearly be intolerable for a party to support the government in the House of Commons but oppose it in the constituencies. Sinclair also indicated that his first responsibility, in the instance of the party breaking the truce, would be to the Prime Minister and that if Churchill wished him to remain a minister he would do so. Behind the question of the continuance of the truce lay the spectre of another, probably fatal, party split in which the independent Liberal Party would be left without a leader of national standing. Furthermore, because of the support for independents in by-elections in 1942, the three main party leaders agreed jointly to endorse candidates nominated in accordance with the truce and to question the patriotism of anyone who stood against them.[19] This reinforced the Liberal leadership's support for the truce, as did its opposition to a motion about the truce put forward by Johnson and Ivor Davies at the party Assembly in 1943.

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Following the failure of their efforts to persuade the Liberal Party to abandon the truce, Johnson and Ivor Davies drew up a list of 100 constituencies which they felt could offer a promising result for an independent Liberal candidate.[20] They agreed to contest any by-elections in these constituencies, with or without help from the LAG, Davies concentrating on the north of the country, Johnson on the south. Both men were backed by Clement Davies, who professed to be delighted at the idea. However, these plans did not take into account the existence of other independents eager to contest by-elections to attack the government. Eight independents originally came forward to contest the Central Bristol by-election in February 1943, for example, although only three eventually stood. Johnson secured a provisional agreement from the National Committee of Common Wealth that they would not contest the 100 seats on Johnson's list. However, Johnson was unable to prevent 'independent' independent Liberal candidates standing at Eddisbury and Daventry in April 1943, seats not on the list of 100. To complicate matters further, Denis Kendall, the independent MP for Grantham, was also organising independent candidatures at certain by-elections. He put forward a supporter at the Newark by-election in June 1943, who was enthusiastically backed by Clement Davies and Tom Horabin. Their decision scuppered Johnson's hopes of organising by-election campaigns which would harness the full support of the LAG and its parliamentary supporters.

During 1943 both Johnson and Balfour stood for Parliament, at Chippenham and Darwen (a Liberal seat until 1935) respectively, and both came exceptionally close to victory.[21] Despite being independently organised, their campaigns were very similar. Both were publicly opposed by the weight of the official Liberal Party, which on both occasions backed the Conservative candidate. This led to both Liberal associations offering only limited help to the 'Liberal' candidates. Johnson stated that the only help he received from the Chippenham Liberals was the right to buy 38,000 addressed envelopes, which had been prepared in advance of a possible 1940 general election.[22] Balfour received help from members of the Darwen Liberal Association after the association's President, Sir Fritz Hindle, signed the nomination papers of her Tory opponent. Both Balfour and Johnson were, at first, strongly attacked by the local media. Balfour was backed by the *News Chronicle*, but only after the local newspapers had threatened to boycott her campaign altogether.[23] The *Bath and Wiltshire Chronicle* fired several broadsides at Johnson, describing him as an 'irresponsible adventurer' of 'unbalanced mind' whose 'presence is highly undesired' and whose candidature served only to 'divert effort from the winning of the war for several weeks'. Furthermore, the newspaper described Johnson as a:

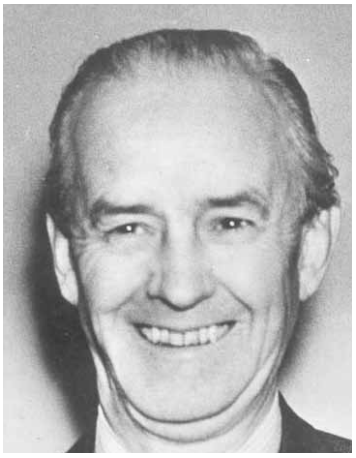
> political beggar who wants others to play him the part of glorifying him, a lone, unknown, untried and very audacious figure who has gambolled on to the political platform as if it were a music-hall stage and he was a rag-tailed comedian out only to catch laughs – for he will certainly never catch votes.[24]

Neither candidate benefited from a substantial political organisation. Johnson was unable to book any indoor venues for his meetings and was barely able to reach any electors outside the towns of Chippenham, Calne and Malmesbury. Balfour relied on an ad hoc local committee and an enthusiastic band of Young Liberals. Although both candidates received minimal support from Radical Action, they were backed by many individual Liberals and others. The Labour Party supported the truce candidate in both by-elections. Johnson had argued with Common Wealth and received no help from them; nor was he helped by A. D. Lindsay or Vernon Bartlett. He noted that Radical Action 'discovered a variety of reasons for not being able to back him at all'.[25] Spicer wrote to both Johnson and Balfour and urged them both not to stand.[26] All of Johnson's meetings were addressed by a team comprising himself, Balfour and two independent, truce-breaking MPs, Bill Brown and George Reakes.[27] Balfour received several private messages of support. Lord Davies sent her £150 towards her election expenses; Lady Violet Bonham Carter and Sir George Gower offered encouraging words; Clement Davies and Vernon Bartlett were enthusiastic in their private backing. The Liberal Associations in Halifax, Lancaster and Newcastle-under-Lyme offered assistance, as did a Labour councillor from Blackburn. N. R. Dickinson of the Yorkshire Liberal Federation summed up a growing grassroots feeling, 'it is positively heart-rending to see the dissipation of energy that is going on in quarters that should be united in common hostility to the organised forces which brought our country so near to disaster at the time of the outbreak of the war'.[28] However, both candidates failed to make a breakthrough and the truce held. Radical Action failed to provide active support for the candidates, despite both being prominent members of the organisation. Radical Action offered more help to Margaret Corbett-Ashby at Bury St. Edmunds in 1944, but it was 'too little and too late'.[29]

Liberal membership of the Churchill government

As early as 1942 the LAG abandoned its fitful efforts to break the truce and turned its attention to two more issues of Liberal strategy – whether the party should remain part of the government and when the party's independence should be reasserted after the end of the war. Tom Horabin argued at the LAG conference in December 1942 that the Liberal ministers should first leave the government and then break the truce, as a party of opposition. Even if the war was won, he suggested, the 'present government would lose the war for the common people'.[30] Johnson supported this, but Spicer was doubtful, wondering whether Horabin was suggesting that the parliamentary party should manufacture a situation whereby it could cross the floor.[31] A motion supporting the move into opposition was backed by the conference, with Clement Davies again an enthusiastic supporter.

The idea of leaving the government was put to Sinclair at a lunch shortly after the



Allies and opponents of Radical Action: Sir Archibald Sinclair, Tom Horabin, Clement Davies and Sir Richard Acland

conference. Predictably, Sinclair refused to countenance the idea and then raised the issue of the Liberal Party's position after the war. Sinclair felt that the war leaders, presumably including himself, would not participate in a large way in the post-war general election, and that there might be more than three parties competing for power, with a strong Communist challenge, and a right-wing Tory splinter party. In his view, this, combined with possible US isolationism, would necessitate the avoidance of party politics in the House of Commons. This was interpreted as a clear signal that Sinclair was considering an alliance with left-wing Tories, his ministerial colleagues, in order to counteract a Communist breakthrough. Spicer was scathing:

> They might have well been the views of someone who had spent the last two years living in a trance. When I reflect on them I can now understand, at last, the attitudes of the grey beards in the party, who seem to resent the intrusion of people who wish to set the Liberal Party in motion, to overtake the spontaneous march of public opinion to the left. Nothing which he said seemed to justify my joining the Liberal Party instead of either the Tory or the Labour Party. I came to the conclusion that Sinclair does not believe that the Liberal Party will survive as a separate entity.[32]

Spicer suggested to Sinclair that the debate over the implementation of the Beveridge Report, early in 1943, could be used as an opportunity to make a stand on a radical issue and break with the government. Sinclair condemned what he saw as a dangerous game of party politics, arguing that 'victory is the only basis on which the Beveridge Report or any other plan for the betterment of the life of the people can be made into reality'.[33] Following this exchange of correspondence between Spicer and Sinclair, the LAG continued to argue that the Liberal Party had a duty to oppose and embarrass the government, and move into opposition if need be. Sinclair had made it plain that he was staying in the government, however, and Radical Action turned its attention to the matter of the party's status after the war.

The Liberal Party after the war

Sinclair had suggested in 1941 that the coalition government could continue after the war, until international peace, order, justice and commerce were all restored. This process would take nearer to '3 years' than '3 weeks'.[34] Sinclair was not simply thinking of what might be best for the country; he suspected that an early election would be to the benefit of the Conservatives and to the detriment of the poorly organised Liberals.

By 1943 the political situation had evolved and it was becoming clearer that the Labour Party did not wish to continue with coalition government beyond the end of the war in Europe. Speaking at the 1943 Assembly Sinclair said:

> I have always recoiled from the prospect of a general election fought immediately after we finish the war with Germany … [but] … consultation with the electors ought not to be unduly delayed.[35]

This approach did not satisfy party members at the 1943 Assembly, who supported Johnson's motion opposing the continuance of the coalition after the war in Europe. Sinclair refused to be bound by the decision, but the pressure on him increased when a meeting of Liberal candidates in January 1944 urged that the forthcoming election should be fought by the party 'without any obligations to any other party'.[36] The Liberal Party Council also backed this approach.

Spicer, in a letter to Edward Hulton of the *Picture Post*, felt that this announcement implied that both of Radical Action's aims – to secure the party's independence and to guarantee the party's backing for a radical programme – had been achieved.

As late as July 1944 Sinclair indicated at a luncheon with Sir Malcolm Stewart, the brick manufacturer, that he wished Churchill to stay in power after the war, that he hoped Liberals could support Churchill's election programme and that there would be increased Liberal representation in the government after the election.[37] Sinclair was not without allies amongst his parliamentary colleagues. A few months earlier Harcourt Johnstone had said in a speech at Middlesbrough that Liberals could be satisfied with the reform measures undertaken by the National Government.[38] However, Sinclair was also a party man and he recognised the pressure being exerted upon him by the Liberal Party Organisation as well as by Radical Action. The Labour Party's position was also influential; continuing in a coalition with the Conservatives after Labour had departed would have severely compromised the Liberal Party's identity. In October 1944 the Liberal Parliamentary Party finally stated that the party would fight the election with the maximum number of candidates and in complete independence. Spicer, in a letter to Edward Hulton of the *Picture Post*, felt that this announcement implied that both of Radical Action's aims – to secure the party's independence and to guarantee the party's backing for a radical programme – had been achieved.[39]

Social and economic policy

Several individual Liberals offered their vision of post-war economic and social policy in a variety of books and pamphlets published during the war years. Johnson's social and economic policy proposals,

outlined in *Safer than a Known Way*, stemmed from his perception that the pre-eminent post-war concern would be the prevention of the re-emergence of fascism. He advocated the redistribution of wages and profits, industrial co-partnership, improved credit facilities to aid the improvement of industry, and the eventual creation of a federal world government, which would bring with it free trade and international peace and harmony. In the context of the war years, this did not constitute an especially radical agenda. Johnson was followed into print by two Liberal MPs, Sir Richard Acland and Tom Horabin, who both set out far more extreme positions. In *What It Will be Like in the New Britain*, Acland suggested that the nation's economic problems would be solved by the 'Common Ownership' of land and property and went as far as to claim that, 'we, without forecasting any of the details of Common Ownership, can be certain that it must be better than giant capitalism'.[40] Horabin, in *Politics Made Plain*, argued that Radical Action wanted to use 'the power of the State to build a Britain fit for ordinary decent people',[41] and this would involve the abolition of the public schools, the nationalisation of power, transport, coal, land and the banking industry, and the implementation of the Beveridge Report in full.

The bulk of the Liberal Party, Radical Action included, was sceptical of policies which involved the dramatic extension of the power of the state. The LAG meeting in December 1942 was primarily concerned with an economic policy motion which was initially close to the position of the Liberal Party as a whole. Although it sought the nationalisation of the natural monopolies and transport it also made clear that there should be a 'framework of law within which there will be the widest possible scope for free enterprise' and that Liberals should guard against 'the kind of planning which would establish a regime of totalitarian or bureaucratic tyranny'.[42] Horabin led the opposition to this orthodoxy and the group's policy took on a more radical tone as a result. The questions of whether monopolies were all bad and which industries should be nationalised were referred to a committee, headed by Dr Balogh, and an amendment suggesting that the state should decide 'in which spheres restricted private enterprise can continue to operate' was passed.

Radical Action's main objective in the economic sphere was to persuade the Liberal Party leadership to adopt a thorough programme of post-war economic reform and reconstruction.

The LAG's enthusiasm for considering economic solutions which were anathema to the Liberal hierarchy did cause the party's leadership some concern. After Spicer and Everett Jones lunched with Sir Archibald Sinclair in December 1942, Spicer wrote to Sinclair, 'I inferred from several of the remarks you made that you feel that members of the Liberal Action Group have been largely dominated by one or two members of Parliament. One in particular.'[43] That one was Horabin, who was widely regarded within the Liberal Party as a left-wing extremist.[44] Horabin become involved with the LAG late in 1942,[45] and his claim to speak for Radical Action was a result of his regular attendance at the group's meetings. However, he was never closely involved with the running of the group. Although he was vocal in the discussion of the group's policy resolutions, Radical Action never supported resolutions which went as far as Horabin desired in extending the state's economic role. Spicer, in an ongoing correspondence with Harold Stoner, regularly expressed his exasperation with Horabin and his political ally Clement Davies. 'We were unusually free of personalities (Horabin, Balogh and Clem Davies were none of them present)', noted Spicer of a Radical Action meeting in June 1943.[46] Another former group member went further, stating of Horabin, 'we had no firm contact with him and certainly were not linked to the policies he put forward in his book'. Spicer was forced to make the same point to Sinclair, when the latter suggested that Radical Action was pressing the Liberal Party to accept wide-scale economic planning:

> Radical Action was not formed by a group who have the same views on economic questions, it was formed by a group of people who were dissatisfied by the inertia of the Liberal Party organisation and were determined to try and get some life into it.[47]

Radical Action's main objective in the economic sphere was to persuade the Liberal Party leadership to adopt a thorough programme of post-war economic reform and reconstruction, which could form the basis of a popular appeal to the electorate. As early as December 1942, Spicer sent Sinclair a LAG motion which stated:

> That the war can only be won in the shortest time, and the opportunities of victory be realised if a substantial measure of reform is embodied in legislation now. It considers that a firm assurance to the people of Great Britain of the kind of economic and social life which will be open to them at the close of hostilities is indispensable.[48]

Spicer argued that the other two parties would not be able to tackle adequately the challenges of peace because both would be too tired at the end of the war and both represented constituencies which were diametrically opposed to each other. Consequently, post-war reconstruction offered enormous electoral potential to the Liberal Party.[49]

The publication of the Beveridge Report in November 1942, and its immediate popularity with the general public, galvanised those Liberals most concerned with post-war reconstruction issues. Spicer called for the Liberal Parliamentary Party to back the report, almost immediately after it was published, but received an equivocal reply from Sinclair on the subject, to the effect that the 'government is doing a great deal about social reform and reconstruction after the war'.[50] In February 1943, with the House of Commons about to divide on a Labour amendment urging the government to implement the report's recommendations, the LAG sent a telegram to Sinclair and Sir Percy Harris (who led the Liberal backbenchers in the Commons) urging them to back the amendment. Sinclair supported the government, but only three backbench Liberal MPs backed him up, while nine voted against the government.[51] Sinclair's decision to support the government and oppose the immediate implementation of the Beveridge Report caused a great deal of disquiet amongst Radical Action members. Spicer later wrote that, 'Sinclair should have resigned on the third day of the Beveridge Report debate'.[52]

Beveridge himself was elected as Liberal MP for Berwick in 1944, under the terms of the truce, following the death in action of George Grey. This allowed Spicer to conclude that Radical Action had succeeded in infusing the party with a militant, radical policy.[53] Beveridge was prominent in the Liberal Party's campaign during the 1945 general election and most Liberal candidates made reference to his report and to the party's commitment to fight want, ignorance, idleness, squalor and disease. However, if there was any advantage to be gained from the Liberal Party being the party of Beveridge and his report, it was lost in 1943, when the party failed to stake out its position with sufficient clarity to make an impact on the electorate.

Johnson described the Liberal leadership as the 'most outstanding example of nepotism of any institution I have ever known'.

Party organisation

Johnson described the Liberal leadership as the 'most outstanding example of nepotism of any institution I have ever known'.[54] The higher echelons of the party were dominated by individuals who owed their positions to their family connections, their money or both. The Cadburys, Seelys, Foots, and, of course, the Bonham Carters, formed the quasi-aristocratic Asquithian hierarchy which outsiders found difficult to penetrate. All the Liberal ministers in the coalition government – Sinclair, Dingle Foot, Seely, Rothschild and Johnstone – belonged to the same dining club as Churchill, the Other Club.[55] The LAG may have been formed to achieve certain ill-defined political ends, but it also reflected the frustration felt by young, ambitious candidates to 'get on' in the party and to assume the positions of responsibility which they were largely denied by dint of their background.

In 1944, Stephen Bonarjee, who had been an officer of the National League of Young Liberals before the war, complained of the snobbery of the senior figures in the party, remarking how easily Mark Bonham Carter had been selected as candidate for the promising Barnstaple constituency, and how Philip Rea had revived his interest in standing for Darwen in 1945, in the light of Balfour's by-election performance. Violet Bonham Carter attracted a large part of Radical Action's censures, because, to some, her prominence in the party was at least as much due to her family connections as to her ability. Bonarjee commented that she was the 'best living argument I know against having women in politics'.[56]

Initially the LAG formed no coherent plan to tackle this oligarchy. However, Radical Action did launch one assault on the make-up of the party's leadership, by submitting a slate of candidates to the elections for the LPO officerships in 1944. Leonard Harris spelt out the group's intentions in a letter to Arthur Worsley, one of the party's senior agents:

> Try to consider what I should think of a business which had on its board of directors men of the age and temperament of Rea, [H.] Worsley and Johnstone. My objection to the latter is chiefly his conservatism, not his age. I should not be inclined to put money into such a company.[57]

Four Radical Action candidates were advanced. J. E. Emlyn-Jones and A. P. Marshall were put forward for the vice-presidential vacancies; Spicer and Harris stood for the three vacancies for the position of treasurer. Spicer, who by this time had been invited on to a committee whose remit was to re-fashion the machinery of the LPO, was appalled at the complacent attitude of some of its members. He asked Marshall:

> if you want to revive the party, do you honestly think it can be done by having as officers, men of the age and temperament as Lord Rea, Harcourt Johnstone and Isaac Foot? Do you really think Wilfrid Roberts has the vigour to infuse dynamic into the organisation throughout the country? When you look round the council, whilst I have the greatest respect for the Viscountess Gladstone and the Marchioness of Crewe, I cannot believe that they are capable, at their age, of reviving the Liberal Party. Lord Stanmore is up for the peers;

> do you think he will help revive the Liberal party? Sir George Paish is sincere, but will he be a potent force in the Liberal Party?[58]

Radical Action's challenge failed, but it had been a half-hearted one at best. The group only turned its attention to organisational matters after it was clear that pressure to abandon the electoral truce, pull the Liberal ministers out of the government or force Sinclair's hand over the matter of the party's independence were futile. The 1944 Assembly was the only occasion on which Radical Action used the LPO machinery to challenge the leadership, but the group's failure to build links with the party rank and file (as will be seen below) cost it dear. In October 1944 Spicer wrote a paper entitled 'Liberals must lead a radical revival', which stated that an immediate goal of Radical Action must be to ensure that all the officers and members of committees throughout the party were radical in outlook and active in the constituencies.[59] At the national level, this was not achieved.

In August 1944 Spicer declared that, 'Radical Action as a unit and members of Radical Action individually are doing all they can to get constituencies active'.[60] This indicated a further rationale for the group's existence. If Radical Action could galvanise the constituency associations, by encouraging the activities of radical, young candidates throughout the country, then it might have been possible for the group to achieve its objective of giving the party a 'leftwards tendency' by ensuring that a bloc of radical Liberal MPs was returned to the House of Commons.

The evidence to suggest that Radical Action played a part in galvanising constituency associations, however, is thin. Only 40 of the 99 identifiable Radical Action members who could have stood in the 1945 election (excluding sitting MPs) put themselves forward at the poll. Radical Action members performed slightly better than Liberal candidates as a whole in 1945, but 31 of the 40 finished third and one Radical Action member finished fourth. More strikingly, 24 of the 40 Radical Action members who stood for Parliament in 1945 failed to stand in 1950, despite the fact that the party was desperate for candidates and even advertised in the press to secure them.

Radical Action and the Liberal Party

The relationship between Radical Action and the leadership of the Liberal Party was always strained, but at least there was a relationship. Sinclair was willing occasionally to engage with the group, and Radical Action was allowed to affiliate to the party as an independent organisation. Radical Action therefore enjoyed the same status within the party as the Liberal Social Council or the Liberal Candidates' Association.[61]

Sinclair appears to have met the leadership of the Liberal Action Group on only one occasion, at a luncheon on 16 December 1942. It was at this occasion that Sinclair spelt out why he would not lead the Liberal Party out of the electoral truce or out of the government. Sinclair and Spicer exchanged correspondence throughout the winter of 1942–43 but, as has been noted, Sinclair refused to alter his position on these issues and the correspondence ceased. After February 1943 only one other exchange of correspondence appears to have taken place between the two men, in January 1944 on economic issues. Clearly, Sinclair did not care for Radical Action's views and felt that having communicated his position to them, he could safely ignore them.

The relationship between Radical Action and the leadership of the Liberal Party was always strained, but at least there was a relationship.

A major issue for the Liberal leadership during the war was the possibility of reuniting the Liberal and Liberal National parties. Ernest Brown, the Liberal National leader, approached Sinclair on the subject of Liberal reunion in July 1943 and negotiations were conducted for eighteen months before it was decided that agreement could not be reached.[62] A Radical Action pamphlet cited 'ending attempts at union with the Liberal Nationals' as an aim of the group.[63] A letter from Everett Jones was published in *The Guardian* in November 1943 opposing Liberal reunion and Spicer concluded that the Liberal Nationals represented nothing which was 'not more honestly represented by the Tories'.[64]

There was virtually no communication between Radical Action and Liberal ministers such as Rothschild, Seely and Johnstone. What is perhaps surprising is that two of the wartime Liberal MPs who later defected to Labour – Dingle Foot and Sir Geoffrey Mander – took no part in the activities of the group.[65]

Although Clement Davies and Horabin, the 'twin spirits of Liberal oppositionism in the wartime parliament',[66] were regularly involved in Radical Action's activities, other parliamentarian members of the group – Granville and Megan Lloyd George – seem to have been members in name only. Wilfrid Roberts had an ambiguous relationship with the group. Roberts joined the LAG at its inception but was always heavily involved with the Liberal Party Organisation and consequently had a semi-detached attitude towards the group's concerns.[67]

When the Liberal Action Group was set up, it was deliberately established as a small group. Its membership was restricted to MPs, parliamentary candidates and party

officials. For all Spicer's exhortations for the group to get involved in the constituencies, the contact between the group and the rank-and-file membership of the Liberal Party was minimal. A number of Liberal Party members from the 1940s were interviewed during the course of this research and none appeared to realise that the electoral truce was ever a bone of contention within the party.[68]

The Liberal Assembly was the only forum in which non-members of the group could have come into contact with Radical Action, but assembles were held in London throughout the war and only a relatively small number of constituency associations sent delegates to them, compared to the assemblies of the immediate post-war period. Only one motion proposed by Radical Action members was carried, and that, on the party's post-war independence, could have been expected to have attracted widespread support. As might be expected, Liberal regional and constituency organisations were practically moribund during the war and, as a result, there are few indications of what rank-and-file members thought about Radical Action or the views it espoused. Spicer was a member of the executive committee of the London Liberal Federation and this may have been the reason why the London Liberal Federation passed a motion in 1944 noting 'with regret that Radical Action is now canvassing Liberals everywhere to join their group'.[69] The federation opposed the group's formal affiliation to the party on the grounds that it was 'resolved in certain particulars in direct conflict with the majority decisions of the Assembly and the LPO Council'. In contrast, the Scottish Liberal Council called in September 1943 for the ending of the truce after the end of the war and the adoption of the Beveridge Report in full.[70] Altrincham & Sale Liberal Association wrote to the government to express its dissatisfaction at how the Beveridge Report had been handled.[71]

Conclusion

Seen within the context of wartime politics, the formation of the Liberal Action Group, later Radical Action, was not a surprising event. With the normal outlets of political expression closed for the duration of the hostilities, political activists dissatisfied with the course of the war or the government's proposed policies of post-war reconstruction had nowhere to turn. New political groups sprang up as a consequence and independents enjoyed a field day in dozens of by-elections. What is perhaps surprising is that Radical Action kept its faith with the Liberal Party throughout the war.

The development of Common Wealth into an independent political party suggested one path for the development of Radical Action. There were three reasons why this did not happen. First, the group's leaders felt very strongly that Radical Action should be a constitutionally recognised element of the Liberal Party and that it should not do anything which would not be approved by the party as a whole. There was little challenge to this conception of the group's role. The LAG applied to become a recognised unit of the Liberal Party as early as 1941, and mindful of the 'schisms and distractions of the last twenty four years', it was made clear from the start that it was 'in no way intended to usurp' the proper functions of the Liberal Party.[72] Secondly, Radical Action served as a vehicle by which young, radical parliamentary candidates and members of the party's council and executive could challenge the Liberal leadership. The group is best understood as a player in internal Liberal Party politics, not as a body which was prepared to step out on the national political stage. Thirdly, Radical Action did not possess a set of policies which it could expound and to which members could subscribe. Unlike Common Wealth, which had a doctrinaire approach to economic questions, Radical Action was a forum for discussion. It was never fashioned as a body for putting coherent political principles across to the electorate.

In conclusion, Radical Action had a significant role to play in ensuring that the Liberal Party entered the post-war era as an entirely independent party, free from ties to Churchill's Conservative Party.

The influence of Radical Action on the direction taken by the Liberal Party in the mid-1940s was significant, in two respects in particular. Firstly, its strong support for the immediate implementation of the Beveridge Report, and its pressure on the party leadership to back the radical blueprints for post-war reconstruction, were highly influential. Secondly, Radical Action consistently pressed the Liberal Party to fight the post-war general election on an independent basis, and helped force Sir Archibald Sinclair to agree to that course of action late in 1944. On both issues, Radical Action struck a chord with the party rank and file and was successful in achieving its objectives only after other influential, and more formal, bodies within the Liberal Party had expressed the same views. Nevertheless, it was Radical Action which raised these issues first and continued to do so clearly and persuasively.

On issues where most Liberal activists did not share the views of Radical Action, such as the participation of Liberal ministers in the Churchill government, the group made little headway. Radical Action was able to initiate and lead debate within the Liberal Party on such matters, but could not overcome the opposition of the party establishment without the support of the Liberal Council or other bodies of activists.

Radical Action cannot claim to have revived the constituencies, and the electoral performance of its members was decidedly average. Neither the group nor its members were involved in the publication of the report of the post-war reconstruction committee, *Coats Off For The Future!*, and the initiative resulted from the outcome of the election, not from any events or suggestions made beforehand.

It is worth examining whether the Liberal Party would have been better off if Radical Action members had been able to gain control of the party during the war and run it according to their aims, or if Sinclair had been persuaded by the group's arguments. Firstly, both Ivor Davies and Donald Johnson claimed that the Liberal Party would have benefited electorally from ending the truce. Davies wrote in 1950 that the 'position in the middle of 1943 provided the best opportunity for the creation of a new Liberal bloc in the House of Commons that had taken place for twenty years'.[73] Sinclair stated that ending the truce would require the Liberal ministers to leave the government, and he would contemplate doing this only in the unlikely event of the government compromising an essential Liberal principle. Leaving the government on a lesser matter than Sinclair envisaged would undoubtedly have split the party and a considerable number of senior figures and constituency members would have remained loyal to the government. The remaining 'independent' Liberal Party would have been very weak, but it would have been well placed to pick up a handful of seats in by-elections before 1945. However, it is difficult to envisage how a post-war general election would have brought anything but electoral disaster, especially if Tory-backed Liberals stood against independent Liberals in the few seats the latter held. It is difficult to appreciate the basis on which Davies believed the Liberal Party could have benefited from 'seizing the initiative' in 1942–43 by fighting by-elections. Only if an issue arose on which the whole Liberal Party could leave the government would such an opportunity have existed; without such an issue, any formal attempt to end the truce would have split the party and probably killed off independent Liberalism.

Secondly, it could be argued that had the Liberal Party as a whole, and its ministers in particular, embraced the Beveridge Report immediately on its publication and pressed the government for the immediate implementation of its recommendations, then the party would have benefited from the leftwards swing evinced at the 1945 general election. By 1945, however, the party was unequivocally backing the report and many other measures of post-war reform. Furthermore, Beveridge himself campaigned extensively in the Liberal interest. For causes of the Liberals' embarrassment in the 1945 election, one must look elsewhere, particularly towards the party's weak organisation in the constituencies.

In conclusion, Radical Action had a significant role to play in ensuring that the Liberal Party entered the post-war era as an entirely independent party, free from ties to Churchill's Conservative Party. Historians have tended to identify Clement Davies' refusal of office in the 1951 Conservative government as a key moment in the survival of the Liberal Party;[74] Archibald Sinclair's reluctant decision to indicate that the party would

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fight the 1945 general election on an independent basis, which followed a sustained campaign by Radical Action, was perhaps equally significant. Furthermore, in leading the campaign in favour of the Beveridge Report, Radical Action took up arms against the economic liberals who were in the ascendant in terms of the Liberal Party's ideological direction in the 1930s and 1940s. In this, the group presaged the ideological battles of the 1950s, which were only finally resolved when Jo Grimond became party leader in 1956.[75]

Mark Egan, a political historian, has recently published Coming into Focus: The Transformation of the Liberal Party 1945–64 *(VDM Verlag , 2009).*

1 This article is principally based on the papers of Honor Balfour, which Miss Balfour kindly allowed me to consult in the years before her death in 2002. The papers have now been deposited with the Bodleian Library, Oxford.
2 Johnson, D., *Bars and Barricades*, p. 211.
3 Ibid., p. 49. For more information about Johnson see Ingham R., 'Donald Johnson: the last Liberal Imperialist', *Journal of Liberal History*, No. 25, Winter 1999–2000, pp. 31–33.
4 Ibid., p. 215.
5 Balfour papers, resolutions passed by Liberal Action Group at various meetings, 23.11.41, resolution no. 3.
6 Ibid., Liberal Action Group memorandum, 8.9.42.
7 Johnson, *Bars and Barricades*, p. 217.
8 Balfour papers, letter W. Roberts to Spicer, 7.8.44. Roberts also accused Radical Action of plotting to overthrow Sir Archibald Sinclair in favour of Clement Davies.
9 Ibid., letter from Radical Action to Balfour, 14.12.44.
10 Ibid., Liberal Action Group, report of meeting at National Liberal Club, 5.12.42 and 19 New Bridge Street 6.12.42.
11 It is worth noting that one non-Liberal MP joined Radical Action prior to 1945: Vernon Bartlett, the independent member for Bridgwater, who had previously been associated with Acland.
12 Johnson, *Bars and Barricades*, p. 218.
13 Ibid., p. 220.
14 Balfour papers, 'Some thoughts on the present political and war situations', 6.7.42.
15 Ibid., letters Spicer to W. Roberts, 13.8.42, and Spicer to D. Foot, 8.9.42.
16 Ibid., 'Political Reflections', No. 61, 26–27.3.44.
17 Ibid., memorandum by T. Lodge, no. 43, 19.8.43.
18 Ibid., note from dinner by Radical Action to Sinclair, 9.3.42.
19 Davies, I., *Trial by Ballot*, p. 156. The coupon was tremendously unpopular amongst many Liberals. Honor Balfour received several letters on the subject during her by-election campaign, including one from Lord Davies, who threatened to resign from the party because of it. (Balfour papers, letter Davies to Balfour, 31.12.43).
20 Johnson, D., *Bars and Barricades*, pp. 221–25. Johnson may have hoped that opposition to Sinclair could have crystallised around a suitable by-election campaign and that Sinclair could have been forced to resign if a significant number of MPs and prominent Liberal members had opposed a coupon being issued to Johnson's or Ivor Davies' opponent. Without the support of Clement Davies and Horabin it was obvious that such a plan would lack the backing required to force the issue. Hence Johnson's disappointment at Clement Davies' actions.
21 Balfour lost by 70 votes, Johnson by 195.
22 Johnson, *Bars and Barricades*, p. 236.
23 *The Guardian* 11.12.43 and interview with Honor Balfour.
24 Johnson, *Bars and Barricades*, pp. 238–39.
25 Ibid., pp. 234–5.
26 Balfour papers, letter Spicer to Johnson, 21.7.43 and Spicer to Balfour, 26.11.43.
27 Johnson, *Bars and Barricades*, p. 241.
28 Balfour papers, letters to Balfour from: Lord Davies, 27.11.43, Lady Bonham Carter, 18.12.43, Sir George Gower, 17.12.43, C. Davies, 10.12.43, V. Bartlett, 7.12.43, Halifax Liberal Association, 11.12.43, Cllr A. E. Turner, undated, M. Jackson, 8.12.43, T. McNamee, undated and N. R. Dickinson, 8.12.43.
29 Johnson, *Bars and Barricades,* p. 248.
30 Balfour papers, Liberal Action Group, report of meeting at National Liberal Club 5.12.42, and 19 New Bridge Street, 6.12.42 – second day's proceedings.
31 Ibid., letter Spicer to Sir A. Sinclair, 30.12.42, 'I would never advocate leaving the government in order to build up the strength of the Party in the country'.
32 Ibid., memorandum on lunch with Sinclair, 16.12.42.
33 Ibid., letter Sinclair to Spicer, 22.12.42.
34 Liberal Pamphlets, National Museum of Labour History, 329,72: 'Speech by Sinclair at National Liberal Club 19.3.41'.
35 Ibid.: 'The Party of Youth – Sinclair Speech to Liberal Assembly 17.7.43'.
36 Joyce, P., 'The Liberal Party and the 1945 General Election', pp. 1–2.
37 Balfour papers, 'Note made after luncheon 11.7.44 given by Mr. E. H. Gilpin to Sir Malcolm Stewart'.
38 Ibid., 'Radical Action and Liberal Survival', March 1944.
39 Ibid., letter Spicer to E. Hulton, 10.11.44.
40 Acland, Sir R., *What it will be like in the New Britain*, p. 10.
41 Horabin, T., *Politics made Plain*, pp. 125–26.
42 Balfour papers, 'Liberal Action Group, report of meeting at National Liberal Club, 5.12.42 and 19 New Bridge Street 6.12.42'.
43 Ibid., letter Spicer to Sinclair, 17.12.42.
44 Reynolds and Hunter, 'Liberal Class Warrior', and Ingham and Wright, 'Tom Horabin Remembered'.
45 Balfour papers, letter Spicer to H. Stoner 10.12.42, 'Horabin has been a very frustrated person … [I am] hopeful that when he has got a place in which [he] can express himself, he may be nothing like as extreme as you seem to fear.'
46 Ibid., letter Spicer to H. Stoner, 8.6.43.
47 Ibid., letter Spicer to Sinclair, 12.1.44.
48 Ibid., LAG resolution sent by Spicer to Sinclair and to Sir. P. Harris, 18.2.43.
49 Ibid., memorandum on lunch with Sinclair, 16.12.42.
50 Ibid., letter Sinclair to Spicer 22.12.42.
51 Voting with the government were Dingle Foot, Harcourt Johnstone, Sir Geoffrey Mander, James de Rothschild, Sir Archibald Sinclair and H. Graham White. Voting against the government were Clement Davies, George Grey, Edgar Granville, W. J. Gruffydd, Sir Percy Harris, Thomas Horabin, David Lloyd George, Megan Lloyd George and Wilfrid Roberts.
52 Balfour papers, 'Political Reflections', No. 61, 26–27.3.44.
53 Ibid., letter Spicer to E. Hulton, 10.11.44.
54 Johnson, *Bars and Barricades*, p. 217.
55 Harris, Sir P., *Forty Years in and out of Parliament*, p. 151.
56 Balfour papers, letter S. Bonarjee to Spicer, 20.5.44. For more

on Bonarjee see his obituary in *The Independent*, 7 October 2003.

57 Ibid., letter L. Harris to A. Worsley, 14.4.44.

58 Ibid., letter Spicer to A. P. Marshall, 8.5.44.

59 Ibid., 'Liberals Must Lead a Radical Revival', No. 67, October 1944

60 Ibid., letter Spicer to W. Roberts 18.8.44.

61 Radical Action was disaffiliated as a result of the constitutional changes following the publication of *Coats Off for the Future!* in 1946. Balfour papers, letter Spicer to G. Naylor, 12.1.49, in which Spicer criticises the party's decision.

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64 *The Guardian* 11 November 1943 and Balfour papers, Spicer memorandum No. 56, 30 November 1943.

65 Foot was a Minister during the war and Mander was Sinclair's PPS.

66 Johnson, *Bars and Barricades*, p. 217.

67 For example, see Balfour papers, letters W. Roberts to Spicer 30.12.43 and 3.8.45.

68 Twenty-seven people who had joined the Liberal Party before or during the Second World War were interviewed.

69 London Liberal Federation, executive committee minutes, 11.3.44 (Greater London Record Office 1446/4)

70 Scottish Liberal Federation, Council minutes, 13.9.43 (Edinburgh University Library).

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72 Ibid., 'Resolutions passed by Liberal Action Group at various meetings', 23.11.41, resolution no. 15.

73 Davies, *Trial by Ballot*, p. 160.

74 For example, Douglas, *Liberals*, p. 259.

75 Ingham, R., 'Battle of Ideas or Absence of Leadership?', *Journal of Liberal History*, No. 47, summer 2005.

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.

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.*

'Economic Liberalism' and the Liberal (Democrat) Party, 1937–2004

A study of the role of 'economic liberalism' in the Liberal Party and the Liberal Democrats. Of particular interest would be any private papers relating to 1937's *Ownership For All* report and the activities of the Unservile State Group. Oral history submissions also welcome. *Matthew Francis; matthew@the-domain.org.uk.*

The Liberal Party's political communication, 1945–2002

PhD thesis. *Cynthia Messeleka-Boyer, 12 bis chemin Vaysse, 81150 Terssac, France; +33 6 10 09 72 46; cynthiandrea@aol.com.*

Liberal policy towards Austria-Hungary, 1905–16

Andrew Gardner, 17 Upper Ramsey Walk, Canonbury, London N1 2RP; agardner@ssees.ac.uk.

Liberal Unionists

A study of the Liberal Unionist party as a discrete political entity. Help with identifying party records before 1903 particularly welcome. *Ian Cawood, Newman University Colllege, Birmingham; i.cawood@newman.ac.uk.*

The Liberal Party in the West Midlands December 1916 – 1923 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.*

The Lib-Lab Pact

The period of political co-operation which took place in Britain between 1977 and 1978; PhD research project at Cardiff University. *Jonny Kirkup, 29 Mount Earl, Bridgend, Bridgend County CF31 3EY; jonnykirkup@yahoo.co.uk.*

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.*

The political career of Edward Strutt, 1st Baron Belper

Strutt was Whig/Liberal MP for Derby (1830-49), later Arundel and Nottingham; in 1856 he was created Lord Belper and built Kingston Hall (1842-46) in the village of Kingston-on-Soar, Notts. He was a friend of Jeremy Bentham and a supporter of free trade and reform, and held government office as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Commissioner of Railways. Any information, location of papers or references welcome. *Brian Smith; brian63@inbox.com*

DAVID A

Dr J. Graham Jones
uses Lloyd George's early diaries and correspondence files in the custody of the National Library of Wales to examine the nature of the courtship between David Lloyd George and Margaret Owen between 1884 and their marriage in January 1888.

ND MAGGIE

David Lloyd George's love of women of all kinds, and enthusiasm for their company, are proverbial. Throughout his adult life, even in old age in the 1930s, he eagerly participated in a string of amorous liaisons; he was totally incapable of remaining loyal either to his wife, Dame Margaret, or to his long-term mistress and confidante for more than thirty years, Frances Stevenson. Indeed, his earliest diary, that for 1878, when Lloyd George was just fifteen years of age, reveals that he was already being sorely tempted by the attractive young ladies of Criccieth and Porthmadog.

Slim and handsome, with dark, wavy hair and piercing blue eyes, he was eyed eagerly by the local girls and he, in turn, found them irresistible. From his middle teens he found himself tormented by starkly conflicting, deep-rooted emotions – his preoccupation with the fair sex and his ambition to succeed professionally in his future career, probably as a lawyer, possibly as a politician. Relationships with young ladies inevitably demanded time and money; the young Lloyd George had precious little of either. Moreover, the all-abiding influence of his revered uncle and mentor Richard Lloyd (to all intents and purposes his adopted father from 1864), coupled with the emphasis of the sermons which he heard in the local chapel (the gist of which he painstakingly noted in his early diaries) had convinced him beyond all doubt that preoccupation with girls would prove an unwelcome distraction from his studies and would be likely to harm his reputation at Llanystumdwy. Surely there were more important, pressing tasks than the pursuit of pretty young women?

Lloyd George, with Margaret and his two daughters, Mair and the infant Megan, in the garden of their Wandsowrth home (c. 1902).

These considerations were constantly being reinforced by the counsels of LG's elder sister Mary Ellen George (b. 1861), an austere, strait-laced, notably puritanical individual who regularly reprimanded her young brother Davy for flirting with the young ladies of the locality. After one such solemn ticking-off in the high summer of 1880 (when Lloyd George was now seventeen and a half years of age), he noted very seriously in his diary:

> This I know that the realization of my prospects, my dreams, my longings for success are very scant indeed, unless I am determined to give up what without mistake are the germs of a 'fast life' … What is life good for unless some success, some reputable notoriety be attained – the idea of living merely for the sake of living is almost unbearable – it is unworthy of such a superior being as man.[1]

His nephew, the late Dr W. R. P. George, believes that Lloyd George's first romantic involvement was with a 'Miss Jones of Glascwm' whom he first met 'in the romantic surroundings of Penmachno' near Bettws-y-Coed which, apparently, he had visited at the insistence of Rev. John Roberts, the Porthmadog Baptist lay preacher and republican. Following an evening service at the local chapel, Lloyd George took Miss Jones 'sweet and twenty' as she was, for a walk along a leafy country lane at Penmachno and was, it seems,

'Highgate', Llanystumdwy – the cottage in which Lloyd George grew up (Richard Lloyd's workshop in the foreground).

totally captivated by her beguiling presence. Even such an innocent stroll attracted the attention of local gossips – much to Lloyd George's concern: 'I was awfully afraid of it becoming known by all the sisterhood and through them to other persons from Porthmadog and Criccieth who may go there to preach.'[2]

Although the regular evangelical visitations to Penmachno continued at the instigation of Rev. John Roberts, the relationship with 'Miss Jones' did not, brought to an abrupt end by the young lady herself who had heard persistent local rumours that her suitor 'was an awful flirt and was having an affair with a Porthmadog girl at the same time'. She was also annoyed by the letters – 'too independent for her liking' – which Lloyd George had sent her. Not long afterwards Miss Jones agreed to marry the local doctor, LG consoling himself that the unhappy course of events was probably for the best: 'Well, I am not sorry … I think it is better for her that she should stick to a man who is in a position to give her a comfortable life and not to an unthinking stripling of 19.'[3] (The use of the adjective 'unthinking' in relation to himself was rather an over-harsh self-condemnation.) But Miss Jones of Penmachno at least has the distinction of being the first real love in Lloyd George's life.

Soon he was to become even more captivated by another Miss Jones – Lizzie or Liza Jones of Criccieth, a well-known singer in the locality whose dark eyes and black hair bowled him over. Her string of singing engagements throughout Caernarfonshire and Merionethshire meant that all too frequently she failed to keep her dates with Lloyd George, to his intense dismay and disappointment. His diary entries for the last months of 1883 contain several references to their planned meetings, usually abortive, and her detailed explanations to account for her last-minute failure to turn up. As he noted on 25 November 1883, an entry which powerfully underlines his loss of control over his emotions, 'In earnest I do not know but I am afraid it is too late now. She has acquired a wonderful mastery over my idiot heart.'[4] Just a week later, after Lizzie had failed to turn up for an engagement, apparently without explanation, he wrote further, 'What anguish it would have saved me if I had known it in time [i.e. her failure to appear]. Let every young man be wary in time of falling in love. It is replete with peril.'[5]

As it happens, Lloyd George was not the only young man to have fallen deeply in love with Liza Jones at this time. She had also captivated the heart of a young schoolmaster in a neighbouring village by the name of Lloyd Williams whom, in fact, she was soon to marry. Again LG accepted the news philosophically, consoling himself that at least he would now be spared the considerable expense of paying for voice lessons for Liza, but it is clear that the

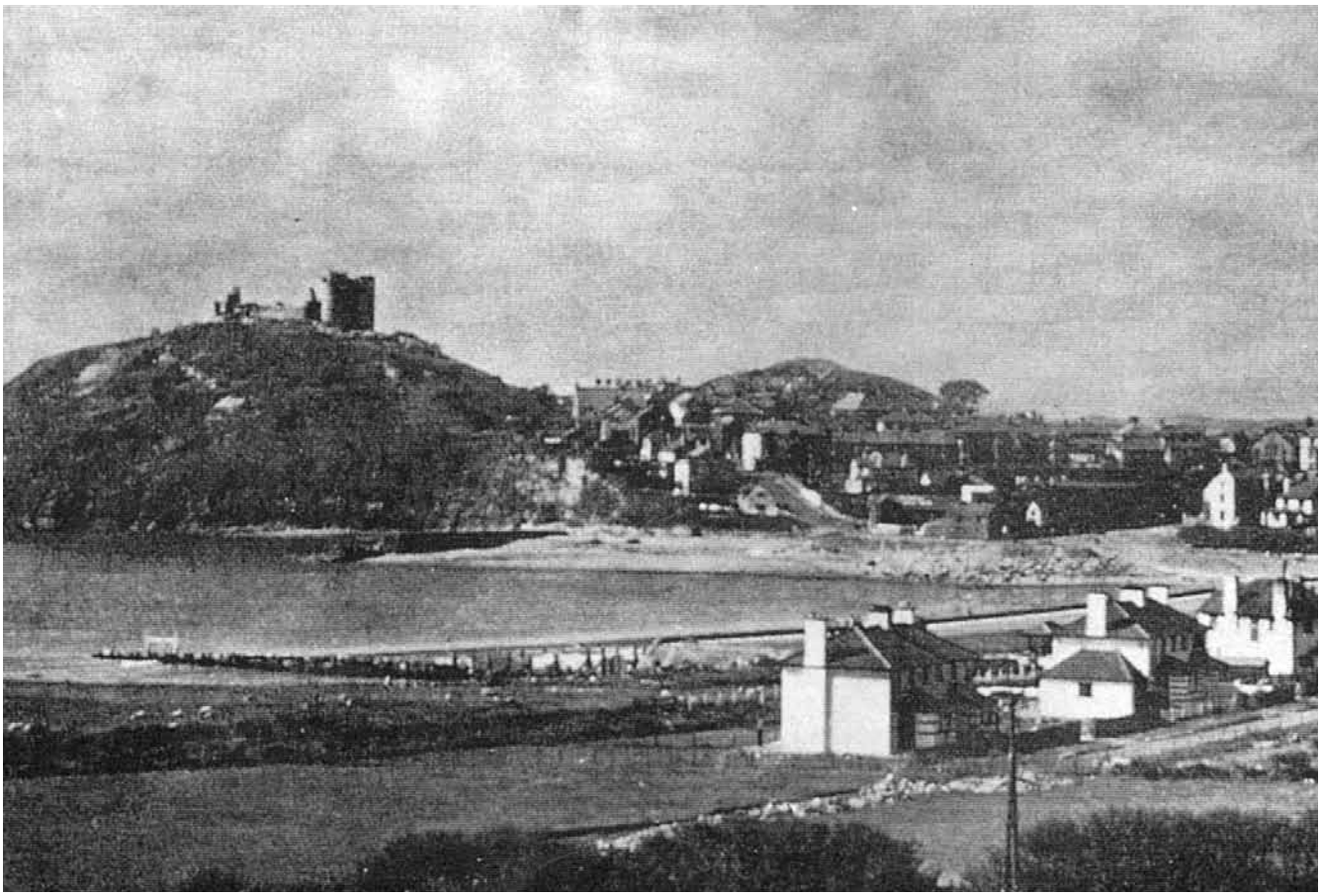
anguish of losing her continued for several months, intensified by the fact that, as a Baptist, she worshipped at the same chapel as him. In June 1884, he wrote in his diary, 'I wish to God she would keep away altogether. I might feel it keenly perhaps, for a while, but I'd sooner get over it by not seeing her at all than by being compelled, as I am now, to see her and *hear her voice* twice a week.'[6] As a symbolic gesture that the relationship was now well and truly over, he burned all her letters to him, but their subsequent occasional chance encounters clearly still continued to vex him sorely for some time.

It was during that very same month – June 1884 – that Lloyd George first met the woman who was to become his wife, Margaret Owen of Mynydd Ednyfed Fawr, Criccieth – 'a sensible girl without fuss or affectation about her' was his first impression.[7] It would appear, however, that their paths did not cross thereafter for almost a year, or at least there are no references to further meetings in Lloyd George's diaries. On 21 May 1885 Lloyd George wrote in his diary about an evening function organised by the local Grand Debating Society:

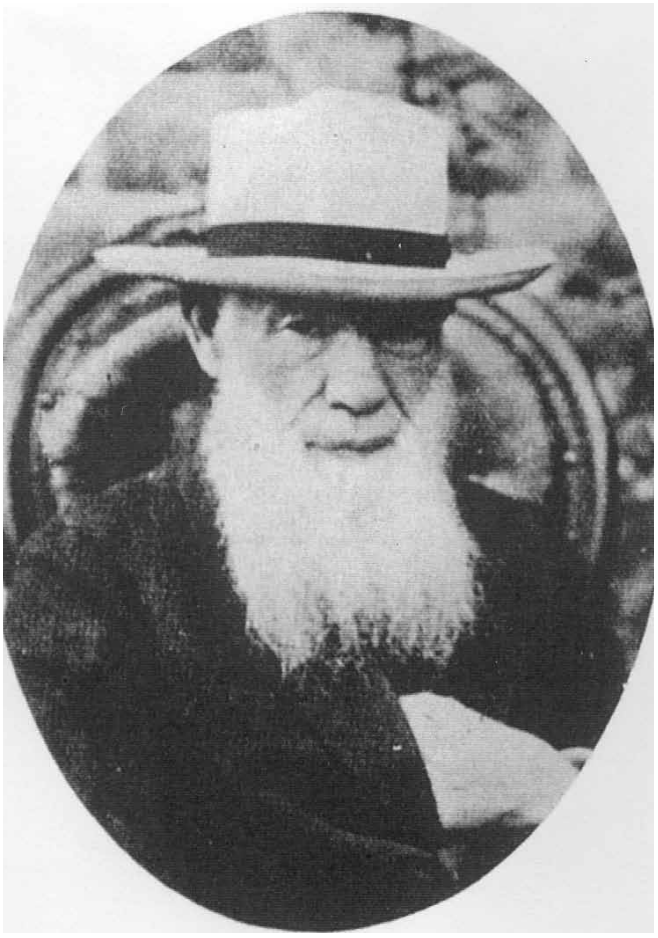
> Grand Debating Society Soiree – a really 1st class affair. The victualling part was excellent & the entertainment part of it was equally excellent – singing, speechifying, playing forfeits & the like games until 11.30. I acted as chairman, there were 30 present – it was an undoubted success in all respects. Am glad of it. Took Maggie Owen home short way – her mother waiting for her in some house. Had my new suit on.[8]

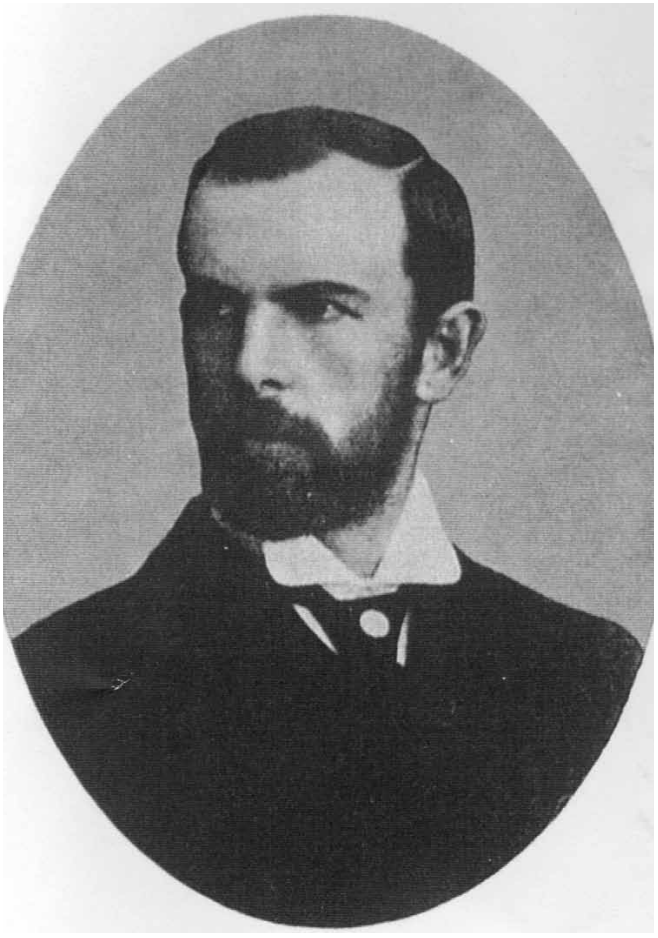
The intervention of Mrs Mary Owen deliberately in order to cut short LG's walk home with Maggie is highly suggestive. The young solicitor was evidently unwelcome at Mynydd Ednyfed Fawr, and he was consequently reduced to ambushing Maggie furtively as she walked to and from chapel, to bombarding her with regular letters and notes and to arranging clandestine meetings on neutral territory.

Margaret Owen, born on 4 November 1866, was the only child of Richard and Mary Owen of Mynydd Ednyfed Fawr, a substantial farmstead of more than a hundred acres on a superb site to the north of Criccieth. Richard Owen was highly regarded locally as an individual of sound judgement, frequently called upon to act as an agricultural valuer. He proudly claimed descent from Owain Gwynedd, one of the native princes of Wales in the twelfth century, while Maggie liked to claim that she was a direct descendant from Prince Hywel Dda in the tenth century on her mother's side. Richard Owen's wife Mary hailed from the same area and from the same background. An able, spirited woman, she, however, remained totally illiterate throughout her life. Both parents clearly adored their only



General view of Criccieth, with the castle.





daughter and were determined that she should enjoy a better lifestyle and education than they themselves had had. Such was Richard Owen's success as a farmer (and as an investor in the Porthmadog trading fleet) that he could afford to send his daughter to the notable Dr Williams's School at Dolgellau, whose main purpose at the time was to train young girls to grow up to become genteel young ladies; she was one of the first boarders there. Here Maggie learned how to read and write and developed a passion for art and gardening, but a marked distaste for cooking and the more mundane household chores.

Richard Owen was also an elder or deacon at the local Calvinistic Methodist chapel which met at Capel Mawr, a commitment which Maggie was to inherit; she took a full part in the life of the local CM chapel at Criccieth throughout her life. By 1885 she was a rather plump, generally good-natured girl of eighteen, still the pride of her parents' life. Any potential suitors for their daughter's hand were to be given close scrutiny by Richard and Mary Owen; her abilities, education and inheritance were not to be squandered on any young adventurer who fancied his chances and tried his luck! Lloyd George's younger brother William (b. 1865), in his volume of reminiscences penned in extreme old age, recalled Richard Owen as 'something of a strong, silent man, dignified and awesome in appearance and bearing, reliable in judgement'. His wife Mary, meanwhile, 'was of a much more approachable type, endowed with a ready wit, and had a wide circle of friends'.[9]

The depth and passion of sectarian feeling were very much apparent in the north Wales of the 1880s. Occasionally acrimonious splits could occur within chapels, even where all of the members were of the same denomination, sometimes leading to the foundation of split congregations at new locations by rival groups. The rivalry was even more deep-rooted and acute between different denominations, sometimes crystallising when a marriage took place between two members of different denominations. Should the wife then change her denomination to her husband's and bring up their children in the same church? The situation was especially sensitive in the case of small denominations such as the Baptists who believed that in their business and public life they were being discriminated against. Lloyd George knew full well that, as he set out to woo Maggie Owen, he was labouring under a distinct disadvantage as a youthful adherent of the Campbellite Baptists. Her father was a deacon at Capel Mawr CM chapel, and one of her other suitors – one of no less than three who were to propose to her during the summer of 1887 – was none other than the Rev. John Owen, the minister of the chapel.

Clockwise, from top left: David Lloyd George, aged 16; Margaret (Maggie) Loyd George, born Margaret Owen; William George (David's brother); Richard Lloyd ('Uncle Lloyd').

The deep-rooted denominational differences which separated LG and Maggie Owen were accentuated by the fact that Richard Owen was unimpressed by what he perceived to be Lloyd George's lack of financial prospects and his family background (which he considered inferior to his own), both of which led Owen to conclude that his adored daughter's suitor was really little more than an upstart young adventurer unworthy of Maggie's hand in marriage. Denominational rivalry was further underlined by social differences. As a farmer descended from generations of farmers, Owen undoubtedly hoped that his attractive daughter would marry someone of farming stock, however auspicious the future prospects of the young solicitor from Llanystumdwy. He had read with much alarm reports of Lloyd George's numerous flamboyant speeches embodying sarcastic, caustic attacks on the gentry class, the established church and established institutions more generally.

In an early multi-volume biography of Lloyd George published by J. Hugh Edwards in 1914–15, Dr R. D. Evans of Blaenau Ffestiniog, who did a great deal to advance LG's early political career in the 1880s and gave him numerous important introductions (and whose son Thomas was eventually to marry LG's second daughter Olwen from 10 Downing Street in 1917), wrote:

> In regard to Mrs. Lloyd George, I well remember going, when I was a mere lad of six or seven years, along with my mother to Mynydd Ednyfed Fawr to see the mother and to take a present to the new-born babe, as was the good old custom in those times. I also remember that I was given the privilege of kissing the babe. Mrs. George's parents were well-connected farmers in the district. Her mother was very much like Mr. Lloyd George's own mother in the shrewdness, gentleness, and refinement of her disposition. Her father was a stalwart in both physique and character. He was invariably described as 'sure-footed' – cautious alike in speech and in deed. He was endowed above measure with common sense, and was a man of high repute throughout the neighbourhood. Both father and mother were known for their piety, and the home life was beautiful in its harmony.
>
> I well remember that on one of the occasions on which Mr. Lloyd George stayed at my house I spoke quite seriously to him in regard to the right choice of a wife. I still recall my advice to him: 'You must turn your attention to a good, well-connected Methodist family for a while, and I assure you that I know of no one more suitable for you in every respect than Maggie,

> Mynydd Ednyfed'. I confess that I felt not a little gratification when I heard a rumour, some weeks later, that he and Maggie had been seen taking 'sly walks' together. These 'walks' developed shortly afterwards in a courtship which led to the marriage ceremony at Pencaenewydd Chapel.[10]

Another local contemporary was to describe Maggie Owen as 'the most charming and the most respected lass in the whole neighbourhood'.[11]

Another local contemporary was to describe Maggie Owen as 'the most charming and the most respected lass in the whole neighbourhood'.

Lloyd George and Maggie clearly met on a number of occasions during 1885, experiences which convinced LG that he now wished to court 'Miss Owen' in earnest. His fascinating diary for 1886 (like the volume for the previous year) casts invaluable light on Lloyd George's personal life in his twenty-fourth year, notably on his relationship with Miss Owen. Seven days into the new year, he recorded in his diary that he had been to Porthmadog for a professional meeting, then, 'Home 6 train. Waylaid Maggie Owen; induced her to abstain from going to the Seiat [religious meeting] by showing her by my erratic watch that she was too late, then for a stroll with her up Lôn Fêl.'[12] At the beginning of February, following a meeting with Maggie on the Marine Parade (which appears to have extended over several hours), he wrote that he now felt that he was 'getting to be very fond of the girl', impressed by her transparent 'combination of good nature, humour and affection'. Three days later, he took a walk with his younger brother William towards Abereistedd before a chapel service, taking advantage of the occasion to discuss his 'predicament with regard to love affairs. He does not disapprove.' On 9 February, 'An appointed rendezvous by 6.30 at Bryn Hir gate to meet Maggie Owen; took her home by round-about way, enjoyed the stroll immensely and made another appointment. It looks as if I were rapidly placing myself in an irretrievable position. Doesn't matter. I don't see that any harm will ensue. Left her at 7.45.'[13]

On 15 February, just three days after the famous meeting at Blaenau Ffestiniog which was addressed by the prominent Irish nationalist leader Michael Davitt (following which LG spoke to a large audience in public for the first time in order to propose the vote of thanks to Davitt – a singular personal triumph for the young solicitor), Lloyd George attended a concert organised by the Criccieth Debating Society, then:

> I then waylaid Maggie Owen to take her home. Never felt more acutely than to-night that I am really in deep love with girl. Felt sorry to have to leave her. I have I know gradually got to like her more and more. There's another thing I have observed in connection with this, that my intercourse with L. [Liza Jones] rather tended to demoralize my taste; my fresh acquaintance has an entirely different influence. She firmly checks all ribaldry or tendency thereto on my part.[14]

The following day a further meeting took place between the two lovers until 8 pm – 'She will not stay any longer.'[15] On 9 March, 'Up to meet M[aggie]. Walked in public with her without a blush … Think I have at last made a prudent choice'. By 11 June, rather patronizingly, 'Met M[aggie]. First time I ever used an expression of endearment towards her. Feel I am becoming very fond of her.'[16] Six days later, 'Sunday school centenary. Speaking at evening meeting. Took Maggie Owen home. Seems to be a jollier girl as you get on with her.'[17] Before the end of the month, 'M. expecting me. M. asked me what I would tell them at home if they wanted to know where I'd been. I replied: "I'd say I'd been to see my sweetheart". This is the second time I've called her so. She likes it. I am now quite committed.'[18] About a month later Lloyd George raised with his only sister Mary Ellen George the subject of his relationship with Maggie, 'Told my sister M.E.G. to-night about M. She is well-pleased and thinks a lot of her, says I may mention the matter [of proposing marriage] to M. shortly, but that it would not do to marry for about five years at least.'[19] It was advice that he was not to take. Although he was doubtless pleased that his sister approved of the obvious love-match, Lloyd George would never have agreed to wait for five years before marrying.

By this time he was clearly considering seriously proposing marriage to Miss Owen. This proposal eventually took place on 25 August 1886:

> Left Carnarvon per 4.40 train – dropped down at Llanwnda. Wrote at the inn at Llanwnda a note for her … marched right up to the door [where Maggie was staying], asked if Miss Owen was in, told the girl at the door that I was desired by her father Richard Owen to give her a note in passing! Eventually I saw her. It appears Miss Jones had read the note, M. being too excited to open it. She had to go to a party that evening, but promised to try and return by 8, and to meet me by the gate; I gave her a bouquet I had brought with me … I returned at 8 to Bodfan – but had to wait until 9.45 until the girls returned. M. came with me for a long drive in carriage (I had brought from Llanwnda). Here I proposed to her. She wanted time to consider, but admitted her regard for me. Although, when I write this, I have not been formally accepted, I am positive that everything is all right so far as the girl is concerned. I left her

> about mid-night. M. has some of the 'coquette' about her – she does not like to appear to jump at my offer.[20]

It may well be that Lloyd George felt more inclined to make his proposal away from Criccieth. At the end of August Maggie was staying with relatives at Llanwnda, south of Caernarfon. Posing as a messenger from her father Richard Owen, Lloyd George was thus able to speak with her and he persuaded her to meet him later in the evening. Although she readily admitted affectionate feelings for Lloyd George, she nevertheless asked for time to consider. She evidently did not respond at once, and Lloyd George predictably (and in keeping with his character) soon grew impatient. Just three days after the verbal proposal, he wrote to her from Criccieth:

> Write me your answer to the question I gave you on Wednesday evening (or Thursday morning – I am not sure which it was!). Do, that's a good girl. I want to get your own decision up on the matter. The reason I have already given you. I wish the choice you make – whatever it be – to be really yours & not anyone else's …[21]

Characteristically, Maggie's vacillation made her suitor more ardent than ever to press his suit. He apparently wandered aimlessly the streets of Criccieth until the small hours, greatly unnerving his revered uncle and mentor Richard Lloyd who, deeply concerned, looked for him late at night, seeking the assistance of passers-by – to LG's intense annoyance. According to the late Dr W. R. P. George, LG even resorted to desperate measures like hiding his uncle's walking boots in an attempt to keep him at home![22] That LG had fallen deeply in love with Maggie cannot be doubted, but Maggie was determined to take her time. Both her parents strongly disapproved of Lloyd George as a suitable suitor for their daughter, and the young couple could meet at her home at Mynydd Ednyfed only when the parents were away.

On 6 September 1886 comes another fascinating entry in the Lloyd George diary:

> Up with him [Williams] to Mynydd Ednyfed & after knocking & dodging about in the rain for about an hour I managed to whistle the servant girl out – & she got Maggie for me – saw her for few minutes to arrange an appointment for tomorrow evening. Gleaned from servant that M. had told her that I had been to see her at Bodvan – it is a sure sign of love when you talk about the doings of another person in connection with yourself to a 3rd person, that is in such circumstances as these.[23]

In his subsequent letters he gives her advice on how to handle her difficult mother.[24] Finally on 1 October she was won around:

> Afterwards to Mynydd Ednyfed & Mr & Mrs O. having gone to Ty Mawr, remained until 1 a.m. Pressed Maggie to come to a point as to what I had been speaking to her about, she at last admitted that her hesitation was entirely due to her not being able to implicitly trust me. She said that some times she did at other times she didn't. She then asked me very solemnly whether I was really in earnest. I assured her with equal solemnity that I was as there was a God in Heaven. 'Well then', she said, 'if you will be as true & as faithful to me as I am to you it will be all right'. She said nothing about her mother's frivolous objection to me being a Baptist, nor to her own objection to my sceptical vagaries. For I told her emphatically the other day that I could not even to win her give them up & that I would not pretend that I had – they were my firm convictions.[25]

Characteristically, Maggie's vacillation made her suitor more ardent than ever to press his suit.

It is evident that Maggie's deep-rooted religious convictions, coupled with the all-important fact that the couple were members of different religious denominations, had caused serious problems in the relationship and, although she had by now accepted his proposal, Maggie was still anxious that the matter should be kept secret. On 11 November they kissed for the first time, a concession which Maggie granted 'in exchange for a story I promised to tell her'. 'Never on better terms', wrote Lloyd George. Two days later:

> After dinner went straight to meet Maggie by an appointed trysting place. William Roberts, Penystumllyn taking her home from Penystumllyn. I stuck to my post until he came up. Maggie rather angry I did not hide myself – but I stood to my dignity. Rather strong rebuke from Maggie for having condescended to gabble at all with Plas Willraham girls – I foolishly let out somehow that I had done so – she let me off – dismissed me – in disgrace.[26]

On 20 November, 'Dr told me that he had been told by a person who had spoken to Mrs O. about me that she thought a lot of me, only objection being that I did not go to the same chapel.'[27]

Maggie's relationship with her mother seems to have vexed the smitten Lloyd George particularly at this point. He wrote to her in early December:

> I trust you will have something to report to me tomorrow of the result of an interview with your mother. As I have already intimated to you it is but of trivial consequence to me what your mother's views of me may be – so long of course as they do not affect yours. All I wish

> for is a clear understanding so that we may afterwards see for ourselves how we stand.
>
> You will appreciate my anxiety to bring the matter to an issue with your mother. I somehow feel deeply that it is unmanly to take by stealth & fraud what I am honestly entitled to. It has a tinge of the ridiculous in it, moreover.
>
> This being done, you will not be troubled with any more lectures & I am confident I shall be thereby encouraged to act in such a way as will ensure your requited Confidence.[28]

Was he here raising the possibility of an elopement with his beloved? Further impassioned letters followed.[29] By the following year – 1887 – the courtship had assumed a more open course, the two lovers appeared together in public, Maggie was an occasional visitor to the Georges' home, and both attended each other's place of worship.

Richard and Mary Owen were, it would seem, generally won around by the realisation that the proposed union was an obvious love match and by the ever-increasing prominence of their future son-in-law as an up-and-coming solicitor and in the political life of the locality. By 1887 their resistance was little more than token, but it had not totally disappeared, and at times Maggie justifiably felt like a hapless pawn between her parents and Lloyd George. In a letter from Maggie to Lloyd George during the early days of their courtship, she wrote, 'I have begged of them to let me come to Porthmadoc this evening but father has utterly refused to let me go. I am sure I don't know why, therefore I must submit to his will & stay at home. I trust you will get this note in time.' She urged him not to take a legal case involving a young lady:

> for your own sake. All the old stories will be renewed again, people will be glad to do it. I know there are relations of mine at Criccieth, & other people as well who would be glad to have anything more to say to my people about you to set them against you & that will put me in an awkward position. I know this much. I shall not be at my ease while the thing is on if you will be taking it up.[30]

A little while later she wrote, 'I had a good scolding this morning for staying up [late] last night, so my parents are angry with me one day & you another. I am on bad terms with one or the other continually, & for such a sulky girl as me, it is very hard not to get into the sulks. Well I am very miserable, that's all I have to say, & I hope things won't be long as they are now.' Yet some members of the Owen family did approve of Lloyd George, notably one of her aunts who urged her niece, 'Don't you give him up! That young fellow has a great future before him!'[31]

Their letters from the early weeks of 1887 constantly arrange meetings and complain of innumerable broken appointments. LG clearly discussed with his intended his legal work and his political aspirations in the area – 'I want to see you particularly – about that breach of promise affair for one thing.'[32] On 19 January he sent her two lengthy letters which he had recently received from his close friend and associate Thomas Edward Ellis, who had been elected the Liberal MP for Merionethshire the previous July:

> I enclose the last two letters I received from T. E. Ellis. It would do your mother good to read these letters as they will bring home to her mind that it is not perhaps essential to even good Methodism that you should taboo other Sectarians. I intend replying to him on Sunday. I implore you to read them out to your mother. She'll pull as wry a face as if she were drinking a gallon of assafatida. Did you tell her what a scandal she has created about us throughout Lleyn?[33]

Some members of the Owen family did approve of Lloyd George, notably one of her aunts who urged her niece, 'Don't you give him up! That young fellow has a great future before him!'

Before the end of the same month he had sent her a much more bitter letter, complaining to her of a succession of broken appointments on her part and asserting that his business interests were now so heavy and beyond his control that he had become 'quite entangled and confounded with office arrears'. Lloyd George appealed to Maggie for her much-needed support, underlining in no uncertain terms the agenda which he had drawn up as the basis for their relationship: 'It comes to this, my supreme idea is to get on. To this end I shall sacrifice everything – except I trust honesty. I am prepared to thrust even love itself under the wheels of my Juggernaut if it obstructs the way … Do you not really desire my success? Recollect my success probably means yours …' After spelling out to her so clearly his perception of marriage, he continued, 'My love to you is sincere and strong. In this I never waver, but I must not forget that I have a purpose in life, and however painful the sacrifice I have to make to attain this ambition I must not flinch.' He then signed the letter, 'From your sweetheart D.Ll.G'.[34]

In another lengthy epistle dating from this period Lloyd George elaborated in some detail on his views on the nature of marriage:

> You seem to think that the supreme function of a wife is to *amuse* her husband, to be to him a kind of toy or plaything to enable him to while away with enjoyment his leisure hours. Frankly, that is simply prostituting marriage. My ideas are very different – if not superior – to yours. I am of opinion that woman's function is to soothe & sympathise & not to amuse. Men's lives

are a perpetual conflict. The life I have mapped out will be so especially as lawyer & politician. Women's function is to pour oil on the wounds – to heal the bruises of spirit received in past conflicts & to stimulate to renewed exertion. Am I not right? If I am then you are pre-eminently the girl for me. I have a thorough belief in your kindliness & affection.

As to setting you free that is a matter for your choice & not mine. I have many a time impressed upon you that the only bond by which I have any desire to hold you is that of love. If that be lost then I would snap any other bond with my own hand. Hitherto my feelings are those of unflinching love for you. You ask me to choose – I have made my choice deliberately & solemnly. I must now ask you to make your choice. I know my slanderers – those whom you allow to poison your mind against me. Choose between them & me – there can be no other alternative.

May I see you at 7 tomorrow? Drop me a note, will you?[35]

Almost from the beginning of their extended courtship, LG had made it crystal clear to Maggie that his great energies and ambitions were being directed principally towards a political career. Such was the ultimate goal towards which all his hard work in the solicitor's office was meant to lead.

It is clear that, although she had now accepted his proposal of marriage, Maggie still harboured very real doubts and suspicions about the relationship, while her parents even at this late stage had not totally abandoned hope of preventing the union. The letters on both sides refer constantly to broken appointments, poor time keeping and various embarrassing incidents. In mid-February Lloyd George apologised profusely to Margaret for the necessity to travel to London on legal business:

As 1887 ran its course, Lloyd George came to the conclusion that the sooner he got married the better.

My future is at present to me a sealed book & not until I am up in the city consulting my agents will the seal be broken. Remember to behave in my absence 'as if I were present in the body' as I shall be 'in the spirit'. Redeem your faithful promise to show your mother the token of our engagement. You may also should you deem it prudent (this I leave to your discretion) arrange an appointment for me to discuss matters with your father, mother or any or either or both of them. That's a good week's work (for *you*) – I have cut out for you. With sincerest love.[36]

Subsequent letters are emotional – 'I am coming home tonight & unfeignedly long to kiss my sweetheart once more'; 'I am far more eager to have a chat with my sweetheart than I am to hear expositions of [religious] orthodoxy'.[37]

Generally, as 1887 ran its course, Lloyd George came to the conclusion that the sooner he got married the better. Some Owen family relatives and others in the locality were still attempting to poison Mary Owen's mind against Lloyd George. On 22 March he wrote in his diary:

It appears that Misses Roberts of Bronygadair & Ystumllyn have been reviling me to Mrs Owen, telling her that they are surprised how I could stand in my shoes when I had been courting 'the daughter of Nansi Penwaig'. Mrs O. pitching into her told Maggie how Miss Roberts, Bron. had by various wiles endeavoured to seduce me from my courtship of her & set me on to court Misses Jones, Davies &c. Told her that if her parents continued to nag at her in that style that the only way to put an end to it was to get married.[38]

On 3 April he recorded a conversation with his sister Mary Ellen George:

Walk after dinner M.E.G. past Ynysgain fawr – told her my ideas as to getting married – that I meant to pay uncle his £200 first & then directly I accumulated another £300 get spliced – told her that if I were to complete matters in hand I should probably get about £500 for them & that W.G. could collect them in about 6 months. She did not in any [way] dissuade me but approved of the amount I had fixed so that perhaps after all my 'impulse' had directed me wisely. Persons most likely to disapprove don't do so. Think that owing to other reasons the sooner I get married, the better. It will steady me.[39]

It is evident that he had already devoted at least some thought to the financial and practical aspects of marriage. Several of his diary entries for the summer months of 1887 refer to his desire to get married as soon as possible, but they also consider the practicability of such a step. On reflection, it was his considered view that the spring of 1888 would be best. In order to accumulate the necessary resources to take such an important step, he made a big effort to maximise the income from his legal work. Consequently he often found himself obliged to cancel his meetings with Maggie, generally at quite short notice. She, too, was frequently guilty of the same offence. 'You did not keep your appointment tonight', wrote an exasperated Lloyd George in May, 'Nor let me know that you did not intend doing so, but I have no doubt you have a good reason why to give. Can I see you tomorrow (Friday) evening & where. I shall be home by the 4 train from Pwllheli. Drop me a line at the Post Office, there's a pet. Sincere love, Yours David.'[40]

With his heart now committed to the idea of marriage during the early months of 1888, Lloyd George applied himself to his legal work with renewed vigour. In mid-July 1887 he devoted his energies to a complex but potentially remunerative arbitration case which took up almost all his time:

> I am making an extra effort to bring the thing to a conclusion. The effort may deprive me temporarily of your company, but I can the more easily bear that when I recollect that it expedites the permanent association to which we both look forward. I am in hopes that we may finish this week & then if our worthy Methodist opponent pays up pretty sharply you may bear another name soon … There is nothing that would reconcile me to neglecting an appointment with you except the fact that my doing so speeds the time when appointments will be unnecessary – even in the evenings.[41]

Just three days later he eagerly anticipated 'a final & irrevocable (I trust) determination' of the arbitration case, insisting, 'Don't imagine angry things about me, that a pet. I shall redeem all misbehaviour yet. Believe me, though I am bodily in the coffee room of the Belle Bue Hotel, Trefriw with Parry Pwllheli by my side assiduously indicting a letter to one of his numerous sweethearts, I am in mind at M. with my sweetheart by me. I swear by the pen which I now hold in my hand that I shall not flirt nor even wink impudently at a girl.'[42]

The depth of Lloyd George's love for his intended is strongly reflected in the long, passionate letters which he wrote to her during their frequent periods apart. He kept her fully informed of the progress of the many legal cases in which he was involved, pointing to the substantial income which he might enjoy in consequence. Responding to a letter from Maggie informing him of her ill-health, Lloyd George wrote:

The depth of Lloyd George's love for his intended is strongly reflected in the long, passionate letters which he wrote to her during their frequent periods apart.

> I am very grieved to hear that my little darling is in such agony. I'll soon settle it. I listened to a very interesting lecture, which had something to do with your & my relationship & it explained how the contact of another person's hand or arm or lips on a pained nerve assuaged the torture. I shall apply this idea practically – by way of experiment when we meet. Now how, when, where & whither shall I see you[?]. I am anxious – *eager* to see you – *longing* desperately for it – now that my anxiety about these cases is over. (Did I tell you that I won my Chancery case on Monday?) I *must* see you tomorrow. Nothing can stop me.

Reacting to light-hearted banter in his previous letters that he was in search of a new relationship, he wrote:

> Did you really think I was in earnest about 'a new sweetheart'? You read the scratched sentence again, I didn't say that I was going to '*take*' one. What I referred to was a joke of very dubious propriety (had it not been that I have acquired almost conjugal confidence with you). That's why I scratched it out. I shall never want a new one, especially as my present one shows every sign of lasting longer than I do. I therefore do not even anticipate enjoying the privileges of a widower. What nonsense I am writing.[43]

A lengthy entry in his diary for 30 August 1887 crystallised Lloyd George's feelings towards the concept and the timing of his intended marriage and to the vexed question of his relationship with his future in-laws:

> By the bye I am in a very queer state of mind upon this question [of getting married]. My inclination is strong for a marriage straight away – say in November.[44] On the other hand for obvious reasons I am anxious that it should not come off until the spring at the earliest. Maggie I believe to be in a very similar state of mind, but on the whole I think she would prefer the earlier date. However my present view is that prudence dictates spring as the date & I rather imagine that the event will be postponed to that season. I should however like to be in a position to ask the old folks consent *now*. One very good reason for postponement is that there is no available house for our residence – except Cefniwrch which neither of us cares for. The only thing to be said for it is that it is to be let furnished for a short period, we might have another house by the end of that period. It is when I am with Maggie that I find myself most anxious for marriage. Her society has a wonderful charm for me & I believe she now much prefers me to her parents. She will tell me so occasionally …
>
> It is evident that I have a higher opinion of Maggie's qualifications than her mother has. I think she is worthy of something better than a farmer. A farmer's wife is only a portion of his stock.[45]

Just four days later he wrote further:

> Long talk as to my night visits. Told her that I was not enamoured of them especially as my uncle seemed to feel them so sorely, but that they were our only resource [*recte* recourse] since her mother was not civilized eno' to permit my visiting her during decent hours. I suggested that she should tell her mother that I intended coming up at 8 every evening & she said she had been thinking of the same thing, that she was thoroughly tired of our midnight

> meetings as they involved a sense of transgressing respectable rules. She finally promised to tell her mother on Monday without fail. She *may* do so.[46]

The following evening Lloyd George escorted Maggie home following a service at a local English chapel, 'Home by 9 through a driving rain. All looking sultry at me.'[47]

On 7 September 1887 Lloyd George paid a visit to Mynydd Ednyfed Fawr, Criccieth:

> Up to Mynydd Ednyfed 8. The old chap [Richard Owen] was down at Criccieth attending a committee in reference to the Capel Mawr Enquiry. I went in thro' front door to dining room. Mrs O. told Maggie that I must not come there more than three times a week. M. replied that she would see me out then the other nights. 'You don't have to put your reason to work' said Mrs O. Left at 10.[48]

Twelve days later – 19 September 1887 – Lloyd George attended a meeting at Caernarfon of the executive of the North Wales Temperance Association where, to his dismay, he discovered that the amendments which he had proposed were rejected as 'being too advanced'. The timing of the marriage clearly continued to preoccupy his thoughts. Generally, it would seem, both partners were prepared to wait until the early spring of 1888, but Maggie felt that if a local church squabble (to which LG referred as 'the Davies affair' in his diary) were not settled fairly promptly, then the marriage should go ahead in any event. The precise date of the wedding clearly caused them considerable trepidation. On 19 September Lloyd George wrote in his diary:

> Home 4 train – met Maggie by Station & with her for stroll. Had asked her on Saturday evening to make up her mind as to our marriage, having regard to the turn Davies' affair had taken. She told me today that she would suggest we should wait until early in spring & see what would become of it & if it was not likely – then – to be settled soon, then get married. Personally I am not sorry for the delay as physically I am far from strong at present but 6 months & those *winter* months may work wonders. Told her my idea about going to Porthmadog & joining the Independents. She approves. The Capel Mawr verdict has disgusted her with Methodism. The Portmadoc idea has grown upon me to that extent that I now look upon it as my fate – fixed & irrevocable – but something may change me. The old folk [Richard and Mary Owen, Maggie's parents] are talking now of leaving Mynydd Ednyfed. Left M at 7. Went up again at 8 & remained until 10.[49]

Just a week later, 'Walked as far as Ynysgain fawr with Maggie. She was staying there over night. Had supper there. Started home 11.30. Had a slight tiff with Maggie about her not coming to Chapel with me – not meeting me at Gwyndy as she had promised. We soon settled our differences however.'[50]

At this time LG seems to have made up his mind that he would become a member of the Independents and go to live at Porthmadog. At this point it would seem that the marriage would take place at Capel Mawr. But nothing came of joining the Independents or the Congregationalists, and Lloyd George was certainly in no position to establish a home at Porthmadog (or anywhere else for that matter) in 1887 or 1888. On 1 October Lloyd George recorded in his diary:

> Walked as far as Porthmadog to see Gorphwysfa, Parry's home to which I have taken a fancy. It will be let furnished for £50. That is an advantage until I get my cash in. Maggie I believe would now prefer immediate marriage. She liked Gorphwysfa. Home 8 train, I having called upon Roberts, surveyor first as to Monday. Up until 12.30 preparing case for Monday.[51]

'They wish us to wait for a year or so – that we were quite young eno'. The old man also said, "I can't give you any money at the moment, only the money that she herself already has".'

Four days later LG paid a further visit to Mynydd Ednyfed – 'I remained until 11. We had a talk about marriage. We arranged to get married soon – provided my uncle [Richard Lloyd] did not upon my talking the matter over with him show good cause to the contrary.'[52] On 1 November Lloyd George was finally able to discuss matters fully with Richard and Mary Owen:

> I then had a talk with Mr & Mrs Owen – they pleaded for delay – that they had made up their minds not to stay at Mynydd Ednyfed after all, but they could not get anything like a good price for the stock these bad times, especially this time of the year, & that they could not get a tenant worth anything to buy their interest [?] at such short notice – that if they sold their things under value it would be *our* loss in the end. They wish us to wait for a year or so – that we were quite young eno'. The old man also said, 'I can't give you any money at the moment, only the money that she herself already has'. I suppose he meant that he had no cash until he sold the stock. I was not prepared for this sort of talk. I thought the old man very cunningly tried to persuade me to delay by showing it was my own interest. In the course of conversation Mrs O. said something about building a house. I then told her we had made up our minds to settle at Porthmadog as we could get no houses at Criccieth. She replied that she did not like us to go to Porthmadog to live. I told them when R.O. said something

> about money that I wanted no money as I had of course before coming to that point seen that I would have sufficient myself without any extraneous aid (I am not sure whether it would not have been better to plead poverty – but I wanted to show them that I took no commercial views of my engagement). The interview ended by their asking me to reconsider the matter & see them again about it. They then went to bed and left me with Maggie who was in the kitchen during the interview. Stayed until 10.[53]

As a result of this interview Lloyd George was predictably left enraged. He suspected that the Owens were deliberately raising difficulties over housing and finance in order to postpone the marriage. His anger over the attitude of his future in-laws knew no bounds. A week later he wrote to Maggie:

> Your mother has not said anything to the contrary. No, perhaps not, but we must not marry on the strength of inference. We ought to know definitely whether they object & also where they propose we should go in the interval between our marriage & their leaving Mynydd Ednyfed. Unless they tell us to stay with them we must lose no time in looking for a house & furniture. Do you understand, Mag[?]. Ensure that you have achieved a perfect understanding by the time I come home. Will you?[54]

On 2 November he noted in his diary, 'Her mother [Mrs Mary Owen] suggested we should take Cardigan House or Plas Wilbraham jointly with them – not a bad idea. This Porthmadog talk has scared them.'[55] On 8 November:

> She [Maggie Owen] told her mother we proposed getting married in February. Her mother simply said, 'As soon as that? You may as well keep your new bonnet until then, hadn't you?' I told my mother before starting – the poor old woman cried & said she felt my leaving very much. She then gave me some very good advice about being kind to Maggie – never saying anything nasty to her when I lost my temper, to be attentive to her especially when she was ill & that sort of thing. She praised M. very much from what she had heard from MEG [Mary Ellen George]. Told MEG also.[56]

Ultimately the settlement of the date of the marriage was to be determined by the resolution of the local religious dispute and the decision of Richard and Mary Owen not to leave Mynydd Ednyfed, at least for the moment. Consequently it was possible for Lloyd George, who had failed to find a suitable property at Criccieth and who had also considered moving to Porthmadog, to, albeit reluctantly, move in with his in-laws after all following his marriage.

Further bickering was to ensue over the venue for the marriage, which eventually took place on 24 January 1888 at Pencaenewydd at a small secluded country chapel some eight miles from Criccieth. At the insistence of Richard Owen, a denominational elder totally committed to the cause, the wedding took place at a Methodist chapel, while Richard Lloyd, it appears, knew nothing of their plans until just a fortnight before the actual ceremony. The family patriarch had not even met Maggie until the wedding day, but any doubts and suspicions which he may have had about her suitability as a bride for his nephew had been assuaged by her reputation in the locality – 'Everyone says that she is a gentle girl, sensible and a practical girl too.'[57] Uncle Lloyd had indeed been presented with a fait accompli, but he accepted the rather dramatic course of events with his customary good grace and humour, convinced that this was an ordinance of life and assured that such was the true desire of his adored nephew's heart. Having given Lloyd George a fatherly lecture on his duties and responsibilities as a husband, he agreed to officiate at the very private ceremony jointly with Rev. John Owen (the Methodist minister from Criccieth), who had himself asked Maggie to marry him only the previous summer.

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Richard Lloyd conducted the actual marriage ceremony, while the Rev. Owen read the lesson and led the tiny congregation in prayers. This rather bizarre arrangement would undoubtedly have met with fierce disapproval from many of the Criccieth Methodists – another good reason for holding the ceremony elsewhere. Possibly, too, both families – the Lloyd Georges and the Owens – instinctively recoiled from the inevitable publicity of a Criccieth ceremony. In the words of Mr John Grigg, 'In all the circumstances, the form and venue of the service represented the best compromise that could be worked out.'[58] LG's mother, his brother William and his sister Mary Ellen were all absent from the marriage ceremony. Maggie was just twenty-one years of age; Lloyd George had just seven days earlier celebrated his twenty-fifth birthday.

It is clear that the marriage was a distinct advantage to Lloyd George within the context of north Wales, personally, professionally and politically. In the words of his distinguished biographer Dr Thomas Jones CH, 'He was indeed fortunate in gaining the affection and companionship of this serene, steadfast, wise and large-hearted woman.'[59] But Maggie's subsequent deeply entrenched reluctance to go to London inevitably meant that she could never fulfil the same kind of social and political role as, for example,

Margot Asquith or Charlotte Campbell-Bannerman. To a large extent, Lloyd George was to keep his political career, his will to succeed and his focus on himself quite separate from his personal life and his relations with women. He displayed but scant interest in the London political society in which a wife could prove of great assistance to him, rarely accepting invitations to London and country homes. While in office, he often invited his political associates to his Criccieth home Brynawelon, but even here he himself was to be the centre of attention, with Maggie fulfilling the role of a glorified housekeeper and devoted mother to their five children. Throughout their marriage Lloyd George was to demand a great deal of his long-suffering wife of whom he always remained genuinely fond. But to her, he was to give precious little in return.

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14 Ibid., diary entry for 15 February 1886.
15 Ibid., diary entry for 16 February 1886.
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19 Ibid., diary entry for 22 July 1886.
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35 NLW, William George Papers 4615, f. 65, DLG to MO, January 1887.
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37 Ibid. ff. 85–88, DLG to MO, [March 1887].
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40 NLW MS 20,403C, no. 29, DLG to MO, [13 May 1887].
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42 Ibid., no. 31, DLG to MO, [17 July 1887].
43 Ibid., no. 35, DLG to MO, 11 August 1887.
44 This phrase is wrongly transcribed in Morgan (ed.), op. cit., p. 19, as 'say in [an] hour'.
45 NLW MS 20, 443A, ff. 15^{v}–16^{v}, diary entry for 30 August 1887.
46 Ibid., ff. 18^{v}–19^{r}, diary entry for 3 September 1887.
47 Ibid., f. 19^{v}, diary entry for 4 September 1887.
48 Ibid., f. 20^{v}, diary entry for 7 September 1887.
49 Ibid., f. 23^{v}, diary entry for 19 September 1887.
50 Ibid., f. 25^{r}, diary entry for 26 September 1887.
51 Ibid., f. 26^{r}, diary entry for 1 October 1887. On 23 September Lloyd George had written in his diary, 'Told William of my proposed Congregationalism & he said he did not blame me if my views were so' (ibid., f. 24, diary entry for 23 September 1887).
52 Ibid., f. 27^{r}, diary entry for 5 October 1887.
53 Ibid., ff. 28^{v}–29^{r}, diary entry for 1 November 1887.
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REPORTS

'Taxes that will bring forth fruit' – the centenary of the People's Budget of 1909

Evening meeting, 12 January 2009, with Lord Kenneth O. Morgan and Vince Cable MP; chair: Lord William Wallace

Report by **David Cloke**

The History Group's meeting on the People's Budget of 1909, which followed the Group's AGM on Monday 12 January, was a lively and well-attended affair and, as Kenneth Morgan wryly remarked, featured two of 'the body of 500 men chosen at random from among the ranks of the unemployed' that had reacted so virulently to Lloyd George's first Budget.

The discussions were led by Professor Morgan, the historian and biographer of Lloyd George, and by Liberal Democrat deputy Leader Vince Cable MP, with the Group's President, Lord Wallace of Saltaire, in the chair. It was, as Lord Wallace remarked, one of the happier anniversaries of 1909, and he expressed the hope that Lords reform, one of the consequences of the Budget, would indeed be completed by 2011.

Vince Cable opened the discussion by admitting that he was no historian but said that he hoped to provide a relevant perspective to consideration of the 1909 Budget. He would endeavour to provide some of the economic context and compare the Budget, and the 1906 Liberal government more generally, with its New Labour counterpart. Comparisons were useful and relevant because the 1906 Liberal government and the 1997 Blair government had been two of the three great governments of the left of the twentieth century. Indeed, it was further illuminating because Blair and many of those around him had frequently referred to the 1906 government as their model. Lord Wallace later pointed out that Alison Holmes's work on comparing Blair's 'Third Way' with the Liberals at the end of the nineteenth century had been very illuminating, teaching him things he did not know, such as the existence of the Rainbow Circle.[1]

Despite the attractiveness of seeking similarities between the two periods, there were significant differences, and Dr Cable outlined those he felt were relevant to consideration of the 1909 Budget. There had been no arguments in the Edwardian era about macro-economic policy as there are today; the 1906 government simply did not concern itself with such issues. Operating as it did under the Gold Standard, the government did not involve itself in monetary policy and, as budgets were always balanced, it had no need to 'manage' the budget as governments did today. Hence, the normal economic tests of a successful government today did not apply in 1909.

Despite this, the boom and bust of the economic cycle still did apply. In 1908 there had been quite a serious recession, with unemployment reaching 8 per cent, though admittedly this was of quite a small proportion of the known workforce, as large numbers of people were not counted. However, it was not something that the government concerned itself about – possibly with good reason, as Dr Cable reported that the unemployment rate had fallen to 2 per cent by 1912.

Comparisons were useful and relevant because the 1906 Liberal government and the 1997 Blair government had been two of the three great governments of the left of the twentieth century.

Dr Cable then turned to the political context. The Liberal Party had been elected with a huge majority in 1906, in part on the back of a pact with the Labour Representation Committee. In some ways, therefore, Cable felt that there was a parallel with the 1997 election. He also noted that the government had proceeded in two stages. In the first two to three years it had been cautious in its approach to budgetary policy, though he acknowledged that there had been some social reform such as in the divorce laws and the introduction of school meals. A major change of gear followed Asquith becoming Prime Minister with Lloyd George as Chancellor of the Exchequer and – in Cable's view arguably more important even than that – with Churchill at the Board of Trade.

A key focus at the start of this second period was the Budget. Even so, Cable argued that it was important to remember that comparatively small sums of money were involved, and also that the budget had to be balanced. Two problems had arisen with regard to achieving that objective: the decision to go for naval rearmament, and the introduction of old age pensions. The latter would seem very timid by today's standard, at £20 a year for those over 70, but, Cable argued, it was revolutionary for the time. It was Lloyd George's task to find the money, around £12 million in all.

The largest sources of revenue at the time were a number of regressive indirect taxes on expenditure, notably on tobacco and spirits, and stamp duty. By the standards of the time, Lloyd George proposed a big increase in income tax, from the equivalent of five pence in the pound

to six pence. This brought in £5 million. To make up the remainder were some proposals specifically aimed at attacking wealth and privilege: a surtax of about two and a half pence in the pound on high earners; a capital gains style tax on the sale of land; and a tax on land values of about a quarter of a penny in the pound, levied annually. Some of these measures were not really money-raising which, Cable pointed out, rather begged the question as to why the government was proposing them. Arguments at the time as to the reason for the proposals continue amongst historians. One answer was that the members of the government were being good liberal radicals and seeking to redistribute wealth and income. Another, more Machiavellian, one was that the government wanted a confrontation with the House of Lords as it had been blocking legislation.

Cable said that he did not feel qualified to answer the question of whether the Budget was a forerunner to the modern type of redistributive budget, or a budget for political and constitutional objectives. However, if it were the latter, then the Lords fell for it: they tried to block the Budget, which in turn paved the way for the 1911 Parliament Act and a sweeping away of many of the powers of the Lords. If the former, then it was certainly part of a pattern of very impressive social legislation creating a substantial body of achievement for the government. This in turn gave further parallels with the Blair government and its introduction of the national minimum wage and the New Deal. However, what the Blair government had not done, Cable argued, was to attack high incomes and wealth. Indeed, capital gains tax was now more favourable than it had been under the Tories.

In summing up, Cable argued that the basic moral and political challenges represented by inequalities of income and wealth were every bit as alive as they were in 1909, if not more so. Such taxation of wealth would, he added, still be controversial today. Even if the Labour government had ducked these challenges, he himself wanted to remain true to the principles represented by the 1909 Budget.

According to Morgan the Budget was very much Lloyd George's own work, and was based on political principles, not on the calculation that the Lords would throw it out.

In Kenneth Morgan's view the Budget was the product of two sets of problems: financial and political. The financial problem was a budget deficit of £16.5 million (then a large sum), which was largely a consequence of the decision to commission the dreadnought battleships and the introduction of old age pensions. The latter, unusually, came directly from the Treasury rather than through local councils, and proved more expensive than Asquith had expected, partly because there appeared to have been more old people in Ireland than had been thought. Another factor was the problem with local government finance, which Lloyd George mentioned in his Budget speech. The various claims on the resources of local councils meant that they increasingly needed assistance from central government.

The second, political, set of problems was exemplified by the government's losing of by-elections, including Winston Churchill's seat in Manchester in 1908. Facing deteriorating terms of trade, the high hopes of the 1906 election were gradually dissipating. The House of Lords compounded this by throwing out measures such as the 1908 Licensing Bill, which the government, despite its big Commons majority, was seemingly powerless to do anything about. Beyond these, Morgan argued, there were the wider strategic issues, of which Lloyd George was deeply aware, of how to strike out on a course that was distinctively Liberal and how to resist the attractions of tariff reform. The Conservatives argued that social reform could only be paid for by tariffs, on the basis that the foreigner would pay. Increasingly, the Liberal response was that the rich should pay.

A further concern was the threat from labour. Lloyd George was aware that liberalism was in decline in France and Italy in the face of labour. He, therefore, in part, took the lead in tackling social problems as a means of resisting it.

According to Morgan the Budget was very much Lloyd George's own work, and was based on political principles, not on the calculation that the Lords would throw it out. He did not believe that there was any evidence to support that argument. The Lords had not done anything as extreme as reject a budget since the reign of Charles II. Nonetheless, Lloyd George and the government were aware that the landowners in the Lords would find the land duties particularly repellent and they were prepared in case the Lords should do anything as extraordinary as reject the Budget.

Before it reached the Lords, the Budget had had a long and somewhat difficult passage through the Cabinet. It had been criticised by some of the less radical members, such as Loulou Harcourt and Runciman, but got through largely because of the unstinting support Lloyd George received from the Prime Minister. Morgan argued that Asquith and Lloyd George were a powerful partnership down to 1915, and noted that Asquith gave loyal support to Lloyd George, not least because the Budget had followed on from his two years earlier.

In Morgan's view, the speech Lloyd George gave the House of Commons in introducing the Budget was one of the worst he ever gave. Nonetheless, despite his rambling performance, it

had a great impact.[2] Morgan agreed with Cable that it was the land duties that generated most excitement – in particular the 20 per cent tax on unearned increment from land, and the levy on the capital of undeveloped land. Both these measures required the valuation of land.

To put these proposals into context, Morgan pointed out that land was a central theme for the Liberals and for the British left generally at the time. It was seen as an undeveloped resource which had the potential to be used for great social purposes. The Liberals made frequent mention of the land owned by figures such as the Duke of Marlborough which they saw as being parasitically frittered away rather than being used for productive purposes such as housing. In addition, land was seen as beneficial, even wholesome; social, almost patriotic. Expanding communities in the countryside would enable people to lead healthier lives than they did living in the slums, and so it would tackle the perceived problem of the physical deterioration of the people; the national stock would be enhanced.

Despite the priority given to land policy, Morgan noted that it had often been pointed out that the land aspects of the Budget were a failure. It proved difficult to devise a satisfactory method of valuing land, and in the event the land duties yielded little; they were abolished in 1920 when Lloyd George himself was Prime Minister. Cable added later that all attempts to tax land values (and there had been five) had met with little success. He suggested that this was as a result of a confusion of purpose: was it to tax wealth or to develop appreciation?

Other aspects of the Budget, Morgan noted, were a great success. The higher taxes on income and the supertax were distinctly redistributive, which he felt was the most important feature in the long term. There were also one or two novelties, such as the road fund.

In conclusion, Morgan declared that the Budget had proved a great success: it provided surplus after surplus and represented the triumph of the New Liberalism over the old. Faced with both financial and political problems, a progressive government had chosen a progressive path.

Morgan also added that the politics of the Budget were important. The Liberals were attacking their familiar targets of parasitical landowners and the drink trade, both long-term themes of Lloyd George. His stint at the Board of Trade had made him more admiring of business. In addition, Lloyd George had worked out the tax bands very carefully, ensuring that the measures in the Budget did not hurt the party's natural supporters. The professionals in law and the public services did not pay more tax, while the rich were particularly affected, as were the poor because of the regressive effect of the indirect taxes.

There was nonetheless, a wider vision. Lloyd George at the end of his 'bad' speech concluded by saying that 'this is a war Budget. It is for raising money to wage implacable warfare against poverty and squalidness.' Morgan argued that it provided a visionary platform for social reform and national development, which continued down to the First World War – in Morgan's view, largely at the behest of Lloyd George and those close to him. Indeed, Lloyd George's 1914 Budget speech was essentially a retrospective on the previous five years, highlighting the benefits of the national investment.

The immediate effect of all this, Morgan declared, was enormously successful. It enthused the Liberals, with a Budget League up and down the country, and it caused outrage amongst the Tories. *Punch* depicted Lloyd George as John Knox railing against golfers, motorists and anybody who owned anything.[3] Cable noted in response to a question that the Tories' response highlighted their nature at this stage: whilst they had often been 'right-wing', their response reflected nationalism and protectionism and was often overtly racist and concerned about the immigration of east European Jews. Morgan argued that the Budget turned the political tide and provided a sustained surge through to 1914. The Liberals won the next two elections (although, as Cable pointed out, they did lose 100 seats and had to govern with the support of the Irish Nationalists), passed the Parliament Act and maintained their momentum until 1914. Morgan even felt that it would have been enough to have brought the Liberals victory in the election due in 1915. In response to a question, Morgan later added that the by elections of 1914–15 did not support the 'Strange Death of Liberal England' argument.

In conclusion, Morgan declared that the Budget had proved a great success: it provided surplus after surplus and represented the triumph of the New Liberalism over the old. Faced with both financial and political problems, a progressive government had chosen a progressive path. It was, as Vince Cable had suggested earlier, a model for our times. Whilst it was not Keynesian, it reflected a belief in national investment when times were hard. Gordon Brown, Morgan believed, should look back to this period rather than Roosevelt's New Deal for his inspiration, and to the legacy of the greatest ever Chancellor, David Lloyd George.

Lord Wallace, in thanking both speakers for their contributions, declared that there were times in Kenneth Morgan's address when he felt moved to signal to the audience to sing the Land Song!

David Cloke is a member of the Liberal Democrat History Group's executive.

1 See: http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/

journal/118532038/abstract?CRETRY=1&SRETRY=0.

2 It can be read at: http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1909/apr/29/budget-statement.

3 http://cgi.ebay.pl/Original-Cartoon-1910-Lloyd-George-As-John-Knox_W0QQitemZ290286652386QQihZ019QQcategoryZ367QQcmdZViewItem#ebayphotohosting.

The Rt Hon. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman (1836–1908)

Further centenary commemorations in Scotland

Report by **Dr Alexander (Sandy) S. Waugh**

The liberal leader and Prime Minister Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman died in 1908. Earlier commemorations were reported in *Journal of Liberal History* 59 (summer 2008); this report focuses on later events in the autumn of 2008.

The High School of Glasgow – which Sir Henry attended between 1845 and 1850 – had its own Centenary Commemoration on the morning of Tuesday 16 September 2008. The audience in the Assembly Hall included members and former members of staff, all the sixth formers, history scholars from the fifth form and from two other Glasgow schools, past and present school governors and trustees and office-bearers of the School Club (former pupils) including the President, the Rt Hon. Lord Philip, and other invited guests.

After introductory welcomes by Colin Mair (Rector), Leona Duff, Girls' Captain of Bannerman House (named for Sir Henry in 1917) outlined Sir Henry's career at the High School. The programme then centred on a lecture by Dr Ewen A. Cameron, now Reader in Scottish History in Edinburgh University, who offered answers to the question 'Why study Campbell-Bannerman?', following much the same approach as in his article on Sir Henry in the *Journal* (issue 54, Spring 2007) and his talk on Sir Henry at Meigle on 22 April 2008 (*Journal*, issue 59, Summer 2008). After a presentation on Bannerman House's current charitable fundraising project in Sir Henry's memory, Thomas Nicoll, Boys' House Captain, concluded the proceedings in the Assembly Hall by expressing the thanks of all present to Dr Cameron.

During the morning the guests also had the opportunity to see the bronze plaque commemorating Sir Henry (by Benno Schotz, RSA) and a picture of John M. Bannerman (1901–69), Lord Bannerman of Kildonan, another former pupil, who played rugby for Scotland on thirty-seven occasions and who, when Chairman of the Scottish Liberal Party (1955–65), came within 966 votes of winning Inverness in 1955 and within 1,658 votes of winning Paisley in 1961. Three months later, it was intimated that, with Bannerman House having raised £5,900 in support of Scottish International Relief's Mary's Meals projects, a plaque in the name of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman is to be put up at the 1,200-pupil Cobbe Barracks Primary School in Zomba, Malawi.

The final Scottish Centenary event was the unveiling of a bronze plaque at 129 Bath Street, Glasgow (Sir Henry's family home from 1836 to 1860 and now the Abode Glasgow Hotel) by the Rt Hon. Lord Steel of Aikwood on the afternoon of Friday, 5 December 2008, the 103rd anniversary of Sir Henry's appointment as prime minister on 5 December 1905.

SIR HENRY
CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN
1836–1908
LIBERAL PRIME MINISTER
BORN IN GLASGOW AND
LIVED
HERE UNTIL 1860
A RADICAL • A PEACE-
MAKER
A GOOD MAN

Those present also included the Rt Hon. Charles Kennedy MP, representatives of the Lord Provost and the High School, a number of Liberal Democrat MSPs and councillors and other Liberal Democrats from many parts of Scotland.

Top: Glasgow High School, 16 September 2008: Colin Mair (Rector), Leona Duff and Thomas Nicoll (Bannerman House Captains) and Dr Ewen Cameron in front of the School's bronze plaque commemorating CB.

Bottom: 5 December 2008: Lord Steel unveils the bronze plaque at 129 Bath Street, Glasgow.

Photos: Neil Mackie (neilmackiephotography.com)

After a reception, hosted by the hotel's General Manager, there were welcomes and introductory remarks by the leading promoters of the project: Nigel Lindsay (formerly a Liberal councillor in Aberdeen) and Robert Brown MSP. We were then piped outside by Thomas Nicholl of the High School (as above). In unveiling the plaque, Lord Steel praised Sir Henry as an 'overlooked radical' whose 1906 general election landslide victory had paved the way for a succession of reforming governments. 'He had led the way for the longest period of successful radical government ever [and] gets overlooked because Asquith and Lloyd George were prime ministers for longer.'

Sandy Waugh is a member of the Liberal Democrat History Group and, like Campbell-Bannerman, a former pupil of Glasgow High School.

Liberal Democrats in Europe: 21 years of success or failure?

Fringe meeting, 6 March 2009, Harrogate, with William Wallace (Lord Wallace of Saltaire) and Sarah Ludford MEP; Chair: Tony Little.

Report by **Graham Lippiatt**

The Liberal Party and the SDP were the most pro-European of the British political parties. So how has their successor party fared in European politics since merger in 1988? How has the party adapted to the wide range of liberal thought represented by its sister parties in the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party (ELDR) and Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)?

Unfortunately the advertised speakers for this meeting were both unable to attend, and the History Group is particularly indebted to William Wallace and Sarah Ludford for agreeing to address the topic at short notice.

William Wallace introduced the meeting by recalling the role played by Liberal youth and student activists at Cambridge University during his time there. Michael Steed had urged them to become aware of the national youth and student organisation of the party and encouraged them to get involved. When Britain joined the European Community in 1973, a similar need for engagement was called for on a continental scale. British Liberals began to visit their continental sister parties in their home countries; William mentioned his own journey to Germany to meet members of the Free Democrats, in an effort to learn more about the parties that British Liberals did not then fully understand. In those days the FDP had both social and economic liberal wings, although as time has passed the social liberal element has lost out. This process of engagement and mutual understanding became even more important in the approach to the first direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979, and it became necessary to form a more coherent European Liberal campaign group.

So what did the European liberal family look like in those early days of cross-border cooperation? How has it changed over the years and how complicated has it been to cooperate transnationally, when each of the individual parties operates in their home environment in such different political and changing contexts? In northern Europe, for example, William Wallace pointed out that liberal parties historically are very often farmers' or rural parties, standing firmly against the idea of a centralised state; they also often oppose the idea of a state church. There has also been a strongly bourgeois, property-owning tradition which has found it hard, as did British Liberals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to come to terms with the emergence of organised labour. In southern Europe, liberal parties have been motivated not just in opposition to the power of the state but also against the power of the Catholic Church.

In many European states, therefore, to be a liberal is to operate in an entirely different political context from that in Britain, often with a religious motivation outweighing questions of the relationship of the individual to the state.

In many European states, therefore, to be a liberal is to operate in an entirely different political context from that in Britain, often with a religious motivation outweighing questions of the relationship of the individual to the state. It is worth realising that although the struggle of the Nonconformist churches against the established church and an antipathy to Roman Catholicism played a part in the development of Liberal thinking and policy in the United Kingdom, these religious issues had disappeared from the causes of the party in contemporary Britain by the time the UK joined the EEC – yet for many European liberals these issues remained central to their beliefs and political actions. Another way in which anti-state liberalism has manifested itself in some European countries and which seems counter-intuitive in a British context, is support for monarchy, particularly in Eastern Europe where the exiled

monarchs from the pre-Second World War era became symbols of the struggle against communism after 1945.

Another complication in the European liberal heritage has been the split between economic and social liberalism, which has resulted in some countries possessing more than one liberal party. In Demark there is both Venstre (Left Liberal Party of Denmark) and Radikale Venstre (Radical Liberal Party), and in the Netherlands there is the VVD (the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy) and D66 (Democrats 66). Occasionally this has meant that parties with a more advanced economic liberal philosophy, especially those strongly opposed to the power of the state, have edged off towards populism or have even developed into right-wing or extreme right-wing organisations. It is embarrassing to note that Geert Wilders started off in the VVD and Jorg Haider's Freedom Party was originally the Austrian liberal party. Austrian liberals have, to their great credit, preserved a clearly liberal party and philosophy, although the party itself remains small.

At the 1997 Liberal International conference in Oxford, which celebrated fifty years of Liberal International, a number of speakers from Eastern Europe were present – speakers representing parties which had been banned even from existing between 1947 and 1990. One of the contributors had recalled how he had joined the Romanian Liberal Party, reconstituted in 1945, but how by 1948 he was sentenced to a term of twenty-five years imprisonment simply for belonging to it. This demonstrates how hard it must be to retain liberal principles while they are subject to such threats. Another speaker was Viktor Orban from Hungary, where two liberal parties emerged after 1989. One stayed on the left and collaborated with the socialists to form a progressive government, while Orban departed to the right and became a populist.

In the early 1970s many British Liberals knew very little about our counterparts on the continent.

In the early 1970s many British Liberals knew very little about our counterparts on the continent. There has therefore been a process of engagement, of learning about each other and of British Liberals educating themselves to distinguish between what we would regard as genuine liberal parties and those groups which had a liberal name but whose policies and programmes were not always compatible with our understanding of liberal behaviour. There was also sometimes a process of encouragement to continental liberals to maintain their independence at a time when political pressures in their own countries were pulling their members in different directions, as in Italy and France. This perhaps explains why our counterparts in the European Parliament have tended to be from northern as opposed to southern Europe, although there have been new liberal members coming in from some of the newly admitted states. Part of the role of the liberals represented in the European Parliament has therefore been to learn how to cooperate towards the building of a common European idea of what constitutes a liberal party, and to recognise what are the core defining characteristics of liberalism around which people from very different political cultures can coalesce and still each call themselves a liberal without throwing off completely their individual national political heritages. This has been essential in the creation of a liberal group which can operate effectively and cohesively in the European Parliament.

Sarah Ludford recalled that it was just over twenty-five years since her first encounter with European liberalism. This was in December 1983 at the ELDR congress in Munich, where the content of the manifesto for the 1984 Euro elections was decided. She was a candidate in those elections for the Hampshire East & Wight constituency, gaining 29 per cent of the vote, to the Conservatives' 51 per cent in a first-past-the post system. At that time Sarah was working as an official of the European Commission, having joined the Liberals in 1981 in Brussels, and went on to become Chair of the organisation British Liberals in the Community. At that time, pre-merger, there was an equivalent group inside the SDP. In an early effort to cement the European parties together, David Steel and David Owen were invited to a lunchtime meeting of all the ELDR parties of the day in Brussels; it provided a valuable platform from which to continue building the necessary relationships.

Since that time, ELDR, and now ALDE, has developed into a very successful Parliamentary force. The group represented about 13 per cent of MEPs, but, because of the pivotal position it enjoys in the Parliament, it was able to punch above its weight and usually ended up on the winning side of the vote. The tendency has been to work with the European People's Party (EPP) grouping, consisting of Christian Democrats and moderate Conservatives (although after the elections in June the British Conservatives departed to form a new, more Euro-sceptic, group). The Liberal cooperation with the EPP is particularly the case around economic issues, as the other major grouping, the socialists, tends to be ideologically left-wing; the French socialists, for instance, are hostile to the market. These tensions in the Socialist group have caused problems for the New Labour British MEPs who often find themselves out on a limb as a result. On human rights, civil liberties and the environment, however, the Liberal group

usually finds it easier to collaborate with the left in the Parliament – including the United European Left, including socialists, greens and communists, even though the socialists can be unreliable on green issues.

Sarah explained the difference between the ELDR and ALDE groups. ELDR continues to exist, no longer a federation of national liberal and reform parties, but a united Europe-wide party. The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) consists both of those MEPs whose parties are members of ELDR and of those who regard themselves as Democrats first – essentially the French (supporters of Francois Bayrou) and Italian (Romano Prodi) traditions. A problem for these countries and others in southern Europe has been an overemphasis on the word 'Liberal', given some of the histories of liberal parties there being overtly populist or laissez-faire. They have favoured the nomenclature of the Democratic tradition, which is why they can cooperate in ALDE but prefer not to be members of ELDR.

The ELDR/ALDE group has produced two presidents of the European Parliament. One was the first president of the directly elected Parliament, in 1979, Simone Veil. Later, in 2002, Pat Cox of the Irish Progressive Democrats was elected president. The difference between these two political eras was that from 1979 to 1999 the socialists were the dominant group in the European Parliament. After 1999, the EPP became the biggest force, which offered the Liberal group, under Cox's leadership, an opportunity to create an understanding with the EPP that the Liberals could be consulted on policy in return for support on specific issues. It also enabled the groups to come to an agreement that Cox could take the presidency from 2002 to 2004. Cox had gained political profile and credibility in 1998, when he was the only group leader to call for the resignation of the European Commission over allegations of fraud. Cox led the opposition to the Commission from within the Parliament and obtained great credit from all shades of political opinion for that campaign when the Commission of Jacques Santer in the end did resign en masse in March 1999, amid allegations of corruption. There is currently a chance for a third Liberal president of the Commission: Graham Watson, the ALDE leader, has declared an interest in the post and is openly campaigning for support. This approach is in contrast to the traditional behind-closed-doors lobbying which has been the norm in the past.

A further difference between the 1970s and today has been the move away from hard-edged ideological approaches to the economy and the role of the state. Although there is a certainly a renewed emphasis on economic and financial issues, now that the world is in recession, the differences between politicians are more nuanced and pragmatic. The argument has shifted on to more liberal ground. The debate no longer takes an ideological stance over whether parties favour the market or a state-centred economy; things are now more value-centred, around themes such as civil liberties and the primacy of dissent. There is also a focus on the impact of globalisation and the role of an open, united European Union championing free trade, free movement of peoples and human rights. This has assisted the position of the ELDR/ALDE groups because these are the priorities and values which those groups endorse as core principles. The groups are perhaps the most united in Europe, as there are no nationalists or Europhobes within them – unlike other groups, notably the Greens, where for example the Germans are very pro-Europe and the British Greens are unequivocally Euro-sceptic.

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This organisational cohesion and unity of purpose has allowed the Liberals to take important committee chairs – three are held at present – and to hold the chair of the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs committee for the last ten years. There is likely to be a challenge for that committee in the future, however, as it has become one of the most important and central of the committees in the Parliament, as value-centred issues have replaced the old left–right stances on economic questions and the role of the state. One of the worrying developments in the recent past has been the attempt to modify the remit of the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs committee and to make it more of a Homeland Security committee, which would be dominated by the right. That move has successfully been fought off for now, but the committee itself remains an influential one and will be the target for one of the main groupings in the Parliament in the near future.

It is also worth noting that ten of the twenty-seven European Commissioners are nominees of European Liberal parties, although some do not have party political backgrounds, being better described as technocrats. In the Council of Ministers the position fluctuates. Until recently there were six Liberal prime ministers represented but the current figure is down to three – although even this compares to a point in time when there were no prime ministers from the Liberal family in the European Union. If there is criticism of the liberal group in Parliament it is that its commitment to diversity and equality can be called into question when the ethnic make-up of the group is examined. This has something

to do with the rural and historical origins of many of the liberal sister parties and its comparative under-representation in urban, metropolitan areas. This means also that metropolitan issues are not sufficiently well addressed by the party at European level, although its positions on asylum, immigration and gay rights are strong ones overall.

The top three issues in the ELDR manifesto for the June Euro elections were the economy, the environment and civil liberties. This chimes precisely with British Liberal priorities. The point we have reached, therefore, after nearly forty years of close cooperation with the various sister parties across Europe, is one where British Liberals feel comfortable and positive – and, while ELDR/ALDE is a broader church than the British party, we can look forward to the future with confidence that liberal values as we understand them and policies deriving from those values will continue to prevail.

In the question and answer session following the speeches, two salient points were quickly raised. The first was that when these questions were first becoming important in the late 1970s–early 1980s, the risk for British Liberals was that we would be swamped by the much larger groups of the French centrists under Valery Giscard D'Estaing and, to a lesser degree, the German FDP. That problem has been remedied by the growth in representation that the Liberal Democrats have achieved in European elections under proportional representation and by the decline in French liberal numbers – indeed, a decline mirrored across much of southern Europe. The other point was that in all countries there has been considerable political flux, with parties undergoing great changes internally, sometimes splitting and re-forming, or with one faction or philosophy coming to dominate. The United Kingdom has not been immune from this process, even without the help of a PR system for Westminster elections. Our own party was formed as a result of the split of the SDP from Labour in 1981. Also, as William Wallace pointed out, the economic liberals who were highly significant in the Liberal Party of the 1940s and early 1950s decided to leave the party and were instead the inspiration for people like Margaret Thatcher and Sir Keith Joseph, making the Conservative Party of the 1980s an overtly economic liberal entity.

As a postscript to the discussion, it is worth remembering that the British Liberal Democrats are now the largest liberal party in Europe. Where we lose out is because, under a first-past-the-post electoral system for the national Parliament, we have not been able to participate in government. This contrasts with the position of some liberal parties in other EU countries, which are much smaller in terms of their national vote or seats in their national assembly but who are able to form coalitions, get into government and sometimes even provide the prime ministership.

Graham Lippiatt is the Secretary of the Liberal Democrat History Group.

The top three issues in the ELDR manifesto for the June Euro elections were the economy, the environment and civil liberties. This chimes precisely with British Liberal priorities.

LETTERS

How long was Lloyd George an MP?

The Liberal Democrat History group's autumn 2008 quiz (reprinted in *Journal* 61, Winter 2008-09) contained a question asking how many years and days David Lloyd George had served as MP for Caernarvon Boroughs. Consideration of the answer threw up some uncertainties: should the start date be counted as the date of his election, or the date of the count and announcement (the next day), or the day on which he took his seat? Should the end date have been the day on which his peerage was announced, or the day on which he died (he was too ill ever to take his Lords seat)? Two correspondents have taken up the issue:

Lloyd George took his seat on 17 April 1890 and ceased being one with the conferment of his title on 1 January 1945. The fact that he never attended the Lords doesn't affect this. He was certainly not an MP at the time of his death.

Kenneth O. Morgan

Lloyd George was surely an MP from when his result was declared on 11 April 1890 until his peerage was announced on 1 January 1945. I have always considered I became Leader of Richmond-upon-Thames council at 10.24 pm on Thursday 10 November 1983. This was the time showing on my watch in the victory photo when the second by-election win was declared that evening.

However, the name of Lloyd George's constituency in 1890 was not Caernarvon Boroughs. It was Carnarvon Boroughs, or strictly the Carnarvon District of Boroughs. The first *Times Guide to the House of Commons* to

use Caernarvon Boroughs was the 1935 edition, probably a late change as it still follows Cardiff. Perhaps there was a Statutory Instrument changing the constituency name, if someone wants to solve *this* puzzle definitively. In 1983 the constituency spelling changed to Caernarfon.

In 1890 the Carnarvon District of Boroughs comprised Carnarvon, Bangor, Conway, Criccieth, Nevin and Pwllheli; and from 1918 to 1950 only Carnarvon, Bangor, Conway and Pwllheli. As well as Caernarfon we now have Conwy, Nefyn, and for some Welsh speakers Cricieth. Name changes are a minefield for the unwary, and even for the expert. FWS Craig has Caernarvon Boroughs in *British Parliamentary Election Results 1885–1918*.

David Williams

Sheelagh Murnaghan

I was somewhat surprised to see no mention of Sheelagh Murnaghan in the 'Liberalism and Women' issue of the *Journal* (issue 62, Spring 2009). The article on Liberal women MPs notes that between 1951 and 1986 there were none at all.

Sheelagh Murnaghan was the only Liberal MP to be elected to the Northern Ireland Parliament. At a time before the Orpington by-election when there were only six Liberal MPs at Westminster, she won a by-election in 1961 to represent Queen's University. She had already made her name as the only practising woman barrister in Northern Ireland and as an international hockey player. Between 1961 and the abolition of her university constituency in 1969 she was a sole voice for many changes needed in a pre-troubles Northern Ireland. She introduced a Human Rights Bill on four occasions and campaigned on a wide range of issues from electoral reform to the abolition of capital punishment. In 1965 she even had the rare distinction of being an unopposed Liberal MP!

Berkley Farr

Editor's note: we will be carrying a full biography of Sheelagh Murnaghan in a future issue of the Journal.

CB and women's suffrage

I must challenge Richard Reeves' statement (*Journal of Liberal History* 62, Spring 2009) that Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman (CB) was 'far from progressive on the issue' of women's suffrage. In 1870 – within two years of his election as an MP in 1868 – CB voted for Jacob Bright's unsuccessful bill for women's suffrage (Jacob Bright, a younger brother of John Bright, was then one of Manchester's three MPs). Nor did CB modify his consistent acceptance of the principle of women's enfranchisement after he became Prime Minister.

On 19 May 1906 he received a deputation of some three hundred suffragettes who were told that, although he thought that the activities of the more militant agitators were counter-productive, in his opinion 'they had made out before the country a conclusive and irrefutable case' and 'should go on pestering'. Then when a Women's Enfranchisement Bill was presented in the Commons on 8 March 1907, CB said that he would vote for it as 'the exclusion of women from the franchise is neither expedient, justifiable or politically right', but the bill's opponents succeeded in having it talked out. Thus a letter from King Edward to his son, the future King George V, on 12 March, stating: 'Thank heaven these dreadful women have not yet been enfranchised. It would have been more dignified if the PM had not spoken on the Bill - or backed it up'. A letter to CB followed on 29 March when the King wrote: 'The conduct of these so-called "suffragettes" has been so outrageous and done that cause such harm (for which I have no sympathy) that I cannot understand why the Prime Minister could speak in their favour'.

Dr Alexander (Sandy) S. Waugh

Morley and Gladstone

I was surprised to see that Michael Ledger-Lomas, in reviewing Richard Shannon's *Gladstone: God and Politics* (*Journal* 61, Winter 2008–09), perpetuated the claim that John Morley 'turned a positivist's blind eye' to his subject's religious views. In the introductory chapter to the great biography, Morley suggested that the 'detailed history of Mr Gladstone as theologian and churchman will not be found in these pages'; but there are nevertheless innumerable references, throughout the book, to the key role of religion in Gladstone's career. Major episodes such as the campaign against papal infallibility are covered in full, but equally illuminating are the many religious quotations from Gladstone's diaries and letters. On 6 April 1880, for instance, an overnight journey after the general election provided 'time to ruminate on the great hand of God, so evidently displayed'.

Morley does not comment editorially on many of these references, but occasionally he allows his scepticism to appear, particularly in relation to the scientific discoveries of the century:

> Mr Gladstone watched these things vaguely and with misgiving: instinct must have told him that the advance of natural explanation … would be in some degree at the expense of the supernatural. But from any full or serious examination of the details of the scientific movement he stood aside, safe and steadfast within the citadel of Tradition.

Of course Gladstone read voluminously on theological and even scientific subjects, but his interest often lay in the secondary detail. For Morley and many of his generation the realisation that the universe was both vaster and immeasurably older than previously believed imposed a radical re-examination of the view that the divine creator retained a direct personal interest in the human species inhabiting this small planet. Gladstone, on the other hand, retained the life-long conviction that God supported and directed his daily activities. Morley did not seek to challenge this comforting view, because the purpose of the biography was to establish a myth rather than to undermine it. More fundamentally, throughout his career Morley was fascinated by more dominant personalities who lacked his own self-doubt. In some ways he envied Gladstone the religious certainties that no longer seemed acceptably plausible to his biographer.

Patrick Jackson

REVIEWS

Strange survival

E. H. H. Green and D. M.Tanner (eds.), *The Strange Survival of Liberal England: Political Leaders, Moral Values and the Reception of Economic Debate* (Cambridge University Press, 2007)

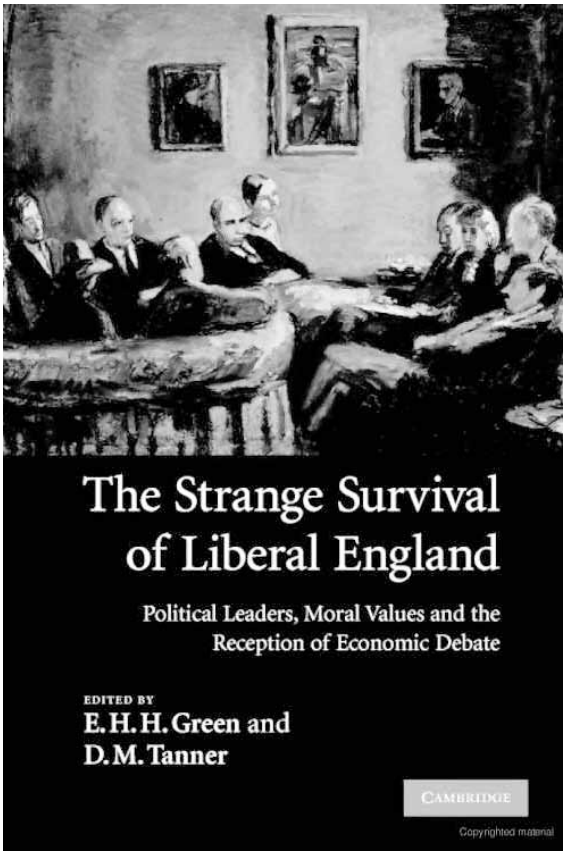
Reviewed by **Martin Pugh**

Up until the 1960s, political scientists largely took the view that industrial societies had an inevitable tendency to develop two political parties, one based on capital and one based on labour, and that political loyalties were overwhelmingly determined by the social class of voters. They were influenced partly by models of Continental societies, where Liberal parties had dwindled earlier than in Britain, and partly by the empirical evidence in Britain of a polarisation among voters; in the elections of 1951 and 1955, 96 per cent voted for the Conservative and Labour Parties.

Today historians and political scientists see things rather differently. Class is far from the be-all-and-end-all that it was once thought to be. And the polarisation of the 1950s represented an unusual phase – it was not the norm. Actually, historians had always known better, in that much of nineteenth and twentieth-century history had been characterised by three or more parties, and class loyalties had remained very mixed. But it was only during the 1960s and 1970s that a huge amount of research recast our entire view of the evolution of party politics. This was partly because historians looked more carefully at the Edwardian Labour Party, concluding that it lacked a distinctive intellectual appeal, had a very limited organisational presence in the country, was focused on limited, unionised sections of the working class, and that in electoral terms it was essentially a client of Liberalism. On the positive side, researchers argued that far from representing a survival from Victorian Radicalism, Edwardian Liberalism had successfully adapted its programme and its thinking to the priorities of the new century by getting to grips with the role of the state, social policy and progressive taxation. After 1906 Liberalism increasingly reflected the ideas of a new generation; and electorally it demonstrated its capacity to mobilise the working-class vote while retaining middle-class support. The implication of all this was that the rise of a Labour Party was not inevitable.

Peter Clarke, who retired from his Chair at Cambridge two years ago, played a key part in this process of revision, and this volume of essays represents a well-deserved tribute to his contribution to our understanding of the process of political change and the interaction between economics and politics in modern Britain. In *Lancashire and the New Liberalism* (1971) Clarke employed a wealth of empirical material to substantiate a thesis about the transformation of the Liberal Party under the aegis of Progressivism. He followed this through with *Liberals and Social Democrats* (1978) and *The Keynesian Revolution in the Making* (1988).

Clarke's interest in the relationship between politics and economic ideas is well represented throughout the collection. Boyd Hilton, for example, examines the heyday of orthodox Treasury Liberalism based on balanced budgets, a minimal state and free trade, in an essay on Robert Lowe, who served as Gladstone's Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1868, rather surprisingly in view of his role in wrecking Gladstone's 1866 Reform Bill. In an interesting chapter on minimum wages and the labour movement, James Thompson rightly points out that Ramsay MacDonald was sceptical about minimum wages and the trade boards introduced by the Asquith government in 1909, although he does not explain the political significance. MacDonald actually concluded that it would be best if the low paid or 'sweated' industries went bust, destroying jobs in the process. This attitude was



a telling indication of the extent to which Edwardian Labour was out of touch with the bulk of the working class; trade unionism was simply absent from the 'sweated' trades – which is why the only way of helping the employees was through the Liberal legislation that doubled their wages

Moving on chronologically, Duncan Tanner revisits the vexed question of the collapse of the 1929–31 Labour government, but puts the focus on leaders as opposed to simply MacDonald himself or the party generally. The result is a graphic picture of a dysfunctional government due to Snowden's aversion to communicating with colleagues and MacDonald's inability to consult with or accept criticism from the unions, the Independent Labour Party, the MPs or the intellectuals. In his excellent contribution, Richard Toye considers the role of Keynesianism in Labour Party politics. It was from the start a love-hate relationship. In the 1920s Labour appreciated Keynes's criticism of the return to the Gold Standard, but MacDonald et al. shrank from talk about not balancing the budget as giving an unwanted impression of radicalism. Actually, by the 1930s Keynes's influence was hampered by the fact that Labour had a battalion of its own academic economists, several of whom, such as Hugh Gaitskell, were quite conservative and orthodox, and suspected Keynesianism of causing inflation. Despite this, Toye explains how, after 1936, the party increasingly adopted Keynes, effectively claiming that his ideas were really common-sense Labour ones. All that is missing from this account is the important role of Ernest Bevin and the unions in pressurising Labour into adopting what they saw as a more realistic approach to unemployment and thus embracing Keynes.

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In a companion essay, E. H. H.Green considers Keynes and the Conservative Party – a more fraught relationship partly because of the dominance of Treasury orthodoxy in the party and partly because Keynes never hid his contempt for the Tory intellect! He shows how three Conservatives, Arthur Steel-Maitland, Harold Macmillan and J. W. Hills, were chiefly responsible for familiarising the party with Keynesian thinking in the 1930s and that the turning point came with acceptance of the 1944 White Paper committing the government to maintaining a high and stable level of employment.

Other chapters in the collection are John A.Thompson on American Liberals and entry into the First World War, Eugenio Biagini on the influence of Keynesianism on post-1945 Italian politics, Stefan Collini on cultural criticism of decline and modernity in inter-war Britain, and Barry Supple on the long-term performance of the British economy, structural change, and attitudes towards the distribution of the fruits of economic growth.

Despite the title of the volume, only a few of these essays are likely to be of interest to readers of the *Journal of Liberal History.* There is very little attempt to examine the strictly *political* implications of the revisionist work on the Edwardian era with which Peter Clarke was so involved. This is a pity because the impact of Liberalism and Liberal personnel on the other parties after the Liberal Party's post-1918 decline is a major formative force, and, in particular, its impact on Conservative politics in the Baldwin-Macmillan era is of crucial importance to the long-term success of Conservatism. Yet it is largely taken for granted and has never been the subject of systematic study. 'National Liberals' were still standing as late as the 1964 general election and they were of considerable importance in sustaining Conservatism in Scotland, at least until 1955 when the party won 36 of the 71 constituencies. The Strange Survival of Liberal England remains to be fully explored.

Martin Pugh was Professor of Modern British History at Newcastle University and is now a freelance writer. His most recent books are Hurrah for the Blackshirts!: Fascists and Fascism in Britain Between the Wars *(Cape, 2005), and* We Danced All Night: A Social History of Britain between the Wars *(The Bodley Head, 2008).*

No end of a lesson

David Marquand, *Britain Since 1918* (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2008)

Reviewed by **Tom McNally**

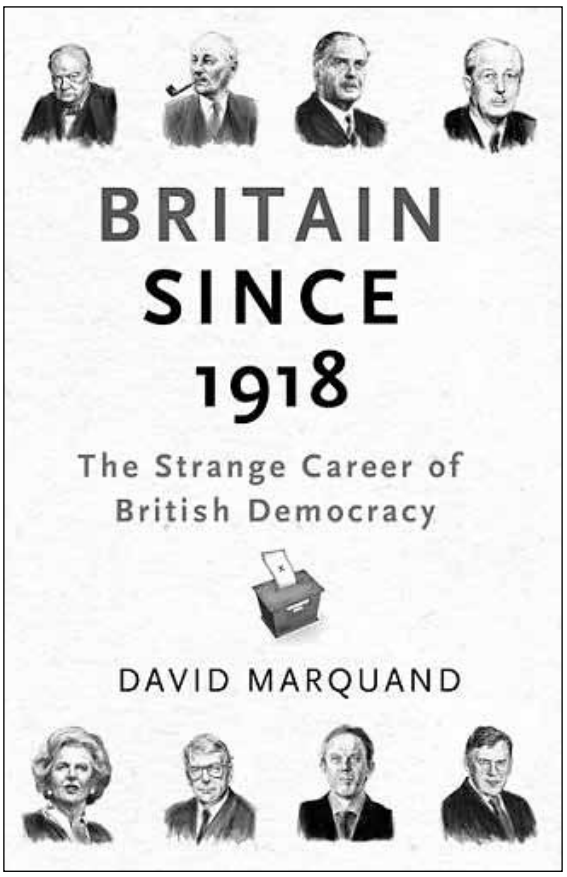
Professor David Marquand is a curious hybrid: part philosopher, part academic historian, part political adviser and part sharp-end politician. Such a mixed pedigree makes him particularly suited to being the chronicler and interpreter of twentieth-century Britain. It is a story which he himself describes as 'a story of courage, perseverance, wisdom, selfishness, folly and self-deception.' In his book

Britain Since 1918, he chooses to tell his story not through the usual prisms of conflict between left and right, or reformers and conservatives, but by tracing phases in twentieth-century British history, and the major players during those phases, in terms of deeper, longer established political roots. These he describes as the four traditions that structure political debate in Britain, and lists them as whig imperialism, democratic collectivism, tory nationalism and democratic republicanism.

Marquand is unfortunate in one aspect of his work. He brings his narrative to an end in 2007. So, although he is not sparing in his criticism of the Blair years ('In a frenzy of self-destructive messianism, Blair dwarfed the achievements of his first term with the ill-fated folly of the Iraq War and all that flowed from it …'), he writes, and reaches his conclusions, before the collapse of Anglo-Saxon free-market capitalism, the consequences of which we are now grappling with. It is as if a history was written in 1913 at the end of the long, golden and extended Edwardian age with no knowledge of the cataclysm to come.

To be fair, he does quote a prophetic piece from Will Hutton calling for the world's anarchic financial markets to be brought to heel by 'the recognition that the market economy has to be managed and regulated, both at home and abroad'. A favourable reference is also given to the Liberal Democrat Commission on Wealth Creation and Social Cohesion, chaired by Ralf Dahrendorf, which argued that wealth was not merely the measure of GDP, but 'the sum of what people value in their social lives'. It followed that conventionally measured economic growth was not an end in itself: development has to be socially as well as environmentally sustainable. Such arguments were hard to sustain when government, and Gordon Brown in particular, claimed it had ended boom and bust, and Marquand does not strive too hard to do so. Indeed his book ends with state interventionism seemingly consigned to the dustbin of history.

Even more ironically, it ends with hope held high that Gordon Brown was about to take up again the cause of radical constitutional reform: 'Within days of his arrival at Number Ten, Brown made a statement to the Commons holding out the prospect of a "new constitutional settlement" that would curb the government's prerogative powers, enhance parliamentary scrutiny of the executive, and explicitly incorporate "the values founded on liberty that defined British citizenship".' All such ambitions are now put on the back burner as Brown tries to survive the economic tsunami now engulfing us. From the Prime Minister there is no recognition that it was the stalling of the programme of constitutional reform after the initial first-term burst, inspired by the Cook/Maclennan Report, which still leaves Britain's system of governance so ill-equipped to challenge an over-mighty executive or connect effectively with the people it claims to serve. Prior to 1997 both Tony Blair and Paddy Ashdown agreed that constitutional reform was essential if the modernisation of Britain and its institutions was to be successful. They entrusted mapping out of a blueprint for reform to a joint commission of the two parties chaired by Robin Cook and Bob Maclennan. The implementation of Cook/Maclennan, of which I had the honour of being a member, resulted in what Marquand calls 'a reconstruction of the British State more radical than any since 1707, and in so doing gave a new dimension to British democracy.' Rather unfairly, in my opinion, he gives no credit in his narrative to Cook/Maclennan or to the massive input Liberal Democrat policy development in the area made to its success.



The sad fact is that, once Labour ministers settled more comfortably into their ministerial cars and the Whitehall cocoon enveloped them, the impetus for reform was lost. I fear I do not share Professor Marquand's 2007 optimism that Gordon Brown is about to breathe fresh life into constitutional reform. Even something as straightforward as Lords reform is punted safely into the long grass of the next parliament (though the parliamentary expenses scandal may possibly bring it forward).

I have concentrated on the conclusions in his later chapters because they show some of the dangers for historians of writing instant history. The unknown and unexpected can turn round and bite you. That does not make the writing of such histories valueless. It will be of immense value to future

historians to read Professor Marquand's assessments of Blair and Brown and the New Labour Project just before the longest sustained period of economic growth in our history came to an end with such a mighty bang. The fact that he was such a multi-disciplined practitioner of the political arts also makes him a shrewd and expert assessor of earlier administrations. For the answer to the question of whether the credit crunch and subsequent events will influence his assessment of the long-term influence of Thatcherism and Blairism, with their obsessive worship of the free market, we will have to await the second edition of this excellent history. In the meantime, readers can enjoy agreeing or disagreeing with what one reviewer described as an anthropological approach to history. They can assess for themselves whether their chosen heroes or, indeed, they themselves, are whig imperialists, democratic collectivisits or democratic republicans (I will excuse readers of the *Journal of Liberal History* from being tory nationalists). Whatever your conclusions, you will find this a stimulating and thought-provoking book, in keeping with the standards David Marquand has set for himself throughout his political and academic life.

Lord McNally is a former SDP MP and Leader of the Liberal Democrats in the House of Lords.

'A little chit of a fellow'

Ian R. Grimwood, *A Little Chit of a Fellow: A Biography of the Right Hon. Leslie Hore-Belisha* (Sussex: Book Guild Publishing, 2006)

Reviewed by **Graham Lippiatt**

Between the years 1937 and 1940, Germany incorporated Austria into the Reich in the Anschluss, seized the Sudetenland at the Munich Conference, invaded Czechoslovakia, annexed Memel and attacked Poland, provoking war with France and Britain. In 1939, Mussolini invaded Albania and created the Pact of Steel with Hitler. Throughout this momentous period, Leslie Hore-Belisha was Secretary for War, the cabinet minister in charge of Britain's army and defence. Earlier, as Minister of Transport, he made many improvements in road safety, including the illuminated pedestrian crossing beacons which still bear his name. Yet this household name has been curiously forgotten by biographers until the publication of this admirable book by Ian R. Grimwood (a former Mayor of Ipswich).

Why was that? It is not that Hore-Belisha left no papers for historians. There are collections in the Churchill Archives Centre at Cambridge and in the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives at King's College. There are other relevant collections, as well as government departmental records. Some of this material was used by R. J. Minney in his book, *The Private Papers of Hore-Belisha* (Collins, 1960) but this is not a full biography as it deals only with Hore-Belisha's career at the War Office.

From 1938 onwards Hore-Belisha was swimming against the tide of appeasement in the cabinet. He argued for rearmament, expanding the Territorial Army, strengthening air defences, even for the early introduction of conscription, but was stonewalled by a Prime Minister who never really believed that war with Germany would come, or if it did, that Britain would have to fight seriously before the conclusion of a negotiated peace. Hore-Belisha also received hostile resistance from the anti-Semitic generals who resented his programme of improvements in living quarters, pay and conditions and the lifting of petty restrictions focused on the other ranks. They eventually succeeded in getting him sacked from the War Office in 1940 and he refused Chamberlain's offer of the Board of Trade in compensation.

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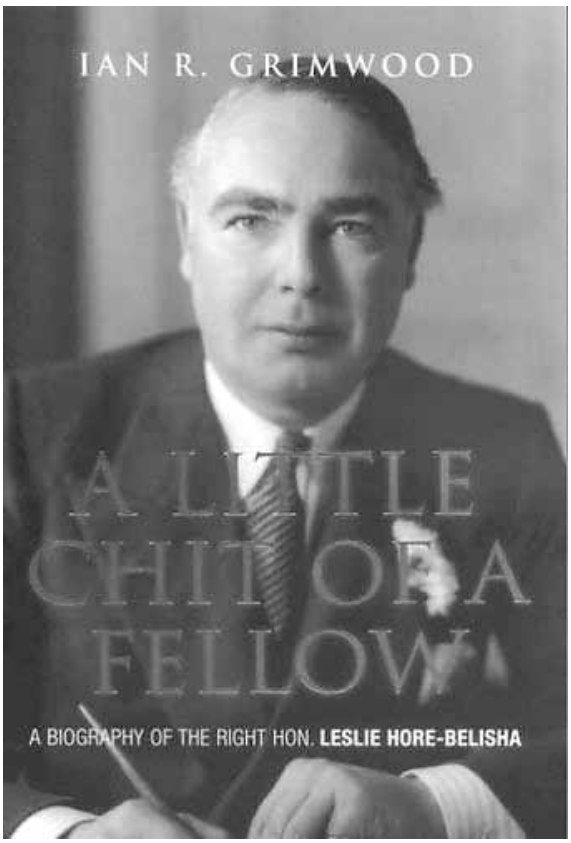
Perhaps one reason that Hore-Belisha's career has received less attention than it should is that, despite his efforts to persuade cabinet colleagues of the need for more soldiers, air defences, equipment production, and the creation of a Ministry of Supply, he could still be held responsible for the inadequacies of the British Expeditionary Force in France in 1940. Hore-Belisha has also suffered as a result of his membership of the Liberal Nationals, the group formed by Sir John Simon to support the Conservative-dominated National Government after 1931. This group has been vilified as traitors and turncoats, motivated by the desire for personal office and disliked for its long, slow drift towards eventual absorption by the Conservatives. Liberal MP Isaac Foot particularly resented the campaign against him (when he was unseated by the Tory at Bodmin in 1935) by two neighbouring 'National Liberal' ministers, Walter Runciman (St Ives) and Leslie Hore-Belisha (Plymouth, Devonport).[1]



The Foots, amongst others, never forgave Hore-Belisha for his support of the Chamberlain government. In Michael Foot's book *The Trial of Mussolini* – a further attack on the guilty men of appeasement, published in 1943 under the pseudonym 'Cassius' – Hore-Belisha was picked out for his visit to Rome in 1938 when he received a bronze medallion from Mussolini, 'for fortitude and valour'.[2] Dingle Foot decried the Liberal Nationals as 'Vichy Liberals' and when Michael Foot beat Hore-Belisha to become MP for Plymouth Devonport in 1945, it seemed like a true come-uppance.

But Hore-Belisha's political career was not designed to win friends. After alienating former colleagues on the radical wing of the Liberal Party by joining the right-leaning Liberal Nationals and serving under Neville Chamberlain, he disappointed political friends again in 1942 by resigning from the Liberal Nationals (who supported the Churchill coalition) to sit as an independent. However he accepted Churchill's offer to serve in the predominantly Conservative 'Caretaker' government of 1945 as Minister for National Insurance. In the 1945 election he stood as a National Independent but was defeated by Michael Foot. He then joined the Tories but never returned to the House of Commons. He did win election to Westminster City Council in 1947 and was a Conservative candidate at the 1950 general election. Churchill made him a peer in 1954.

Grimwood's approach to Hore-Belisha is sympathetic, sometimes perhaps identifying a little too closely with him. The title of the book is taken from a slight on Hore-Belisha from his Tory grandee opponent at the 1922 election; Grimwood seems to feel the insult on his subject's behalf. The rest of Hore-Belisha's career is presented as if to rebut the snub, and Grimwood reports Hore-Belisha's victory in 1923 with the rejoinder that 'The Little Chit had unseated a Conservative member of several years' standing. Leslie had won his first battle.'

Grimwood is good on Hore-Belisha's ministerial career at Transport. In the 1930s, the roads were a slaughterhouse. In 1934, the year Hore-Belisha became Transport Minister, there were 7,343 road deaths. The figure for 2006 was 3,298 – and think of the increase in vehicle numbers since then. Grimwood carefully records the road-safety improvements Hore-Belisha introduced, things we take for granted today: a new Highway Code, 30mph limits in built-up areas, safety-glass in vehicles, restricting ribbon development, promoting trunk roads. He also provides detailed information from the content of Transport Bills and departmental plans.

Grimwood's style is thorough, factual and business-like – in fact it has echoes of a business report with its bullet point lists, statistical tables and detailed appendices. This fits well with Hore-Belisha's ministerial career, in which he was a committed and able administrator. This is a workmanlike and worthwhile biography; a useful addition to the literature of Liberal and Liberal National history, rescuing its subject from an undeserved obscurity.

Graham Lippiatt is Secretary of the Liberal Democrat History Group.

1 K. O. Morgan, *Michael Foot: A Life* (Harper Collins, 2007), p. 55.
2 'Cassius', The Trial of Mussolini (Victor Gollancz, 1943).

Richard Holme remembered

Alison Holmes (ed.), *A Liberal Mind in Action: Essays in honour of Richard Holme* (Matador Publications, 2008)

Reviewed by **David Steel**

Richard Holme, whose untimely death last summer robbed us of one of the most talented people in British political life, has been commemorated by a series of essays in this remarkable little book. Let me say straight away that its greatest shortcoming lies in the word 'little'. It was obviously and understandably put together in a hurry by the editor Alison Holmes, and therefore manages to omit reference to

whole chunks of his varied life and interests – for example no one has written of his dedicated chairmanship of the Royal African Society. Nevertheless it remains, as proclaimed, 'in honour of Richard'.

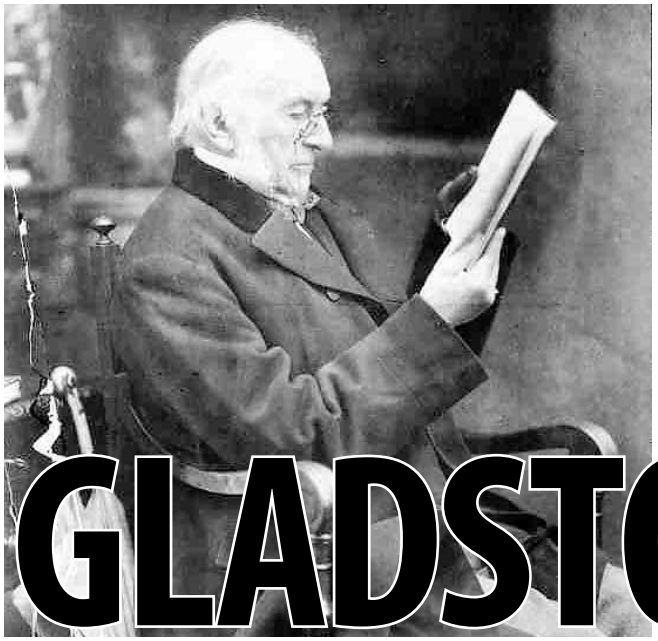
I first met him as candidate in the by-election at East Grinstead in 1965 which was held just a month before my own in Roxburgh, Selkirk & Peebles. He was a brilliant candidate, inspired as we both were by Jo Grimond's leadership, taking a creditable second place – which in those days was counted a considerable Liberal triumph. We became friends ever since, and when he emigrated to California in 1969 (and got actively involved in Democratic Party campaigns) I stayed with him and Kay there over one weekend hoping that he would return, which indeed he did in 1974. On my becoming leader in 1976 he became my most senior and consistent adviser, a role which he continued under Paddy Ashdown – leading to the joke within the party that since we couldn't change advisers we should change the leaders instead. Much hilarity has also been engendered by his operating hours, which were thought to suit Ashdown rather than Steel. Actually, that is not true, because he would frequently be in my office before any of the staff, having read and usefully annotated the morning's papers before I arrived at 9.30 a.m., but as a consequence he was pretty hopeless at post-10 p.m. ruminations on current events, which I always enjoyed.

He used to come and stay at our home in Ettrick Bridge a couple of days every summer – sometimes with Kay, and at least once with the children as well – to help draft my autumn conference speech. This consisted of editing my own drafts and suggesting chunks himself. (It never quite resembled the finished product but he sparked off ideas.) He was a firm favourite of my black labrador who found herself taken for walks in the Border hills at 6 a.m. – something she never otherwise experienced. He was delightfully free with his criticism: 'David, I do wish you wouldn't speed up when it comes to the economic bits because it shows you are not really interested!' I recall his jaw-dropping reaction when I showed him my intended peroration for 1981: 'Go back to your constituencies and prepare for government.' He thought it right, but neither of us foresaw how often it would be quoted out of the context in which I had been arguing – that such was the strength of our Alliance that no government could be formed without us, *not* that we would *be* the government. Anyhow General Galtieri and the Argentines put paid to even that.

Richard was of course a stalwart of the Alliance and the emergence of the united Liberal Democrats. Indeed he laid the foundations for it when he and I, together with Shirley Williams and Bill Rodgers (two of the Gang of Four) and John Roper (the SDP whip), lunched in the sunshine at a Königswinter conference in April 1981. There at a table on the banks of the Rhine he seized a paper napkin and wrote down our heads of agreement, which became known as the Königswinter Compact. Our SDP colleagues later fell out with David Owen over their actions.

Peter Riddell, in his essay on 'Democratic and Consitutional Reform', attaches a memo which Richard wrote as chair of the House of Lords Constitution Committee a year before he died. It is in the form of a memo to Gordon Brown: 'Treat a reformed Second Chamber not as an act of class war or a political embarrassment but as a Chamber of nations and regions to revise and counterbalance the Commons Chamber of the people.' There, truly, is unfinished business. Richard's contribution to the House of Lords was substantial, but it remained one of the great sadnesses of my leadership that he so closely missed a seat in the House of Commons, where he would have been an instant star. He himself concludes in his preface reflections: 'Against the odds of the electoral system and the adversarial political culture, we have firmly established a three-party system, and I am glad to have been a part of that' – a very large part indeed.

David Steel (Lord Steel of Aikwood) was leader of the Liberal Party from 1976 to 1988, and one of the interim joint leaders of the Liberal Democrats upon the party's foundation in 1988.



Throughout the long years of his public life, William Ewart Gladstone drew great strength and inspiration from books. During Gladstone's bicentenary year, **Peter Francis**, Warden of the national memorial to Gladstone, St Deiniol's Library, reflects on how the great Liberal statesman is still inspiring us today.

GLADSTONE 200

In his study at Hawarden Castle, his 'Temple of Peace', Gladstone had a huge personal collection of over 32,000 books. We know he read most of them because he listed his daily reading in his diary and annotated everything he read. When Gladstone attended the funeral of the Anglican theologian, Edward Pusey, in 1882, the idea of a library based around Pusey's books was suggested and, indeed, was later realised. Gladstone returned to Hawarden convinced that his books could also form the basis of a library. Friends and colleagues suggested that he should give the books to the Bodleian Library in Oxford while others suggested donating them to the London Library, but Gladstone was adamant that his collection should go to a location that was not already awash with books. He chose Hawarden because it was within easy reach by rail of Manchester and Liverpool, the rapidly growing new cities of the approaching twentieth century, and because it was situated in North Wales, an area renowned for its castles and mountains rather than as a centre of learning.

Naming the library

At first, Gladstone wanted to call his library *Monad*, a Greek word meaning *oneness* or *one truth*. What the name underlines is Gladstone's firm belief that as much truth could be found in Dante, Homer, Augustine, in works of great literature or in the beauty of mathematics as in the four gospels. However, he later decided to name the library after the sixth-century Welsh saint, Deiniol.

From Tin Tabernacle to National Memorial

Gladstone, then in his eighties, was himself responsible for the removal of books from Hawarden Castle to a corrugated iron building known as the 'Tin Tabernacle', wheeling them the three-quarters of a mile to their new home where he unpacked them and put them on bookcases which he himself had designed, shelving the books according to his own cataloguing system. In this task, he was helped by his daughter, Mary, and a valet. At the same time, he rented the former village

A Liberal Democrat History Group / National Liberal Club commemoration

THE STRANGE BIRTH OF LIBERAL ENGLAND

One hundred and fifty years ago, on 6 June 1859, at Willis' Rooms in St James, Westminster, Radical, Peelite and Whig Members of Parliament met to formalise their Parliamentary coalition to oust the Conservative government. This meeting brought about the formation of the Liberal Party.

To commemorate the event, the Liberal Democrat History Group and the National Liberal Cub are organising a joint reception (7.00pm) and dinner (7.30pm) at the Club on 20 July 2009. After dinner, **Professor Anthony Howe** of the University of East Anglia, author of *Free Trade and Liberal England, 1846–1946* and *Rethinking Nineteenth-Century Liberalism: Richard Cobden Bicentenary Essays*, will speak on the political background to the meeting in Willis' Rooms and the formal birth of the Liberal Party.

Admission to the event will include wine at the reception and dinner at a cost of £40. If you would like to celebrate 150 years of Liberalism with us, please contact:

The Club Secretary, National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2HE
Tel 020 7930 9871, fax 020 7839 4768, email secretary@nlc.org.uk

7.00pm, Monday 20 July 2009
National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, London SW1

school as a hostel for readers. Gladstone was ahead of his time in recognising the benefits of residential learning.

Following his death in 1898, the present library was built as the National Memorial to Gladstone. It is an elegant Victorian building with two wings – one for the books and one for the residents – and has a Grade 1 listing. Today, Gladstone's initial donation has grown into a world-renowned collection of more than 250,000 books, journals and pamphlets. St Deiniol's is recognised as Britain's finest residential library and its only Prime Ministerial library. Each year, the library, which specialises in theology and Victorian Studies, attracts thousands of visitors from many different walks of life and from many parts of the world. They come – on their own or as part of a group – to read, write or reflect, to debate or discuss or just to get away and spend time relaxing in the unique atmosphere of St Deiniol's.

To follow in the spirit of Gladstone during his bicentenary year, St Deiniol's is launching the Gladstone 200 Campaign to fund a series of bold and imaginative initiatives. It includes plans for an Islamic Reading Room which, alongside courses and lectures, will help promote dialogue between Christianity and Islam. The Reading Room will contain books on Islam for the benefit of all, from non-Muslims to Islamic scholars.

In addition, there will also be a Religious Education Resource Centre to provide an up-to-date facility for teachers, community leaders and parents. Although Gladstone was a committed Anglican, he wanted the library to be for 'all Christian denominations; not only for Christian denominations but for all religions, not only for all religions but for people of any ideology'.

In 2009, St Deiniol's Library is once again addressing the most pressing needs of contemporary society with innovation and imagination, just as its founder, William Gladstone would have done.

A number of bicentenary events are taking place at various venues throughout the UK and in Bulgaria. Full details are available on the bicentenary page of the library website www.st-deiniols.org or contact Annette Lewis at St Deiniol's Library, Church Lane, Hawarden, Flintshire CH5 3DF. Tel: 01244 532350 or email: annette.lewis@st-deiniols.org