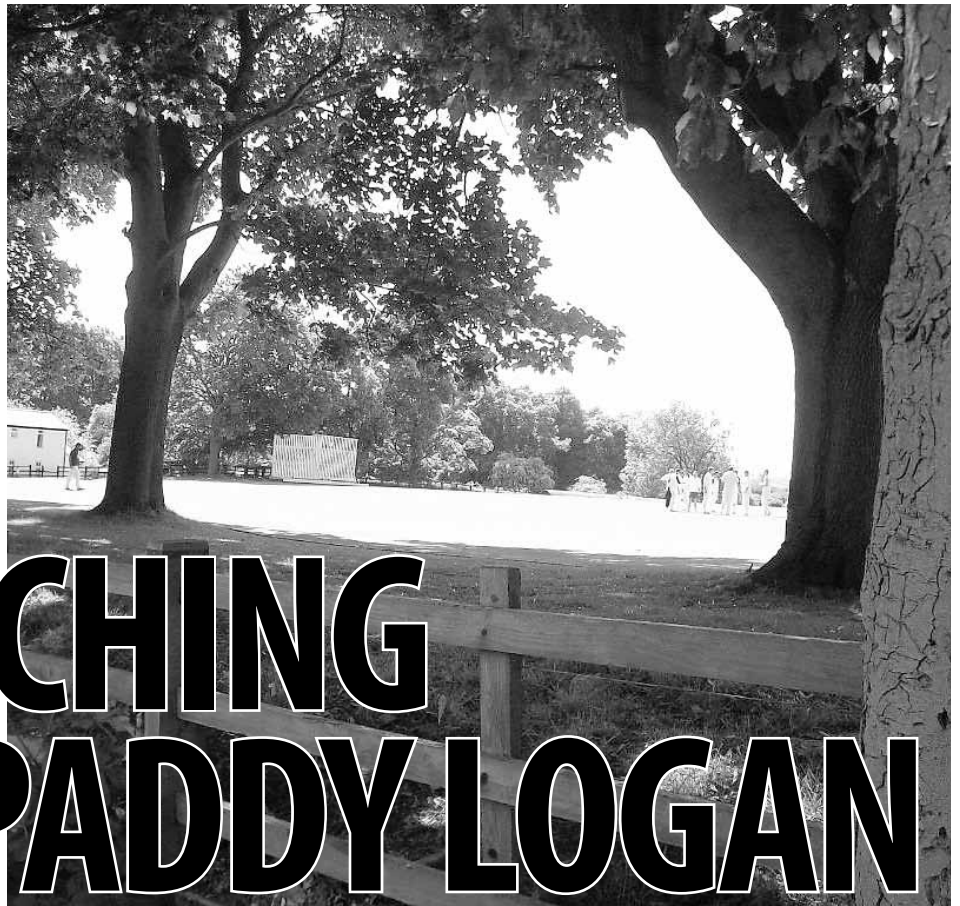


Liberal Heritage

Jonathan Calder begins a new series for the *Journal of Liberal History*, in which well-known Liberal Democrats take a look at the Liberal heritage of their home town.



SEARCHING FOR PADDY LOGAN

DISCOVERING HARBOROUGH'S LIBERAL HISTORY

I MOVED TO Market Harborough at the age of 13. My father had left us the previous year, just as my political consciousness had begun to dawn, and coming across such phenomena as free school dinners and social security inspectors had left me in no doubt that I was not a Conservative. At the same time, the Liberal Party was enjoying a of run by-election victories – including two on the same day in Ripon and the Isle of Ely – that made it seem terribly exciting. I can date my intellectual conversion to Liberalism to reading Mill and Popper¹ some five years later, but my party loyalty is rooted in this earlier period.

The road that cut across the one into which we had moved was called Logan Street, and I soon found there was a plaque at the town's swimming pool recording that it had been opened by a J. W. Logan MP. From odd paragraphs in local history books, I discovered that Logan had largely paid

for the pool himself and had also given the town the recreation ground that was near to my new home – his wealth had come from his success as a railway contractor. From local tradition I also learned that he was known as 'Paddy' Logan, had once started a fight on the floor of the Commons and, best of all, he had been a Liberal.

My knowledge of Paddy Logan remained at this level until, having been to university and worked in Birmingham and London, I found myself back in Market Harborough and with a job in Leicester. Behind my workplace stood the county record office, and I soon discovered that it held all sorts of Harborough Liberal treasures from the Victorian and Edwardian periods. With these and the library at the University of Leicester, I was able to expand my knowledge of Logan's career and of the golden age of Harborough Liberalism. For it turned out that the Liberals had held Harborough continuously from 1891 to 1918.

East Langton
cricket ground

I even took myself off to Dewsbury reference library, which holds a manuscript history of the firm of Logan & Hemingway, the railway contractors in which Logan was a partner. It turned out that his own father had been a Scottish navy who had begun contracting in a small way and built up the business from there. Logan & Hemingway were one of the major railway contractors of the late nineteenth century and built part of Great Central's London Extension.

I also discovered a remarkable pamphlet in the country record office which described Logan's conversion to radical Liberalism after seeing poverty in Ireland; one day I shall return to it as it deserves to be more widely known. In the mean time, I suggest that Logan's pro-Irish sympathies may provide the origins his nickname of 'Paddy'.

More recently, having acquired a digital camera and a blog where I can use the

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photographs, I have set out some of the places associated with the names I came across in that era. For instance, I found the grave of Thomas Tertius Paget, who enjoyed two brief spells as MP for the South Leicestershire constituency that existed until 1885, at the Unitarian church in Leicester. This congregation contained so many prominent Liberals in the nineteenth century, when the city was known as 'Radical Leicester', that it was called 'the Mayor's nest'.

I also went to East Langton, where Logan lived in the Grange. He gave the village a hall and also a cricket ground that was recently described by the blogger Down at Third Man² (2010) as 'the mythic cricket ground that all lovers of the game believe one day they will stumble on' – you can read a little of its history in a recent book on Logan and two other notables from the Langtons.³ I also found the village hall he had provided (now converted to private accommodation) and his cottage home for the children of men killed on his works.

This last discovery reminds me that the period in which I started researching Logan's career is also the period in which I conceived of Lord Bonkers and began to write his diaries for *Liberator*. It sounds improbable now, but I am convinced that I invented the Bonkers' Home for Well-Behaved Orphans before I discovered that Logan had founded a similar establishment.

No account of Paddy Logan's career is complete without an account of the fight in which he was involved on the floor of the Commons, but before we turn to that there is time to consider a few other Harborough Liberal personalities.

Logan resigned his Harborough seat twice for health reasons, thus giving him the unique distinction of having held the Stewardship of both the Manor of Northcliffe and the Chiltern Hundreds – the two offices for profit under the Crown that MPs conventionally take up when they wish to leave the Commons between elections. When Logan first resigned, in 1904, the

resultant by-election was fought and won for the Liberals by Philip Stanhope, a veteran radical who had lost his previous seat in Burnley over his outspoken opposition to the Boer War. Students of the period will not be surprised to learn that he managed to reconcile this radicalism with the ownership of a 145-room mansion in Kent.

At the 1906 general election Harborough was won for the Liberals by Rudolph Lehmann, better remembered today as the father of the writers John and Rosamond Lehmann and the of the actress Beatrix. He combined orthodox Liberal views of the day (I have a copy of a leaflet of his that has strong things to say about Chinese Labour) with membership of the committee of the National League for Opposing Woman Suffrage.

Logan returned as MP for Harborough at the second election of 1910, only to stand down again in 1916, thus landing the Liberals with a difficult by-election. Although there was a wartime truce with the Conservatives, the young Liberal candidate Percy Harris faced a strong challenge from an Independent with considerable press backing. He won, but lost the seat to the Conservatives in 1918 when, although a radical, he sided with Asquith and was thus refused the 'coupon' from the Lloyd George coalition. Harris went on to be an MP in the East End of London and a stalwart of the declining Parliamentary Liberal Party until 1945. He was recently revealed to be the great-grandfather of the recently retired Liberal Democrat MP Matthew Taylor – a fact that surprised everyone except, I suspect, Lord Bonkers.

Harris's defeat did not quite spell the end of Liberal success in Harborough. John Wycliffe Black, a prosperous businessman (it seems Percy Harris had turned his back on the seat because of the financial contribution he was asked to make), won the seat back at the 1923 general election, only to lose it the following year. I have a poster, incidentally, which suggests that Logan endorsed the Labour candidate ('No Tory–Liberal Coalition') at the 1924 general election.

Paddy Logan's cottage home





Water tower at East Langton Grange

However, you will be wondering about Logan and his fight in the Commons. It happened on the evening of 27 July 1893 as a division was taking place on Gladstone's second Home Rule bill. Contemporary accounts say that arguments continued on the floor of the House and, as he waited for the throng to clear, Logan crossed the chamber and sat down truculently beside Carson on the Conservative front bench. Hayes Fisher, a Tory MP, pushed him away. Logan elbowed back and was grabbed by more Tories, whereupon the Irish Nationalists waded in to support him. For the next twenty minutes elderly, frock-coated MPs belaboured one another. Hats were flattened, coats torn and faces bruised until the Serjeant-at-Arms was able to restore order. A later Leicestershire politician, the Conservative Guy Paget, described Logan as 'a man of dominant character with a violent temper over which he exercised little control'. I am sure this is unfair, although another contemporary account suggests that he was quite happy to settle a dispute with a recalcitrant workman with his fists.

Whatever the truth of this, Logan is not forgotten in Market Harborough. The town now has

a Logan Ward and if you visit its new swimming pool – I seconded the motion that got it built – you will find the stone commemorating Logan set up outside it. I hope the old boy would have approved.

Jonathan Calder has been a district councillor in Market Harborough and has written for Liberator, Liberal Democrat News, The Guardian and the New Statesman. He blogs at Liberal England.

- 1 Only after writing the entry on Popper for the *Dictionary of Liberal Thought* – J. Calder, 'Karl Popper', in D. Brack and E. Randall
- 2 Down at Third Man, 'A Vision of Perfection'. Retrieved 20 April 2010 from <http://downatthirdman.wordpress.com/2010/04/01/a-vision-of-perfection>.
- 3 D. Lewin, *Parson, Politician and Gentleman: Three Men of the Langtons* (Arnesby: Derek Lewin, 2009).

REPORTS

Red Guard versus Old Guard? The influence of the Young Liberal movement on the Liberal Party in the 1960s and 1970s

Fringe meeting, 12 March 2010, with Matt Cole, Michael Steed, William Wallace, George Kiloh, and Bernard Greaves.
Chair: Tony Greaves.

Report by **Graham Lippiatt**

IN THE 1960s the press coined the phrase 'Red Guard' to describe the radical politics of the youth wing of the Liberal Party. At the 1966 Assembly in Brighton, the Red Guard sponsored an anti-NATO resolution, and the Young Liberals were soon at the forefront of the opposition to apartheid and the Vietnam war. They took a leading role in the 'Stop the Seventy Tour' of South African cricket and rugby teams and their actions brought them into conflict with the party leadership under Jeremy Thorpe.

To bring these exciting times back to life, our spring conference fringe meeting took the form of a witness seminar of party activists

(eds.), *Dictionary of Liberal Thought* (London: Politico's, 2007) – did I discover that Bryan Magee, the great populariser of Popper's work in Britain had been evacuated to Market Harborough as a schoolboy and lived literally around the corner from where I used to live – in Logan Street: see B. Magee, *Growing up in a War* (London: Pimlico, 2007).

2 Down at Third Man, 'A Vision of Perfection'. Retrieved 20 April 2010 from <http://downatthirdman.wordpress.com/2010/04/01/a-vision-of-perfection>.

3 D. Lewin, *Parson, Politician and Gentleman: Three Men of the Langtons* (Arnesby: Derek Lewin, 2009).

from those years. The event was chaired by (Lord) Tony Greaves, sometime chair of the Manchester University Liberal Society and the University of Liberal Students (ULS), and in 1970, Chairman of the Young Liberals.

To introduce the topic we heard Dr Matt Cole, who lectures at the LSE for the Hansard Society and is the author of a forthcoming book about Richard Wainwright, the Liberal MP for Colne Valley. Dr Cole set out three main functions for youth movements in political parties and examined the record of the YLs to see how effectively they followed the model. First, the nursery function: the