

Journal of Liberal

HISTORY



The strange case of E.G. Hemmerde

David Dutton

The strange case of Edward Hemmerde

Report

The 2010 election in historical perspective John Curtice and Denis Kavanagh

Willis Pickard

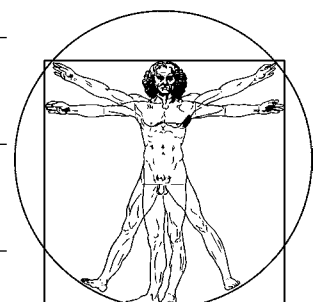
The 'member for Scotland' Duncan McLaren and Liberal dominance in Scotland

Michael Meadowcroft

Leeds and the Liberal pantheon Leeds' liberal heritage

Natascha Zowislo-Grünewald and Franz Beitzinger

Long-term trends in public opinion and the rise of the FDP The 2009 election



RIDING THE TIGER

THE LIBERAL EXPERIENCE OF COALITION GOVERNMENTS

SATURDAY 26 MARCH 2011, LSE, LONDON

A one-day seminar organised by the Archives Division of the London School of Economics, the British Liberal Political Studies Group and the *Journal of Liberal History*

Saturday 26 March 2011

LSE, Wolfson Theatre, New Academic Building, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2 2AE

The distinguished psephologist Dr David Butler has pointed out that coalitions between unequal partners can turn out to be like the relationship between the tiger and the young lady of Riga. But they can also last and achieve success, despite Disraeli's classic pronouncement that England does not love them. The formation of the present government offers a timely opportunity to re-examine the Liberal experience of coalitions in 19th and 20th century British history.

Speakers include (titles of contributions may change):

- **Professor Vernon Bogdanor**, Emeritus Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford: *'England does not love coalitions'* (Disraeli): an introduction to the Liberal experience of coalition politics
- **Dr Angus Hawkins**, Oxford University: *Whigs, Peelites and Liberals: coalition politics before 1886*
- **Dr Ian Cawood**, Newman University College, Birmingham: *The Liberal Unionists, 1886–1912*
- **Dr Ian Packer**, Lincoln University: *The formation and fall of the wartime coalition of HH Asquith, 1915–1916*
- **Professor Kenneth O. Morgan**: *Coalition Liberals 1918–1922: from coupon to National Liberal*
- **Professor David Dutton**, Liverpool University: *The Liberal Party and the National Government, 1931–1940*
- **Dr Alun Wyburn-Powell**, Leicester University: *Winston Churchill and coalitions*
- **Sue Donnelly**, Archives Division, LSE: *Relevant papers in the Liberal Party archives at the British Library of Political & Economic Science*

The cost of the seminar will be £15, to include refreshments at mid-morning and mid-afternoon. Registrations open on Monday 17 January. To register, please contact:

Archives Division, Library, London School of Economics

10 Portugal Street, London WC2A 2HD

Tel: 020 7955 7221

Email: document@lse.ac.uk

Understanding how the coalition is changing British politics

Friday 25 March 2011: LSE, London

A conference jointly organised by the British Liberal Political Studies Group and the Conservatives and Conservatism specialist groups of the Political Studies Association

Papers on the current Conservative – Liberal Democrat coalition will be given by leading political scientists and historians, and there will also be a roundtable discussion with Conservative and Liberal Democrat politicians examining successes and failures of the coalition from their perspective.

The price of attending the conference will be around £45, including lunch and refreshments. **To register, email Professor Russell Deacon at rdeacon@uwic.ac.uk**. Space is limited so please book early.

Journal of Liberal History

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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.

Chair: **Tony Little** Honorary President: **Lord Wallace of Saltaire**

LIBERAL HISTORY NEWS

WINTER 2010–11

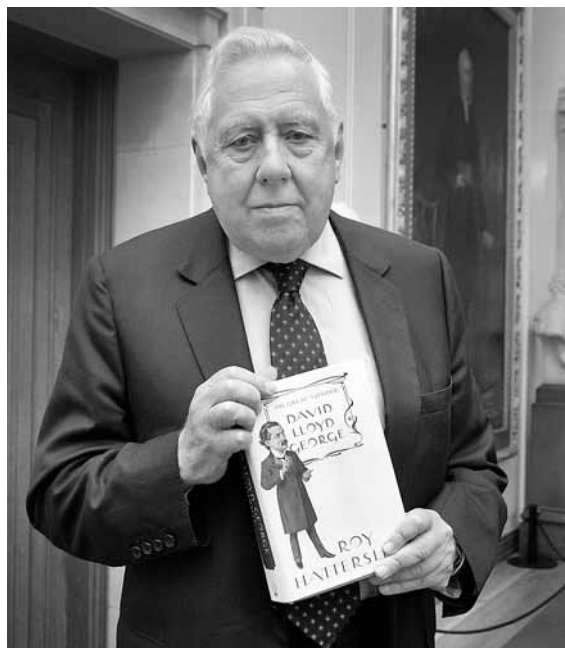
Liberal history news

is a new regular feature in the *Journal* (except in special themed issues), reporting news of meetings, conferences, commemorations, dinners or any other events, together with anything else of contemporary interest to our readers. Contributions are very welcome; please keep them reasonably concise, and accompany them, if possible, with photos. Email to the Editor on journal@liberalhistory.org.uk

Roy Hattersley lectures at Aberystwyth

THE DRWM at the National Library of Wales was packed on the evening of Thursday 23 September 2010 when Lord (Roy) Hattersley delivered a public lecture on the theme 'Lloyd George: the Great Outsider'.

J. Graham Jones reports.



This was the title of his new 700-page biography of Lloyd George launched at the National Liberal Club in London just a week earlier and published by Little, Brown. Mr Andrew Green, Librarian of the NLW, took the chair at the lecture, and the vote of thanks was delivered by Dr J. Graham Jones, Head of the Welsh Political Archive at the Library.

This is the first substantial single-volume biography of Lloyd George to be published since Peter Rowland's mammoth tome saw the light of day in 1975, and it has been generally well received. During the course of his research and reading for the biography, the author had already spent a period at the NLW in January 2009 making widespread use of the extensive Lloyd George archives and other relevant source materials in the custody of the Library. He had also quarried the Lloyd George Papers deposited at the Parliamentary Archive at the House of Lords.

Lord Hattersley spoke fluently without recourse to notes for about forty minutes to an obviously enthralled audience which clearly warmed to the speaker as he eagerly related many captivating anecdotes about Lloyd George and his family. His political career and complex personal and family life were well covered. Many pertinent questions were asked at the end, and several copies of the book were then purchased in the Library shop.

The biography will be reviewed, by Tomy Greaves, in a future edition of the *Journal of Liberal History*.

Community politics forty years on

AT THE Eastbourne Liberal Assembly in 1970, community politics was officially endorsed as an integral part of the strategy of the Liberal Party. **Graham Lippiatt** reports on a discussion on the topic held at the West Midlands regional conference.

The theoretical foundation of community politics was that Liberals should assist people to take and use power in their own communities. The practical application was that Liberals would produce community newsletters, report back on political activity, work with individuals and community groups, collect petitions and find out what people wanted in their locality through surveys and 'grumble sheets'. This soon led to success in local government elections, pioneered by activists like Sir Trevor Jones ('Jones the Vote') in Liverpool, and laid the foundations for a revival of Liberal fortunes in the aftermath of the poor performance of the 1970 general election.

In 1980, *The Theory and Practice of Community Politics*, written by Bernard Greaves and Gordon Lishman, was published as an Association of Liberal Councillors campaign booklet. The document made the philosophical principles on which community politics was based more widely understood and became a Liberal handbook for local government campaigning.

While community politics has been the jewel in the Liberal crown since 1970 it is always worthwhile revisiting the givens

in politics and to do so, a fringe discussion meeting was organised at the West Midlands Liberal Democrats regional conference on 20 November at Church Street in Shropshire. The meeting examined the background to the adoption of the community politics strategy and considered some of the present-day challenges to community politics as a distinctively Liberal approach. It was delivered in morning and afternoon sessions, chaired by Graham Lippiatt, Secretary of the Liberal Democrat History Group, and was addressed by Gordon Lishman, joint author of *The Theory and Practice of Community Politics* and the person who both drafted the original motion at Eastbourne and summed up in the debate there. The full break-out rooms seemed to enjoy the mixture of debate and nostalgia.

Who killed the *News Chronicle*?

FIFTY YEARS ago after the famous Liberal *News Chronicle* disappeared, **York Membery** reports on its fate.

Few national newspapers can have met so sad and sudden an end as the *News Chronicle*, which ‘died’ fifty years ago, disappearing overnight despite boasting a circulation of over a million – more than many of today’s nationals.

On the morning of October 17, 1960 – ‘Black Monday’ as it would become known – the newspaper, Liberal at heart to the end, appeared as normal. The paper had been losing circulation, and there was speculation about its future. But staff turning up at its offices in Bouverie Street (off Fleet Street) that day were sent out on assignment as usual. As darkness fell, though, fears for its future were brutally realised when it was announced that the paper had been ‘merged’ with the rival *Daily Mail* in a move that sent shock waves throughout Fleet Street and beyond.

The following day the paper’s loyal readers were left wondering what had happened when it failed to appear; the *Mail*’s new-look masthead made its fate clear, stating ‘Incorporating the *News Chronicle*’. Both

Lord Rothermere, the owner of the *Daily Mail*, and Laurence Cadbury, owner of the *News Chronicle*, expressed ‘regret’ at the passing of the paper (along with the *Star*, its London evening sister), reported the *Mail*. But ‘mounting costs and continued losses’ had made it ‘impossible’ for the *Chronicle* to continue as ‘a separate entity’, it claimed, before adding that Cadbury believed the two papers had ‘much in common in the integrity of their reporting and honesty of their outlook’.

Few were taken in by the sugary words and ‘the brutal way in which it was done to death remains one of the darkest chapters in Fleet Street’s murky history,’ says Derek Jameson, the former Fleet Street editor. Just about every national carried an obituary. *The Guardian* said: ‘To write dispassionately about the death of friends is not easy.’ Even the Conservative-supporting *Daily Express* was magnanimous, declaring: ‘Last night a fine newspaper died. Families grew up with the paper: it was their voice. Now that voice is stilled.’

Some titles were particularly critical about the *News Chron*’s choice of ‘saviour’. The *Daily Mirror* called it ‘a shotgun romance – a nuptial ceremony between Like and Unlike, with Dis-like as the best man.’ But it was too late, and Jo Grimond, the Liberal Party leader, could only say hopefully: ‘I trust that the *Daily Mail* will maintain the high standards and liberal outlook associated for so long with the newspaper.’

The Liberal-leaning, if sometimes Labour-supporting (it backed Labour in 1945, 1950 and 1951 but called for a big Liberal vote in 1955 and 1959) *News Chron* had an illustrious past. It was created in 1930 out of the merger of two Liberal-supporting papers, the *Daily News* (1846) – first editor: Charles Dickens – and the *Daily Chronicle* (1855). The *Daily News* had been bought by George Cadbury (the Quaker chocolate-maker) in 1901 to campaign for pensions and against sweated labour. Inheriting the *Daily News*’ radicalism, the *Chron* made its name in the 1930s when it assembled ‘one of the finest staffs known to modern journalism’,

A paper ‘that shouldn’t have died’, in the words of the *Encyclopaedia of the British Press*, met a sad and sorry end, while the Liberal Party was deprived of its last cheerleader in the popular press

as Michael Foot put it, and was at the forefront of the battle against fascism at home and abroad.

By 1960, though, the paper was clearly one of the weaker players in Fleet Street. But despite speculation about its future, the eventual demise of the *Chronicle* (and the *Star*) still came as a bolt from the blue, resulting in 3,500 staff (including 300 journalists) being thrown out of work. There was also anger among staff that Cadbury had sold out to the *Daily Mail* of all papers – the two were chalk and cheese politically.

Fifty years on, it still beggars belief that a newspaper with a circulation of around 1.2 million – selling more than today’s *Times*, *Guardian* and *Independent* combined – could disappear overnight. So who was to blame for its demise?

Within days of Cadbury selling the *News Chron* to Rothermere for £2m, news emerged of other possible suitors, including Sir Christopher Chancellor, chairman of Odhams (which owned the *Daily Herald*), and Lord Beaverbrook. But by then it was too late. The leading Liberal, Jeremy Thorpe, complained that at no time prior to the ‘merger’ had party leaders been told that the paper was likely to close. If it had, he claimed, ‘the necessary money would have been raised’ to save a paper which he and his colleagues believed was ‘vital’ to the Liberal interest.

Some have argued that the *News Chron* was killed off by the print unions and overstaffing. Others blame the management. The truth is that for all the Cadbury family’s support over the years, by 1960 Laurence Cadbury seems to have lost the will to keep it alive, ignoring every circulation-boosting suggestion. ‘He was never committed to the *News Chron* in the way that an earlier generation of Cadburys had been,’ said one former staffer. But whether the *Chron*’s demise was murder or suicide, the result was fatal – and a paper ‘that shouldn’t have died’, in the words of the *Encyclopaedia of the British Press*, met a sad and sorry end, while the Liberal Party was deprived of its last cheerleader in the popular press.

THE STRANGE EDWARD HEMMERDE

E. G. Hemmerde was Liberal MP for East Denbighshire from 1906 to 1910, and for North-West Norfolk from 1912 to 1918, and then Labour MP for Crewe from 1922 to 1924. His political career was dogged by controversy, both over the state of his finances and through his dedication to his other career – as a successful lawyer, who held the post of Recorder of Liverpool for four decades.

David Dutton traces the strange story of Edward Hemmerde.



THE BIGGEST CASE OF HEMMERDE

ON 22 November 1910, in the midst of the second general election campaign of that year, it was announced in the press that E. G. Hemmerde, the sitting Liberal MP for East Denbighshire, would not, in fact, be defending his seat. As the political correspondent of the *Liverpool Daily Post* noted, the decision had been taken in deference to the urgent representations of the party's Chief Whip, the Master of Elibank, and 'members of the party even more prominent' that such a talented campaigner should not be wasted in defending a safe seat.¹ Instead, in what was expected nationally to be a close contest,² Hemmerde would transfer his attention to Portsmouth, one of the Liberal Party's key target seats, which was currently held by the Unionist frontbencher Lord Charles Beresford. The latter's alleged scaremongering about the dangers of invasion facing the country had made him a particular bête noire of the Liberal government. Elibank, recognising the 'ties of comradeship and friendship' that bound Hemmerde to the local Liberal Association, and acknowledging the inconvenience which his intervention

was bound to cause, none the less insisted that 'we live in days of crisis and we want our best men to lead our people where the fight is most strenuous'.³ It was a difficult request to resist.

Hemmerde had made his intentions known to a meeting of the East Denbighshire Liberal Party's executive committee on 21 November. A resolution was hastily passed unanimously expressing the committee's 'deep regret' at the prospect of losing their candidate but at the same time congratulating him on having been selected for such an important mission. 'We tender to Mr Hemmerde our most cordial thanks for the great services which he has rendered to East Denbighshire, and wish him every good luck in his courageous undertaking.' That evening the news was broken to a meeting of the party faithful and, two days later, a farewell reception was held at the Drill Hall, Wrexham, presided over by Alderman Edward Hughes, chairman of the local Liberal Party's finance committee. Hughes recalled that, four years earlier, it had been his privilege and pleasure to preside over the first meeting which Hemmerde had held in Wrexham as prospective

parliamentary candidate for the constituency. Now he had the privilege, 'but certainly not the pleasure', of occupying the chair as Wrexham Liberals said their good-byes to Hemmerde as their Member of Parliament and sent him forth 'to one of the biggest fights in the country'. Amidst concerted cries of 'for he's a jolly good fellow', Hemmerde took his leave setting out for the railway station and an uncertain electoral future in Portsmouth.⁴

Yet this public display of local Liberal unity and comradeship in the face of the broader needs of the national party bore little relation to the reality of Hemmerde's chequered career as East Denbighshire's MP, which had been mired in controversy and dispute from the start. After unsuccessfully contesting Shrewsbury for the Liberals in the general election of January 1906, Hemmerde shifted his attention to East Denbighshire only a few months later when the sitting Liberal member, Samuel Moss, was obliged to resign following his appointment as a county court judge. Even before his selection as candidate for the division, Hemmerde showed that he was not going to impede his own career aspirations by an over-scrupulous

Edward Hemmerde (1871–1948) as Recorder of Liverpool and leader of the Northern Circuit

adherence to prevailing conventions and norms. While the other Liberal hopefuls, responding to the expressed wishes of local party officials, refrained from holding any public meetings in the constituency, Hemmerde was already 'quite as active as though he were in the thick of the contest', arguing that the Liberal Association had no right to issue an edict banning such gatherings.⁵ When the Liberal selection process was reduced to a final choice between two hopefuls, Hemmerde again caused surprise by circulating an open letter to the constituency's electors in which he warned them not to 'be governed by Wrexham wirepullers'.⁶ It was even reported as 'an unpleasant rumour' that, if not chosen as Liberal candidate, Hemmerde intended to stand as an independent Labour candidate. In a constituency where the retiring MP had presented himself, at the recent general election, under the terms of the MacDonald–Gladstone Pact of 1903, as a joint Liberal–Labour nominee, such a prospect opened up the possibility of a Conservative by-election victory on a minority vote.⁷ In the event, with the backing of Edward Hughes, Hemmerde duly secured selection and went on to defeat his Conservative opponent.

Notwithstanding the circumstances of his selection, East Denbighshire Liberals seemed to have good reason to congratulate themselves on securing the services of a talented parliamentary representative, one who could look forward to a distinguished career. Born in Peckham in 1871 and educated at Winchester and University College, Oxford, where he took a first in Classical Moderations in 1892 before graduating with a B.C.L. (Bachelor in Civil Law) in 1896, Hemmerde had already embarked upon a career at the bar. Intellectual distinction was matched by sporting prowess. Hemmerde excelled at cricket and football, threw the hammer against Cambridge and won the Diamond Sculls at Henley in 1900. Strikingly, in view of what would happen later, the press commented upon evidence of his readiness to address public meetings in this

constituency and elsewhere.⁸ To the electors of East Denbighshire Hemmerde presented himself as 'an advanced democrat, in sympathy with both Liberal and Labour Parties and believing that the Liberal Party can best serve the nation's interests by pressing forward those reforms which the Labour Party demands, and has a right to demand'.⁹ To the pleasure of many of his new constituents he also supported home rule for Wales.

But it was not long before Hemmerde showed signs that his responsibilities as an MP would not be allowed to stand in the way of his legal career. In August 1907 he went to Jamaica and, after being called to the Bar there, appeared in a series of cases against insurance companies arising out of a famous earthquake fire. His letter at this time to Edward Hughes must have caused the latter some concern:

I shall rely upon you to keep things turning in E[ast] D[enbighshire] while I am raking in the fees out here, and endeavouring to make a big reputation which may take me a long [way] towards being a K. C.¹⁰

Hemmerde won his cases and also successfully contended the Appeal case in the Privy Council, as a result of which the companies paid out about £700,000 in claims and £75,000 in costs.¹¹ The young barrister could not conceal his joy:

I have had the most wonderful success: have smashed up the opposition at every point of the game, have netted £3500 and expect to double that before May, have applied to the Lord Chancellor for silk, and have generally covered myself with glory.¹²

Hemmerde duly took silk in 1908 and, the following year, became Recorder of Liverpool. It was a surprise appointment, not least because this office carried a higher salary than any Recordership outside London. It also necessitated his resubmission to the voters of East Denbighshire in a further by-election – though it is clear that he initially hoped

It was not long before Hemmerde showed signs that his responsibilities as an MP would not be allowed to stand in the way of his legal career.

that Hughes could use his influence to avoid an actual contest. At thirty-seven he was about fifteen years younger than any previous holder of this post, and friends confidently predicted that he was now well placed to 'break other records'.¹³ But Hemmerde's advancing legal career merely served to bring to a head mounting tensions in his relationship with his constituency. Feeling was growing among local Liberal activists that Hemmerde was neglecting the routine, but necessary, duties of a constituency member. For his part, the MP, like many others with no great wealth to fall back on, had a clear (and strictly limited) perception of what could be expected of an unpaid MP who also had to earn his living. He was, not surprisingly, a declared advocate of the payment of members to make 'Parliament open to all men regardless of their wealth'.¹⁴ A letter to Hughes in June 1908 defined Hemmerde's position with brutal clarity:

I foresee difficulties of the gravest character unless you and my other friends will realise what my position in London is. It is absolutely impossible for me to leave my business in the middle of a week and attend meetings or Eisteddfods. I should be ruined if I did. I say this because there is a constant under current of dissatisfaction at my not being present on this or that ceremonial or political occasion ... It is quite obvious that you yourself have no idea of the strain upon a busy barrister. You constantly suggest my presence at functions which are nothing to do with serious political work.¹⁵

For the first time Hemmerde even hinted that he might, with regret, be forced to seek another seat at the next election if attitudes among local Liberal officials did not change.

For his part Edward Hughes refused to accept Hemmerde's definition of what it was and was not reasonable to expect of a constituency MP, especially when this worked to the detriment of the local party. The member's reluctance to attend a temperance

meeting in the constituency gave rise to a particularly heated exchange between the two men. There were, Hughes insisted, 'strong undercurrents' and Hemmerde's 'friends on the spot' were fully alive to these and concerned about his interests. They 'deem it best that you should be in the front on every possible occasion; and you must allow that they know what is best to be done for the purpose of securing your position'. If Hemmerde failed to attend, it was impossible to estimate the damage that might be done. It would be 'equivalent to "chucking" the seat away' and the fact that the leading Labour figure, Arthur Henderson, would be in attendance only served to underline the importance of the MP's presence. 'Welsh people who are so intensely interested in this matter can never be brought to agree that a Social Engagement should be placed in front of the claim of your constituency.'¹⁶ But Hemmerde could not be moved and he complained of the 'lack of consideration' with which he had been treated in this matter. The real reason for his absence, he insisted, was that a rest from the strain of public speaking and of long train journeys had become 'absolutely imperative'. He refused categorically to represent East Denbighshire, or any other constituency, on the basis Hughes suggested. 'I shall not be present,' he concluded. 'You can take this as definite and final.'¹⁷

By the autumn of 1909, as the country moved uneasily towards a constitutional crisis over the rejection of Lloyd George's budget by the Conservative-dominated House of Lords, the prospect of another general election was in the air. Hemmerde viewed such a possibility without enthusiasm. He was 'so thoroughly tired out' – presumably more as a result of his legal than his political work – 'that I am quite prepared to retire'. Indeed, he would 'rather retire than go once more round the constituency before Xmas'. He had, he asserted, the offer of 'several safe seats'. East Denbighshire would have to accept its MP on his terms or not at all:

I am sick of the talk of friction in E[ast] D[enbighshire]. If they

E. G. Hemmerde, depicted by 'Spy' (Leslie Ward) in *Vanity Fair*, 19 May 1909; the caption is 'The New Recorder'



are tired of me I will go. But I decline to degrade myself to the level of the party hack who hugs his constituency for dear life, platitudinising with his friends. I think I am cut out for better things and I shall act upon that belief.¹⁸

In the event Hemmerde failed even to appear in the constituency until a matter of days before the voters of East Denbighshire went to the polls. It seems that the MP was worried about the expense of another contest, his fourth in four years, and intended, through his absence, to lead by example as far as the avoidance of expenditure was concerned:

I can only fight now on condition that economy is practised down to the smallest detail. Please protect me in every way. I think that everything ought to be done inside £500 and I cannot pay more. The election must be conducted upon that understanding and all expenses which cannot be brought within this limit must be ruthlessly cut off.¹⁹

With the Liberal candidate accepting speaking engagements in neighbouring constituencies rather than his own, Hughes had, in practice, to lead the local campaign himself. His pleas that Hemmerde should reorder his priorities – ‘we find it absolutely impossible to do the work within that time [seven days], and we ask that you will arrange to cut out one of the Flintshire meetings’ – were in vain.²⁰ Indeed, it is a tribute to Hughes’s own electioneering skills, and an indication, perhaps, that the voters were not unduly troubled by having a largely absent MP, that Hemmerde still managed to increase his majority over his Conservative opponent.²¹

Nationally, the general election of January 1910 led to a near dead-heat between the Liberal and Conservative parties. But the conditional support of the Labour and Irish Nationalist members enabled Asquith’s government to remain in office and seek a resolution of the constitutional crisis occasioned by the Lords’ rejection of the budget. When inter-party

negotiations failed to produce a settlement, the government determined to introduce legislation to limit the powers of the upper chamber, a development which necessitated a further general election before the end of 1910. It was against this background that Hemmerde decided to accept the Chief Whip’s invitation to contest the Conservative seat of Portsmouth and sever his increasingly strained links with the voters of East Denbighshire.

At first it seemed that this second general election of 1910 would witness one further round in the difficult partnership between the MP and his local party. In another angry exchange of letters between Hemmerde and Hughes, the former denounced the ‘cruel and wicked’ charge that he had been ‘neglecting the Division’ and pointed to ‘one long succession of illness and domestic worry’ to explain his absence and his poor record in the House of Commons division lobby. Recognising that ‘a good many’ in the constituency would regard a serious breakdown in his health as ‘God sent’, Hemmerde promised to give his critics ‘something serious to think about in the course of the next few weeks’.²² By this stage the MP’s smouldering feud with Edward Hughes was coming into the open for the first time. Finally persuaded to address an audience at Rhoson-Sea, in early October, Hemmerde could not hide his feelings for the man who was chairing the meeting. As the local newspaper reported, ‘a vulgar attack had been made upon him, suggesting that he had refused to subscribe to propaganda work’. If there had been any misunderstanding, ‘it had been Mr Hughes’s fault’. Hemmerde seized the opportunity to voice some of the grievances, particularly financial, that had characterised his relationship with East Denbighshire ever since his first election. He ‘should not be one of the subscribing Members of Parliament, and he should not be one of the bazaar opening members’. He regarded the practice of trying to turn members into ‘some sort of relieving officer for the district’ as ‘degrading’.²³

In all the circumstances, and notwithstanding fulsome public expressions of regret, the MP and his local party were probably relieved that the Chief Whip’s intervention afforded them the opportunity to end their troubled relationship. Hughes’s correspondence with Hemmerde had scarcely been restrained hitherto, but if the need to maintain some sort of working relationship had previously imposed an element of discretion, this final parting of the ways allowed the two men to drop the last pretence of civility. The latest cause of their antagonism was, predictably, financial – the payment for Hemmerde’s farewell gathering at the Drill Hall, Wrexham. If, Hemmerde stressed, the Executive of the East Denbighshire Liberal Association had ‘the incredible meanness’ to ask him to pay these expenses, he would do so, but only on receipt of a signed requisition from the executive officers. ‘I shall then know my friends in East Denbighshire.’ But for Hughes, personally, the retiring MP reserved his most barbed invective:

Your hypocrisy which, after you have heaped my wife and myself with a treachery which leaves Judas amongst the ‘also rans’, allows you to express an interest in our future happiness and prosperity, is to me simply nauseating, and I desire to have no further communication with you. For your own sake I can only hope that the price of your treachery may in some measure compensate you for the sacrifice of your honour.²⁴

Hughes, however, was not prepared to allow Hemmerde the last word and proved himself at least the MP’s equal in the matter of personal invective:

The vulgar abuse, contained in the concluding paragraph of your letter, is characteristic of you and if you had added to your other charges the additional accusation of my being a ‘Snob’ you would have correctly portrayed the characteristic features of your own record during the period of your representation of East Denbighshire, and accurately

In all the circumstances, and notwithstanding fulsome public expressions of regret, the MP and his local party were probably relieved that the Chief Whip’s intervention afforded them the opportunity to end their troubled relationship.

outlined the reputation which accompanied you into the division. Some of the best informed members of the party here believed the reports then circulated about you. I cannot now but come to the conclusion that their belief was well founded.²⁵

Hughes, however, was not finished. Hemmerde, he suggested, had not the remotest idea what generosity, loyalty or gratitude meant, while his 'personal and intimate acquaintance' with meanness, hypocrisy and treachery drove him to judge others by his own standards. The MP's record in East Denbighshire had been 'the concentrated essence' of his vices. His meanness was 'proverbial' while his snobbery left Pecksniff²⁶ among the also rans. 'That snobbishness which caused the constant reiteration of the alleged fact that you went to the same school as the Duke of Marlborough is only equaled [sic] by the nauseating conceit which prompted you to state that Mr Lloyd George did not welcome you into the Welsh party because he was jealous of your platform ability.' In sum,

You have used East Denbighshire for your own ends and would continue to do so if you had your own way. In your letter to me of 12 November last, the interest of the people of the division did not enter into the calculation, all you thought of was 'self' (to use your own words).²⁷

In between abusing one another, Hughes and Hemmerde had to give urgent attention to the forthcoming election. The latter's first intention had been to allow himself to be nominated for both East Denbighshire and Portsmouth so that, in the event of failure in his new constituency, he would still have the opportunity of returning to parliament. If successful in Portsmouth, however, he would leave the other division 'to work out its own salvation as best it could'. Hughes opposed this suggestion from the outset, so Hemmerde next suggested that a replacement candidate should be nominated by himself, presumably in

the expectation that such a figure could be persuaded to stand down should the need arise. Once again Hughes voiced his objections, claimed the right to be nominated himself, and informed Hemmerde that he would consider it a personal affront if he suggested any other name. Hughes, however, had no real wish to embark upon a parliamentary career and, as soon as Hemmerde had announced his intention of contesting Portsmouth to the East Denbighshire Executive Committee, left for London by the first train the following morning. After conferring with Elibank, David Lloyd George, Sir Herbert Roberts, the prospective chairman of the Welsh Liberal party, and the majority of the other Welsh members, Hughes managed to secure the services of Edward Thomas John, the director of a smelting and mining company and a committed Welsh nationalist. Returning to Wrexham, Hughes then persuaded the local executive to submit John's name, and his alone, to the Liberal 'Thousand' for formal adoption.

Realising that he had been outwitted, Hemmerde addressed a public meeting at which he tried to convey the impression that no replacement candidate had been found to succeed him and suggesting that the workmen of East Denbighshire could find a suitable nominee from among their own number. Ironically, in view of what had already passed in private, Hemmerde even seemed ready to offer financial support:

There were men in East Denbighshire who would be a greater credit to the British House of Commons than half the people who might be invited from outside because they could afford to fight. Let them try and find some young Lloyd George and let him (Mr Hemmerde) know if it was a question of money, he would see what he could do.²⁸

Several local party leaders left the platform on hearing Hemmerde's words, while Hughes himself received a veiled threat that, if Hemmerde should prove

Still under forty years of age, Hemmerde was keen to return to the House of Commons as quickly as possible, not least because he now nurtured ambitions of a ministerial career.

unsuccessful in his new constituency, there might yet be 'implications' for East Denbighshire.²⁹ In the event John's formal adoption passed without difficulty and he went on to defeat his Conservative challenger in the general election in December with a majority only slightly down from that secured by Hemmerde in January.³⁰ In the meantime, Hemmerde failed to unseat the sitting Conservative member in Portsmouth.³¹

Still under forty years of age, Hemmerde was keen to return to the House of Commons as quickly as possible, not least because he now nurtured ambitions of a ministerial career. A by-election in the safe Liberal seat of Keighley in Yorkshire in November 1911 was of obvious interest. The Chief Whip, however, had other plans and, 'in view of possible changes in the government', was keen to secure the early return to parliament of Stanley Buckmaster, who had narrowly lost his Cambridge seat in December 1910. Hemmerde's reaction echoed the outraged indignation that had so often characterised his exchanges with Edward Hughes:

I cannot tell you how amazed I am to see that the Government are attempting to get Buckmaster adopted for Keighley. It is difficult to speak or write coolly of so scandalous a breach of faith ... The matter is aggravated by the fact that in my absence from the House it is clearly the intention of the government to make Buckmaster Solicitor-General when Rufus Isaacs is promoted. He is not only to be given a seat which was promised to me, but solely for the reason that I am temporarily out of the House he is to be preferred to me for an office which my services to the party give me a greater claim to than do his.³²

Hemmerde's suspicions were in due course confirmed. Buckmaster was returned for Keighley and, in October 1913, when the Attorney-General, Sir Rufus Isaacs, was appointed Lord Chief Justice to be replaced by Sir John Simon, Buckmaster duly joined the government in Simon's old position of Solicitor-General.³³

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But it was not only competition from fellow Liberal lawyers with which Hemmerde had to contend. One man at least was determined to do his best to prevent Hemmerde's return to the Commons – and that was Edward Hughes. Hearing that the former's name was being considered for a vacancy in Gloucestershire, Hughes made confidential contact with the local party chairman. 'Although I was in large measure responsible for securing Mr Hemmerde's adoption here in 1906', he admitted, 'I should certainly not support him had I a vote in your division.' Hughes warned that, if he were not adopted, Hemmerde might still run as an independent candidate. If he did, 'please let me know and I will arrange for a strong contingent of Liberal leaders from East Denbighshire to come down to speak against him, including the Chairman of our Executive Committee and myself as Chairman of the Finance Committee'.³⁴

Notwithstanding Hemmerde's disappointment, Keighley was not in fact an ideal seat from his point of view. There was no Lib-Lab agreement in the constituency and the local Liberal party was dominated by 'a group which had little sympathy for the aspirations of the working class and which regarded the socialists as naïve dreamers and troublemakers'.³⁵ Hemmerde's claims for consideration in a more radical constituency were given a boost by his emergence as one of the leaders of the so-called Single Tax movement.³⁶ Followers of the American theorist Henry George, land taxers believed that the individual ownership of land was a fundamental evil. As land was essential to the creation of all other forms of wealth, and existed for the benefit of all, the solution was to impose a tax on the unimproved value of land. While land taxes were widely seen as a 'mildly progressive way to redistribute land-owners' wealth',³⁷ a group of so-called Single Taxers had emerged in the 1906 parliament, originally led by figures such as Alexander Ure, Solicitor-General and later Lord Advocate for Scotland, and Charles Trevelyan, MP for Elland in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

Such men believed that the proceeds of the land tax would eventually permit all other taxes to be abolished.

Disappointed by the land tax provisions in Lloyd George's celebrated 1909 budget, the Single Taxers determined to take their campaign to the people and attempted to make the taxation of land values the central issue of a number of by-elections in 1912. According to A. C. Murray, brother of the Chief Whip,

the group is running for all it is worth an extreme land policy, which in effect, although they deny it, amounts to a single tax on land values. The members of the group are becoming more arrogant every day, one of them having the audacity to say that there was no place in the Liberal Party for anyone who did not accept their policy.³⁸

In the most famous of the by-elections at Hanley in the Potteries in July, the advanced radical, R. L. Outhwaite, with Hemmerde figuring prominently in his campaign, captured a seat which had previously been held by the Lib-Lab MP, Enoch Edwards. Two months earlier, however, Hemmerde himself had stood as Liberal candidate in North-West Norfolk. This agricultural constituency was already held by the party, but the position was by no means secure and Hemmerde's success in retaining the seat was widely attributed to 'a campaign of robust Liberalism, on the lines of land reform'.³⁹

The reactions to this result by the leadership of the two main parties are instructive. The Chancellor, Lloyd George, who had sent Hemmerde an enthusiastic letter of endorsement on the eve of the poll, promptly set up a Land Enquiry and invited Hemmerde to become a member of it. Meanwhile, the Conservative Chief Whip pondered the electoral implications of Hemmerde's victory:

I do not like the Norfolk by-election. It is true we have reduced the Radical majority by fifty per cent, but the Radical victory will be treated as a

triumph, not for Home Rule, Disestablishment, or Insurance, but as a proof that Lloyd George's recent excursion into bucolic problems, is the only method of retaining the shires. A minimum wage of twenty shillings a week for agricultural labourers, and the further promise that the towns shall pay for the country – these are the implied results of the recent policy – to be embodied no doubt in a budget of 1913 contrived to re-establish falling Radical credit as was the case with the Finance bill of 1909.⁴⁰

In the event, Hemmerde proved less troublesome as a member of Lloyd George's committee than many, including the Chancellor, had anticipated. 'Hemmerde whom we all dreaded was specially helpful', reported Lloyd George in September 1913. 'That is what comes of [meeting] troubles in advance.'⁴¹ The reason for the MP's moderation must remain a matter of speculation. Quite possibly, his continuing hopes of a ministerial career necessitated a cautious approach to avoid alienating those upon whom his future advancement would depend. In addition, Hemmerde's determination to continue to pursue his legal career made him an irregular contributor to the committee's deliberations. This in turn was probably linked to his ongoing financial problems which had in no sense been limited to disputes over the financing of his former constituency party in East Denbighshire. In 1909, injudicious speculation on the stock market left Hemmerde facing the prospect of bankruptcy and disqualification from the Commons.⁴² His career was saved only when the celebrated charlatan, Horatio Bottomley, then Liberal MP for South Hackney, organised a round-robin collection of £10,000 among his fellow MPs.⁴³ Interestingly, in December 1908 Bottomley and three associates had been summoned for trial on a charge of conspiracy to defraud the shareholders of the Joint Stock Trust and Financial Corporation. While Bottomley defended himself, Hemmerde appeared on behalf

Hemmerde's success in retaining the seat was widely attributed to 'a campaign of robust Liberalism, on the lines of land reform'.



of the accused company auditor, Dalton Easum.⁴⁴

Hemmerde, however, was nothing if not talented and resourceful. Beyond politics and the law he sought a third career, and possibly financial security, as a playwright, under the pseudonym of Edward Denby. His biggest success came with 'The Butterfly on the Wheel', written in conjunction with a fellow Liberal MP, Francis Neilson. In practice, Hemmerde's contribution was extremely limited. The third act was set in the divorce court and for this the barrister made 'a few technical changes'. Otherwise the play was Neilson's work. This, however, did not prevent Hemmerde from taking half the resulting royalties and insisting that all monies should be placed in one account.⁴⁵ The play was first produced in 1911 and enjoyed a West End revival a decade later. The two authors had met at the beginning of the century and Neilson offered considerable financial support to Hemmerde's early political career, including managing his interests during the

Francis Neilson (1867–1961), Hemmerde's co-author of 'A Butterfly on the Wheel'

East Denbighshire by-election of 1909, necessitated by Hemmerde's appointment as Recorder of Liverpool. A relationship of financial dependence soon developed. As Neilson later recorded:

When he was accepted by the [North-West Norfolk] Liberal Committee, I took my family to Hunstanton and remained in the division during the whole contest. Also, from my own purse, I paid the expenses of several well-known speakers. It was a difficult job I undertook, for, ever since Hemmerde had claimed half authorship and half fees in the plays, my wife and children regarded him as 'a very unpleasant person'.⁴⁶

After the war, by which time Neilson had settled in the United States after a brief career as MP for Hyde (1910–1916), Hemmerde began to spread the rumour that his own financial difficulties resulted from Neilson's failure to repay money owed. In 1921 Neilson's wife received 'a long letter which she regarded as a threat, if not something bordering on blackmail'.⁴⁷ Neilson found the whole affair 'most distressing' but, out of respect for Hemmerde's wife (whom Hemmerde divorced in 1922) and their children, decided not to follow his solicitors' advice to take his complaint to the courts. 'I now realise', he wrote in his memoirs published in 1953, and therefore after Hemmerde's death, 'that this was probably the reason why some of my former friends believed Hemmerde's claim was just'.⁴⁸

In the meantime Hemmerde had had to confront further crises in his political career. As with so many of his Liberal colleagues, his prospects were transformed by the impact of the First World War. His radical credentials made him inherently suspicious of the drift to all-out war, particularly after the one-time champion of Liberal radicalism, David Lloyd George, had taken up this cause in coalition with the Tory enemy. But, at the same time, Hemmerde distanced himself from Lord Lansdowne's call for a peace without victors or vanquished.⁴⁹ He wanted an allied victory, but a just one. Ironically, indeed,

Hemmerde was speaking in the Commons in December 1917 in favour of the fair treatment of Germany when his chambers in the Inner Temple were bombed. Hemmerde was thus an inevitable ally of Herbert Asquith in the deepening split which characterised Liberal politics after December 1916. But self-interest was never far from his mind and, with Lloyd George clearly holding most of the cards, Hemmerde suddenly reversed his position and voted with the coalition government in the crucial Maurice Debate of May 1918. When he was included in the select group of Liberal MPs invited to Downing Street on 12 November, it seemed that his reward would be the granting of the 'coupon' in the general election that autumn. To his dismay, however, this letter of endorsement, and the probability of electoral success which it entailed, was given to Hemmerde's Conservative opponent. Angrily, he withdrew from the contest and subsequently campaigned actively for the Labour candidate.⁵⁰ By 1920 Hemmerde, like many of the pre-war land taxers and, ironically, also E. T. John, his successor in East Denbighshire, had joined the Labour Party. In the general election of 1922 he was successfully returned for the Crewe division of Cheshire, where he defeated the sitting Coalition Liberal member by just 555 votes.

Hemmerde's political conversion, coupled with his re-election to parliament, breathed new life into his continuing hopes of a ministerial career. On the one hand the Labour party's fortunes were clearly in the ascendant, largely at the expense of the declining Liberals. More specifically, as Labour moved ever closer to forming a government, the question was bound to arise of the filling of key specialised offices. The 'scarcity value' of professional lawyers on the Labour benches 'meant that they achieved office relatively easily', opening up tantalising opportunities for one whom *The Times* described as 'one of the shining legal lights of the Labour Party'.⁵¹ Hemmerde's opportunity came when Baldwin called a surprise general election in December

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1923. Though the Conservatives remained the largest single party at Westminster, Labour, supporting free trade, emerged as the victors from an election fought specifically on the issue of tariffs. In Crewe Hemmerde increased his majority to nearly 6,000. The Labour vote held up well, but the intervention this time of a Tory candidate forced the Liberal into third place. Hemmerde was clearly optimistic about receiving office in the new government, not least because Henry Slessor, one of the few Labour lawyers who could claim a long-standing association with the party, failed to secure election in Leeds Central, a result that was perhaps not surprising granted the candidate's declaration that he was not a socialist as that term was generally understood.⁵² A rumour even circulated that Hemmerde might be given a peerage and become Lord Chancellor.⁵³

In the event, Lord Haldane became Lord Chancellor, the senior law office, the Attorney-Generalship, went to Patrick Hastings, like Hemmerde a recent convert from the Liberal ranks, while Slessor, notwithstanding his lack of a parliamentary seat, was quickly made a KC and given the

The opening ceremony for the Mersey Tunnel in July 1934, which caused Hemmerde such concern

post of Solicitor-General. Never one to keep his feelings to himself, Hemmerde made his bitter disappointment with Ramsay MacDonald's selections public.⁵⁴ Once again, his private financial problems may have been the crucial factor. In March 1921 Hemmerde had been the defendant in an action for the recovery of a debt dating from 1910 of £1,000 with interest at 7 per cent. Faced with this difficulty, he attempted to exploit a legal loophole by pleading that the debt was effectively cancelled by the Statute of Limitations, but the ruling of the court went against him. Hemmerde appealed and won, but the House of Lords later upheld the original judgement.⁵⁵ The resulting bad publicity may have been in MacDonald's mind when making his ministerial appointments in January 1924, especially as the Labour prime minister's relationship with Slessor was relatively cool.

Hemmerde's political career never recovered from this setback. The minority Labour government survived for only ten months, its collapse partly a function of Hastings's mishandling of the celebrated Campbell Case. In the ensuing general election, with the cash-strapped Liberals

withdrawing from many of the constituencies they had contested a year earlier, Hemmerde faced a straight fight with his Conservative opponent, Ernest Craig. As Crewe Liberals prepared to meet to decide what advice to give to their supporters in the constituency, a figure from Hemmerde's past re-emerged in an attempt to deliver the coup de grâce. Writing now as the Chairman of the Wrexham and East Denbighshire Liberal Association, Edward Hughes contacted his opposite number in Crewe. 'I do hope', he declared, that Crewe Liberals would decide to vote for Craig:

Mr Hemmerde was the Liberal member for this Division at one time. I am sending you a copy of a letter which will explain why he left Denbighshire. I think you will agree that this does not do him any credit. It was SELF and nothing else.

Hughes then turned to Hemmerde's debts, citing a figure of £56,000:

I enclose you an extract from the Gazette, from this you will note that the prospect



of his being able to pay his creditors will depend upon the Russian [Bolshevik] Government paying the debts of the former Russian [Tsarist] Government.⁵⁶

This was tantamount to asserting that Hemmerde's debts would remain unpaid. Beaten by more than 3,600 votes, Hemmerde now abandoned further political ambitions to concentrate on his legal career in Liverpool.

Granted the dignity of the office of Recorder, it might have been expected that Hemmerde's fortunes would now be less mired in controversy than they had been in his time as a politician. Yet the reverse was the case. Unlike many other industrial cities where Labour made rapid advance, Liverpool remained under solid Conservative control during the inter-war period. Hemmerde believed that his problems began as soon as he changed his political allegiance. As he later recalled:

Since I joined the Labour Party in 1920 I have never been invited to any civic function, except the Lord Mayor's dinner to the Judges. I was not even invited to the opening of the Cathedral. Before 1920 I had always been invited to take the Recorder's appropriate place at all civic functions.⁵⁷

It amounted, Hemmerde argued, to a ceremonial and professional boycott at the hands of the Liverpool Corporation. A further factor, he believed, was his refusal to toe an establishment line within the courts. It was, Hemmerde noted with scarcely veiled sarcasm, no doubt a coincidence that the Corporation had withdrawn all legal work from him immediately after he had appeared for certain Sinn Fein defendants at the Liverpool assizes. When the Town Clerk insisted that the Corporation 'had no intention whatever of offering any insult or offence of any kind' to the Recorder or his office, Hemmerde simply replied, 'I do not believe it'.⁵⁸ Further controversy arose following a case in 1921 when a group of unemployed protesters tried to occupy the city's Walker Art Gallery to gain

publicity for their cause. When the accused appeared in court it was noted that 'the heads of a number ... were swathed in bandages' and Hemmerde criticised the police for their 'unnecessary violence' and expressed the hope that this was not typical of the way the police behaved on such occasions.⁵⁹

This simmering quarrel dragged on for more than a decade, with Hemmerde expressing himself as forcefully as he had ever done in his political career. 'I have for the most part', he somewhat disingenuously suggested,

refrained from making any protest against the petty indignities and impertinencies which I have come to regard as merely the characteristic method by which the dominant political party in Liverpool thinks it decent to express its abhorrence of political freedom of thought.⁶⁰

In truth, Hemmerde remained obsessed, as he always had been, with his supposed station in life. The young MP who would not waste his time opening bazaars in his constituency had transmogrified into the middle-aged lawyer who refused to attend civic functions if he was not accorded his rightful place in the proceedings. Matters came to a head when Hemmerde objected to the order of precedence drawn up for the formal opening of the Mersey Tunnel by King George and Queen Mary in July 1934. When Hemmerde appealed to the Home Secretary, Liverpool's Tory grandees, fearful of the possible impact of public controversy upon their performance in the forthcoming municipal elections, turned to the veteran Conservative wire-puller, Lord Derby, for support.⁶¹ That wily operator had the experience of many decades of political manoeuvring upon which to draw:

I think it would be very difficult for me to ask the Home Office to postpone the decision about Hemmerde on the ground of political advantage in the election, but what I have done is practically the same thing, and is quite in order. I

'As a young man he promised more than he was ever able to perform ... But he was always too sensitive and too ready to complain and men who were far inferior to him in talent have often been more popular and more successful.'

have asked them not to promulgate any decision they arrive at before the Armistice ceremony on the 11th [November].⁶²

In the event, the matter was referred back to the city authorities and a report by the Town Clerk on the whole dispute, submitted to the City Council in June 1935, predictably found in the Corporation's favour.

In all the circumstances, it was perhaps surprising that Hemmerde held on to the Recordership of Liverpool for almost four decades, though the steady progress of the Labour Party within the city in the last years of his life no doubt eased his position. He died in post on 24 May 1948 after suffering a heart attack. Hemmerde had never ceased to practise at the Bar and 'though at one time it seemed as if he had been entirely eclipsed by younger men, he, in the end, found his practice increasing rather than diminishing'.⁶³ Nonetheless, it seems that the wealth which he craved never came his way. Hemmerde left effects valued at just £402 and died intestate. For all his shortcomings, he was not without merits, particularly in the courts. As a judge, suggested Professor Lyon Blease,

he was imaginative and humane. He was patient, courteous and dignified. He never forgot that the criminals who came before him were human beings, capable of redemption, and he did his duty fearlessly and in accordance with his conscience. He had his faults, but he never let even his faults get him down.⁶⁴

But the same commentator also offered a perceptive assessment of the faults which had held Hemmerde back, particularly in his political career, and which will serve as an appropriate conclusion to this essay:

As a young man he promised more than he was ever able to perform ... But he was always too sensitive and too ready to complain and men who were far inferior to him in talent have often been more popular and more successful ... He did

not deserve the censure which was passed upon him, but members of the Bar and Members of Parliament must be above suspicion and both his forensic and his political careers suffered from what was more his misfortune than his fault ... But with all this incapacity to bear grievances with dignity, Hemmerde had something heroic about him.⁶⁵

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- 1 *Liverpool Daily Post*, 22 November 1910.
- 2 The general election of January 1910 had left the Liberals holding 275 seats to the Conservatives' 273.
- 3 Denbighshire Record Office, Glyndwr MSS, DD/G/2527, Elibank to R. A. Jones, chairman East Denbighshire Liberal Association, 21 November 1910.
- 4 *Wrexham Advertiser*, 26 November 1910.
- 5 Glyndwr MSS, DD/G/1492, unidentified press cutting 14 July 1906.
- 6 *Liverpool Daily Post*, 26 July 1906.
- 7 Glyndwr MSS, DD/G/1492, undated press cutting.
- 8 *Liverpool Daily Post*, 27 July 1906.
- 9 Glyndwr MSS, DD/G/1492, 1906 by-election address.
- 10 *Ibid.*, DD/G/2514, Hemmerde to Hughes, 27 August 1907.
- 11 *Vanity Fair*, 19 May 1909.
- 12 Glyndwr MSS, DD/G/2514, Hemmerde to Hughes, 27 December 1907.
- 13 *Vanity Fair*, 19 May 1909.
- 14 *Westminster Gazette*, 16 March 1907.
- 15 Glyndwr MSS, DD/G/2514, Hemmerde to Hughes, 17 June 1908.
- 16 *Ibid.*, DD/G/2514, Hughes to Hemmerde, 17 June 1908.
- 17 *Ibid.*, DD/G/2514, Hemmerde to Hughes, 18 June 1908.
- 18 *Ibid.*, DD/G/2514, Hemmerde to Hughes, 19 October 1909.
- 19 *Ibid.*, DD/G/2514, Hemmerde to Hughes, 27 December 1909.
- 20 *Ibid.*, DD/G/2514, Hughes to Hemmerde, 31 December 1909.
- 21 The full result was: E. G. Hemmerde (Lib.) 6,865; D. Rhys (Con.) 3,321.
- 22 Glyndwr MSS, DD/G/2514, Hemmerde to Hughes, 26 September 1910.
- 23 *Wrexham Advertiser*, 8 October 1910.
- 24 Glyndwr MSS, DD/G/2514, Hemmerde to Hughes, 27 December 1910.
- 25 Glyndwr MSS, DD/G/2514, Hughes to Hemmerde, 7 January 1911.
- 26 The archetypal hypocrite in Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit*.
- 27 Glyndwr MSS, DD/G/2514, Hughes to Hemmerde, 7 January 1911.
- 28 *Wrexham Advertiser*, 26 November 1910.
- 29 *Ibid.*, DD/G/2527, Hughes to Sir Herbert Roberts, 30 January 1911.
- 30 The full result was: E. T. John (Lib.) 6,449; A. Hood (Cons.) 3,186.
- 31 The full result in this two-member constituency was: Lord Charles Beresford (Unionist) 15,125; B. Falls (Unionist) 14,856; E. G. Hemmerde (Lib.) 13,146; H. Harben (Lib.) 13,013.
- 32 R. F. V. Heuston, *Lives of the Lord Chancellors 1885–1940* (Oxford, 1964), p. 259.
- 33 Precisely this pattern of events was predicted in the local press at the time of the Keighley by-election in 1911. *Keighley News*, 21 October 1911.
- 34 Glyndwr MSS, DD/G/2527, Hughes to J. Cooksey, 6 February 1911. Later in the year the efforts of the Whips' Office to ensure Hemmerde's selection for a by-election in Oldham were thwarted by the resistance of the local constituency party. *The Times*, 15 November 1911.
- 35 D. James, *Class and Politics in a Northern Industrial Town: Keighley 1880–1914* (Keele, 1995), p. 112.
- 36 After his re-election for East Denbighshire in the by-election of April 1909, the *Liverpool Daily Post* noted that Hemmerde was 'a strong advocate of the taxation of land values'. It judged that when the MP had said that his return would send a message to the government, he had in mind 'mainly the taxation of land values'. *Liverpool Daily Post*, 4 April 1909.
- 37 P. Mulvey, 'Henry George Foundation', in D. Brack and E. Randall (eds.), *Dictionary of Liberal Thought* (London, 2007), p. 163.
- 38 Murray diary, 19 July 1912, cited in H. V. Emy, 'The Land Campaign: Lloyd George as a Social Reformer 1909–14', in A. J. P. Taylor (ed.), *Lloyd George: Twelve Essays* (London, 1971), p. 48. P. Mulvey, 'Radicalism's Last Gasp? The British Liberal Party and the Taxation of Land Values, 1906–1914', www.schalkenbach.org/scholars-forum, p. 11.
- 39 R. Douglas, *Land, People and Politics: A History of the Land Question in the United Kingdom 1878–1952* (London, 1976), p. 156; I. Packer, *Lloyd George, Liberalism and the Land: The Land League and Party Politics in England, 1906–1914* (Woodbridge, 2001), p. 81.
- 40 J. Vincent (ed.), *The Crawford Papers* (Manchester, 1984), p. 276.
- 41 K. O. Morgan (ed.), *Lloyd George: Family Letters 1885–1936* (London, 1973), p. 165.
- 42 Packer, *Lloyd George, Liberalism and the Land*, p. 97.
- 43 R. S. Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. 2, companion part 2 (London, 1969), p. 917. When Bottomley himself was jailed for fraud in June 1922, the only question was why he had acted with impunity for so long. G. R. Searle, *Corruption in British Politics 1895–1930* (Oxford, 1987), p. 338.
- 44 A. Hyman, *The Rise and Fall of Horatio Bottomley* (London, 1972), p. 99.
- 45 F. Neilson, *My Life in Two Worlds*, vol. 1 (Wisconsin, 1952), pp. 305, 307.
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REPORTS

The 2010 election in historical perspective

Conference fringe meeting, 19 September 2010, with Professor John Curtice, Professor Dennis Kavanagh and James Gurling. Chair: Tony Little.
Report by Dr Mark Pack

IT HAS become a Liberal Democrat History Group tradition at the first Liberal Democrat conference after each general election to hold a fringe meeting looking back on the results and placing them in historical perspective.

The historical context

Psephologist John Curtice from Strathclyde, a long-term Liberal Democrat watcher, started by asking Liberal Democrats in the audience to think back to the Friday after polling day, pointing out how few people's immediate reaction was that it was a great result for the party. He therefore went on to reverse the usual roles of party members talking up the party's position and outsiders talking it down by arguing instead that the general election result was, in historical perspective, highly impressive.

Not only had the party ended up in government for the first time since 1945, but it secured the second highest share of the vote for the party or its predecessors since 1923 and the second largest number of seats since 1929. Had expectations not been raised so high during the campaign, this would have been seen as a much more promising result than the immediate post-election reactions painted it.

The gap between the polls and the result

Looking at the gap between the campaign's opinion polls and the actual result, Curtice suggested that the explanation was that the poll surge after the first TV debate had been a brittle phenomenon, fuelled by the personal popularity of Nick Clegg,

which did not transfer strongly to other views of the party. The surge was dominated by people who were less likely to vote and more likely to change their minds. He also suggested that the weighting rules used by pollsters may have exaggerated the Liberal Democrat position in the polls, though even the raw data showed more Lib Dems than turned out to vote.

Finally, there was a body of voters who usually voted Labour and were not happy with their party in 2010, but in the end held their nose and voted for their traditional party. Despite these explanations, Curtice said that he thought they did not add up to the full story and further research would be needed to tell the full story.

As to why the Liberal Democrats went up in votes but down in seats, Curtice put this down to a large number of seats where incumbent MPs were standing down (6 of these 10 were lost), some fallout from the expenses scandal, the fading of the very positive circumstances of 2005 (particularly the Iraq war and its effect on Labour support in Muslim communities) and Labour's strength in Scotland. In addition, in six of the nine Labour seats which would have fallen to the Lib Dems on the national swing but did not, there had been a relatively low increase in unemployment. Economic and political geography combined in a way favourable to Labour.

John Curtice's look at the 2010 election concluded with a warning: beware of short-term surges in the campaign. Support is built up through the five years of the Parliament, especially as local campaigning and organisation

play a key role in winning or losing seats.

Lessons for the future

Turning to the future, Curtice said that he did not expect future TV debates to have anything like the same impact as they did in 2010. Lack of novelty in the future will probably see their audiences decline, and the advantage Clegg gained by getting the technique right whilst the others did not can only be won once.

As for future strategy, Curtice said the Liberal Democrat plan had always been a choice between realignment (usually of the left) – with the implication that the party is closer to one of the other two main parties – and equidistance. As he pointed out, the party's power does not depend to that great an extent on the number of seats it wins. Influence depends on having a hung parliament, and the appeal of the equidistance strategy is that to maximise that influence the Lib Dems have to be willing to do a deal with either of the other two main parties.

With the changing way in which first past the post works in the UK already having made hung parliaments more likely, Curtice did not see defeat in the AV referendum in May 2011 as necessarily dealing a large blow to the party's future influence – though, if introduced, AV would probably strengthen the Liberal Democrat position in Parliament. Either way, equidistance would give the party greater negotiating muscle than a strategy of realignment.

Under AV Curtice said he expected many non-Liberal Democrats who had voted tactically for the party to switch their first preference to the party of their real choice, reducing the number of first preferences the Lib Dems would win. In addition, being in coalition may deter Labour voters from listing the Liberal Democrats even as their second preference – though since in Scotland the Lib Dem coalition with Labour had not stopped many Tories still putting Lib Dems second Curtice did not expect this impact to be too large.

John Curtice's look at the 2010 election concluded with a warning: beware of short-term surges in the campaign. Support is built up through the five years of the Parliament, especially as local campaigning and organisation play a key role in winning or losing seats.

The TV debates

Dennis Kavanagh, the co-author since February 1974 of the Nuffield series of general election studies, started by emphasising the impact of the TV debates. He pointed out that the parties had prepared for traditional election campaigns, with press conferences, major TV interviews, poster launches and so on. When it came to it, however, much of this went by the board because of the dominance of the TV debates. The idea of each party holding an early morning press conference each day died with this campaign.

For the TV debates, Kavanagh revealed that Clegg put in more preparation over longer periods than either Cameron or Brown, who relied more on expensive advisers from the US. Despite what has been said in public about the debates, based on his numerous interviews with senior campaign insiders, Kavanagh believed that Cameron and Osborne were pleased with their impact. Rather than being a problem for giving a profile to Nick Clegg, they benefited the Tories, in their eyes, by reducing the amount of attention paid to policy issues such as taxes and cuts. Kavanagh also pointed out how the instant polls cut the legs from under the post-debate spin doctoring.

Kavanagh did, though, question how real the debate surge was, pointing to how the other two main parties observed that their canvassing returns and other feedback did not pick it up.

Kavanagh went on to comment that, ironically, Cameron has been able to change the political landscape since the election because he failed to win it – comparing that with Blair’s inability to change the landscape after 1997 because he succeeded. Success does not always beget success.

As with Curtice, Kavanagh put some of the explanation as to why the Liberal Democrats did not do better in 2010 down to the conditions in 2005 having been so good. Since then the party had had three leaders in two years, with poll ratings below the 2005 election for nearly the entire Parliament.

Preparing for a hung parliament

One thing the party did get right was its preparation for a possible hung parliament. Clegg had a detailed plan, drawn up with Danny Alexander and others. By comparison, Labour had done almost no preparation and Oliver Letwin’s work for the Conservatives only started very late in the day. Helped by this superior preparation, Clegg kept his nerve during the negotiations and wisely made efforts to take the party with him during the talks.

One factor in favour of a Cameron / Clegg deal, Kavanagh argued, was that they are both of the same generation, part of the shift currently under way in British politics. Gordon Brown was old politics from a different age.

The people with Brown on the road during the election thought that Labour would win the most seats right until the end, and Brown was confident that he would be able to do a deal with the Liberal Democrats. He never considered the question of personal chemistry; it was always a huge blind spot of his, fostered by his failure to grasp the change of generation in the Liberal Democrat leadership from the likes of Menzies Campbell and Paddy Ashdown to Nick Clegg, Chris Huhne and others.

The changing nature of British politics

Looking to the future, Kavanagh suggested that a new political era is coming, with TV debates an established presence further personalising and presidentialising politics. This may be to long-term Liberal Democrat and Labour benefit, as it reduces the importance of money and the traditional Conservative advantage there.

Westminster has now joined Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in not having one-party majority government; there are now ten political parties exercising executive rule in the UK. Hung parliaments and assemblies are the norm – and in turn coalitions are likely to be the norm as the growth in strength of other parties and the decline in the

Looking to the future, Kavanagh suggested that a new political era is coming, with TV debates an established presence further personalising and presidentialising politics.

number of marginal seats makes a single-party winner increasingly unlikely. The traditional idea of general elections being a simple choice between two parties, one of which then has a mandate to govern according to its manifesto, cannot survive in this new form of politics.

At the next election the Liberal Democrats will, for the first time, have to fight an election based on a judgement of what they have done. The ‘plague on all your houses’ vote, concluded Kavanagh, will no longer gravitate towards them.

The party’s post-election review

James Gurling, Chair of the Liberal Democrat Campaigns & Communications Committee, then talked about the review the party had carried out of the election campaign. He said that all three parties failed at the last election – Labour lost power, the Tories failed to win an overall majority and the Liberal Democrats lost seats and failed to increase the Parliamentary Party’s diversity.

He praised the TV debates for giving party leaders direct access to the public, presenting policies directly in their own words. A TV debate bounce for Clegg had been expected, as it would be his first major media exposure to the public, but in the end the bounce greatly exceeded expectations. That gave people huge enthusiasm and also – as it turned out – false hope.

This meant that the campaign plan was knocked off message, and at the grassroots it diverged from the party’s targeting strategy. Just 4,000 votes going the wrong way cost the party no less than ten seats, showing how close the result had been between losing and gaining. Lessons should be drawn from that about the importance of targeting for the party’s future.

The campaign’s other failure was that not all of the party’s policies survived the scrutiny of the campaign, particularly on immigration. This echoed a point made earlier by Kavanagh about the post-election private polling for the Liberal Democrats.

It showed that party policy on immigration and the 'you can't win' argument were the two main reasons for people not to support the Lib Dems; the talk about what Clegg would do in a hung parliament also turned out to be a negative for the party. In addition, the Liberal Democrats lacked a strong closing message in the last few days of the campaign and below-the-radar scare tactics from Labour in urban areas helped them hang on in many key seats.

James Gurling also agreed with Denis Kavanagh that the form of campaigning changed in 2010, with party election broadcasts largely forgotten during the campaign, being overshadowed by the TV debates. Posters too appear to be on the way out, helped by the rapid spoofing of posters online.

Furthermore, the days of simply sticking your message on a piece of paper and putting it through the letterbox are gone. Technology is moving campaigns on

from blanket leafleting. One example of change he gave was the traditional Liberal Democrat handwritten letter. This used to be seen as a powerful way of direct, personal contact with voters. Now, compared with direct personalised online communication, it looks like just another blunt form of mass contact.

What was notable across all three contributions was how many of the issues they discussed will almost certainly feel like old history by the time of the next general

election. The formation of a coalition government is reshaping British politics in unpredictable ways. While the lessons from previous elections were often very applicable to the next, in 2010 that is much less likely to be the case.

Mark Pack ran the Liberal Democrat 2001 and 2005 internet general election campaign and is now Head of Digital at MHP Communications. He also co-edits Liberal Democrat Voice (www.LibDemVoice.org).

LIBERAL HISTORY QUIZ 2010

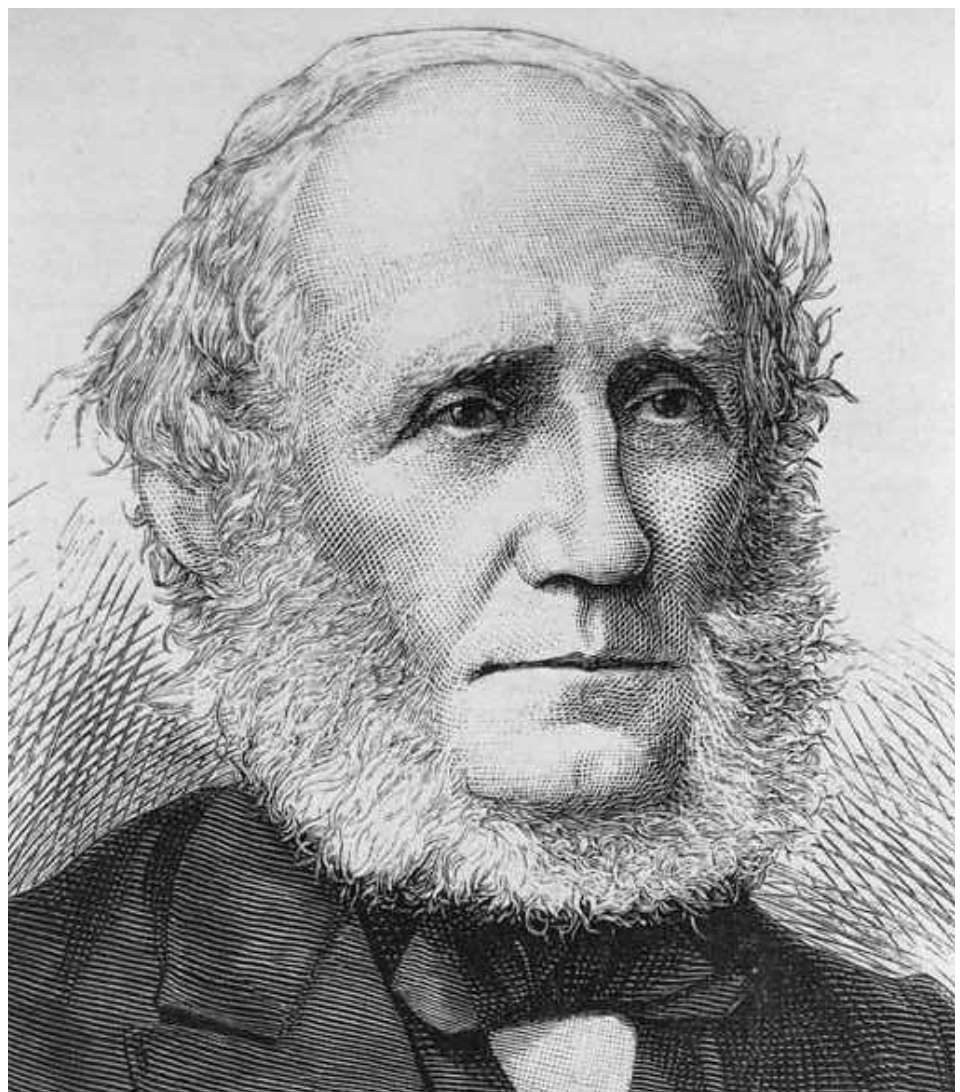
This year's Liberal history quiz attracted a record level of entries at the History Group's exhibition stand at the Liberal Democrat conference in Liverpool in September. The winner was Michael Mullaney, with an impressive 18½ marks out of 20; as Michael was last year's winner too, we may consider barring him from future contests! Below we reprint the questions – the answers are on page 36.

1. Who was voted the greatest-ever Liberal in the poll run by the Lib Dem History Group in 2007?
2. Who holds the record as the shortest-serving Liberal Prime Minister since the party was founded in 1859?
3. Which constituency did Liberal leader Jeremy Thorpe represent from 1959 to 1979?
4. Who, on being elected to Liverpool City Council in 1972 at the age of 21, became the youngest sitting councillor in Britain?
5. Who wrote the book *The Strange Death of Liberal England*, the classic study of the decline of Liberalism, first published in 1935?
6. On 26 July 1973, the Liberal Party won two by-elections from the Conservatives; in which constituencies?
7. Who served as President of the Liberal Democrats from 1998 to 2000?
8. The Liberal Democrat History Group has raised enough money to have a plaque installed on the building which is now the site of Willis's Rooms, where the Liberal Party was founded in 1859. Where is the building?
9. Who was elected Liberal MP for Finsbury Central in 1892, becoming the first non-white member of the House of Commons?
10. In which English city was William Ewart Gladstone born on 29 December 1809?
11. Who, as President of the Liberal Party in 1947–48, presented a copy of Milton's *Areopagitica* to his successor, inaugurating the tradition of handing on the book as a symbol of the office of President?
12. Who was the SDP/Alliance candidate in the Peckham by-election of 28 October 1982?
13. Who was Gladstone's Chancellor of the Exchequer in his short-lived administration of February–July 1886?
14. Who served as principal private secretary to David Lloyd George from 1923 to 1945?
15. Whose memoirs, published in 2009, were entitled *Free Radical*?
16. Who was President of the Liberal Party in 1986–87 and went on to be the party's Campaign Director during the 1987 general election?
17. Which historian and thinker was the MP for Carlisle 1859–65 and for Bridgnorth 1865–66?
18. What was the name of the SDP think tank founded in 1982 by Lord Young of Dartington and wound up after the merger of the SDP with the Liberal Party?
19. Which Liberal cabinet minister had his career ruined by the Crawford divorce scandal of 1885?
20. Who became the first ever female Liberal minister?

THE 'MEMBER FOR SCOTLAND' DUNCAN MCLAREN DOMINANCE OF VICTORIAN SCOTLAND

As Liberal MP for Edinburgh, Duncan McLaren (1800–86) was nicknamed 'Member for Scotland' because he was so assiduous in pursuing all manner of Scottish causes. The tag may also, however, reflect the crucial nature of his contribution to the creation of the Liberal Party that dominated late Victorian and Edwardian Scotland.

Willis Pickard asks why the role he played in creating the Liberal dominance of Victorian Scotland has been so ignored.



FOR SCOTLAND' AND THE LIBERAL TORIES SCOTLAND

IN GENERAL histories of Scotland, Duncan McLaren is little more than a footnote. He did not become an MP until he was sixty-five and never held office. He was a leader around whom men gathered but he was also a divisive figure.

So what did McLaren achieve and why has history served him so ill? Politically, McLaren's life was a series of challenges to the Whig domination of Scotland. Although he started representing his home city of Edinburgh two years before the second Reform Act, the bedrock of his support came from the working men enfranchised in 1867 – the electorate who, in neighbouring Midlothian, were to be so enthused by William Gladstone. The Grand Old Man was always suspicious of self-proclaimed Radicals but he would not have won his marginal seat in 1880 and become the 'people's William' without the allegiance of voters whom the proudly Radical McLaren, more than anyone, made into a formidable Scottish force.

Duncan McLaren was born to a family of Argyll crofters that had moved to the developing textile industry of Dunbartonshire. Apprenticed at twelve to a shop-keeping uncle in Dunbar, he

established in his twenties a draper's business in the High Street of Edinburgh opposite the High Kirk of St Giles. By the time of the reform of local government in 1833, he was well enough established to afford the time to sit on the town council that replaced the self-perpetuating oligarchs who had run the capital of Scotland into bankruptcy. He soon became treasurer and largely made the deal with the government that restored the city's finances. But he and his allies on the council were increasingly frustrated by the refusal of Lord Melbourne's Cabinet to maintain an agenda of reform – and in particular to abolish the tax that paid the stipends of Church of Scotland ministers. McLaren argued that the tax was unfair to the many thousands who worshipped in Presbyterian churches that had seceded from the Established Church of Scotland.

Pressure on the Whigs

The argument was the same as made against church rates in England, and similar groups were brought into public life to rally opposition. McLaren's skill was in marshalling facts and in particular the statistics that showed how the

subsidised Church of Scotland no longer commanded the adherence of a majority. McLaren's supporters were not yet a fully formed group of political Radicals – and certainly they had no time for the Chartists – but the power of congregations of religious Dissenters formed into a national committee could make life uncomfortable for a Whig government. In November 1837 Andrew Rutherford, the Solicitor General, wrote to a fellow junior minister that the Committee of Dissenters had been to see him and made clear that there was 'a very lukewarm and partial support, if not abandonment of the Whigs'.¹ Rutherford recognised McLaren as 'an able and excellent man'.² That recognition was soon to be turned by the Whigs into suspicion of his motives and fear for their continued domination of Edinburgh and Scottish politics. The men who had defeated the 'Dundas despotism' in Scotland were landed gentry and advocates at the Scottish Bar. They were happy to have prosperous shopkeepers run town councils but not to challenge the Whig leadership within the loosely organised Liberal party. McLaren, using resentment against slights by the government and the Established Church to

Duncan McLaren (1800–86), from a photograph by J. G. Tunny (picture reproduced by kind permission of Scran)

show the power of organised Dissent, began to pose a real threat.

Not that he displayed open ambition himself. His supporters had no one to challenge Thomas Babington Macaulay, whom the Whigs imposed on Edinburgh in an 1839 by-election. McLaren interfered in a hotly disputed election for Lord Provost in 1840, but only from the sidelines. He had left the town council to look after his business and his growing family. His first wife had died leaving him responsible for three children. His second wife, Christina Renton, was a member of a prominent Dissenting family who encouraged his involvement in church politics but she failed to recover from the birth of a third child. McLaren's unmarried sisters rallied to the young family, and success in business allowed him to keep his commitment to public affairs and polemical journalism.

The campaign to abolish the Corn Laws was taking root in Scotland, and McLaren (aided by his Renton relatives) saw a way of harnessing his supporters to the new cause. The self-regarding claims of Dissenting churchmen faded from public attention as splits in the Church of Scotland culminated in the cataclysm of the Disruption and the founding of the Free Church in 1843. McLaren marshalled the army of Dissenters to help Richard Cobden and John Bright in the Anti-Corn Law League. In January 1842, McLaren organised a large conference of Dissenting ministers in Edinburgh. Of 494 who were asked their opinion, none was in favour of the existing Corn Laws and 431 wanted total repeal. The next month saw McLaren lead an Anti-Corn Law League march along the Strand in London to the House of Commons, where MPs were about to vote on the annual repeal motion by Charles Villiers. John Bright first met McLaren at the Edinburgh conference, and both he and Cobden quickly recognised the Scotsman's organising abilities. He facilitated their visits north of the border and led fund-raising efforts. With Cobden he exchanged letters about once a month in 1842–43.³ The topics covered a gamut of Radical causes: taxation, household suffrage, triennial parliaments.

The campaign to abolish the Corn Laws was taking root in Scotland, and McLaren (aided by his Renton relatives) saw a way of harnessing his supporters to the new cause.

McLaren's abilities made him more than just the League's eyes and ears in Scotland. His judgment was valued among Radical thinkers and campaigners – just as his motives were questioned by the Whig establishment. Macaulay, in particular, had a difficult relationship with his disputatious constituent. The MP's tentative approach to Corn Law reform led to a tetchy correspondence, and his reluctance to appear at meetings in Edinburgh was widely resented. In the wake of the Disruption, political allegiances were tangled up with sectarian differences. Within the supposedly Liberal fold there were factions belonging to the Free Church, the Dissenters (a majority of whom, including McLaren's core supporters, were soon to coalesce in the United Presbyterian Church), and the Church of Scotland, whose members included both Liberals and Tories. As elsewhere in Britain, the government's grant to the Roman Catholic Maynooth College in Ireland became a focus for sectarian squabbling. Macaulay refused to join the bulk of his voters in opposing the grant and in whipping up religious intolerance – although McLaren's church supporters could at least be excused from purely anti-Catholic prejudice because they opposed grants by the state to all religions, including Protestant good causes.

At the general election of 1847, Macaulay was defeated, and McLaren was chief among those blamed for creating the coalition of United Presbyterians and Free Churchmen who brought shame on the city by removing a national statesman and writer. *The Scotsman* newspaper, in particular, had by now turned against McLaren and embarked on a campaign of denigration and misrepresentation that lasted most of his life. Macaulay, sick of his disputatious constituents, wrote to his niece: 'I am not vexed, but as cheerful as I ever was in my life.'⁴ He left behind him the question of whether the Whigs in Scotland had suffered a mortal blow. That was the hope of those who challenged their privileged self-interest and reforming timidity. But there was no real battle at this time for the Liberal soul. In a country where Liberals

held almost all the burgh seats and most of the counties, MPs continued to be returned from the upper reaches of society. Even a prosperous merchant like McLaren doubted whether he could support six months' unpaid life in Westminster as well as a home in Edinburgh. Like other constituencies in Britain that returned two members, Edinburgh gave an opportunity for the Liberal factions to share the spoils. A Whig and a Radical (or Independent Liberal, as the term usually was in Edinburgh) might each take a seat. That could give the Radicals a representation that was usually denied them in single-member constituencies. McLaren and his friends did try to find sympathetic candidates to challenge Whigs elsewhere, but not often successfully. One seat in which McLaren took an interest was Stirling Burghs which, in the 1847 parliament, was represented by John Benjamin Smith, the Manchester free trade businessman, with whom McLaren formed a close alliance.⁵

Bright as brother-in-law

McLaren was encouraged in broadening his Radical agenda from religious to wider issues by both Cobden and Bright, the latter in his role from 1849 as brother-in-law. McLaren took as his third wife Bright's sister Priscilla, herself ardently committed to advanced causes. She was a Quaker who on marrying a non-Quaker was expelled, to her brother's fury. McLaren and John Bright formed a lifelong working partnership, with McLaren deferring to Bright's oratorical skills and national reputation, and Bright relying on McLaren's assiduity in delving into parliamentary papers and drafting reforming legislation.

Ventures into banking and railways in these years proved profitable but worrisome, and McLaren's natural calculating caution meant that for the rest of his life he built his prosperity on the draper's business, employing up to 200 'hands', and through land purchase and development in rapidly growing suburban Edinburgh. In 1851 he was reluctantly persuaded to rejoin the town

council, knowing that he would be catapulted by his loyal supporters into the Lord Provost's chair for three years. He was called on to tackle again the despised clerical tax, and he had already shown enterprise and persistence in other civic matters such as locating a dependable water supply, especially for tenement houses. He confounded critics by the even-handedness of his dealings as Lord Provost, and he showed his Liberalism in beginning the process by which museums and private gardens were made accessible to the wider public. In tackling the prevalent and damaging abuse of alcohol he was an advocate not of total abstinence but of limiting public-house opening hours. Edinburgh's lead was soon followed elsewhere in the country.

For the first and perhaps only time, McLaren was now persuaded to override his customary caution in making major decisions. Despite recently becoming Lord Provost he stood in the 1852 general election. The alliance of Independent Liberals that had defeated Macaulay was at an end. Free Churchmen continued to back Charles Cowan, Macaulay's conqueror. The Dissenters loyal to McLaren thought little of Cowan's abilities, and when Macaulay agreed to stand again for the other seat now vacated by a Whig MP, the McLarenites calculated that they could displace Cowan. McLaren was confident that he would add to his own support the second votes of Macaulay's backers as well as Cowan's and the Tory candidate's. Sectarian issues including Maynooth still loomed large at public meetings and in the newspapers, which openly backed one or other of the religious factions. But, despite the unpleasant atmosphere (from which Macaulay kept clear by not appearing in Edinburgh at all), it was not religious affiliation that decided the outcome. Poll books published after election day showed that an elector's occupation was the main determinant of how he voted.⁶ McLaren scored heavily among merchants and shopkeepers but had scant support among lawyers and other professionals, who formed a large proportion of the limited electorate. He did not win enough

second votes to prevent Macaulay and Cowan from taking the seats. McLaren had been launched into public life by fellow Dissenters. It was clear that their loyalty was no longer enough. A broader-based organisation was needed to challenge the Whigs. It neither could nor should have a sectarian taint. The local campaign against the clerical tax would go on, but McLaren increasingly involved himself in national issues. He worked with Bright on franchise reform, and with Cobden on taxation. His reputation among Radicals was never higher than when, as Lord Provost, he presided over a Peace Congress in Edinburgh, one of a series in European cities designed to set public opinion against the belligerence of leaders (not least the supposedly Liberal Lord Palmerston). It was a great intellectual gathering, Bright told Cobden, and it outshone a similar event months earlier in Manchester. Unfortunately, realpolitik prevailed over the well-meaning peace party, and the Radical cause was set back by the years of war against Russia. Bright was among those who paid the electoral price in the 1857 election. The following year he was on holiday in Scotland when a by-election occurred in Birmingham. McLaren convened a meeting at his Edinburgh home to persuade his reluctant brother-in-law to stand. The pair hastened to the Midlands and Bright was returned for the seat he went on to represent for thirty years.

Despite Macaulay's retirement through ill health in 1856, there was no prospect of an Independent Liberal coup against the Whigs. Cobden hoped that McLaren would look beyond Edinburgh: 'For Heavens sake come into the House for one of your Scottish boroughs, or try an English one that you may endeavour to set up something better in the House than the present forlorn state of the representation of Scotland.'⁷ But McLaren would not be drawn beyond Edinburgh where the arch-exponent of lawyers' Whiggery, James Moncreiff, became MP in 1859 and Lord Advocate in Palmerston's government. Moncreiff had represented *The Scotsman* in a libel case successfully brought by McLaren three years

earlier over publication of a depiction of him as 'snake the draper'. Now Moncreiff had the opportunity to rid his constituents of the unpopular clerical tax. His compromise legislation only reignited the opposition, brought McLaren briefly back into the town council and then, at the behest of the Independent Liberals, into parliament in 1865. With Palmerston, the main obstacle to franchise reform, soon dead, the issue of the time was legislation to widen the urban electorate and redraw constituencies. McLaren, who sat himself among Radical friends on the Liberal benches rather than with the Scottish Whigs, was ready to assist Bright in the struggle ahead. They had worked on reform bills. 'You are a very "steam engine" for work at figures and arguments,' Bright told him.⁸ In 1859, the year that Whigs, Radicals and Peelites came together to form the Liberal Party as we know it, McLaren enunciated the principle on which he was to campaign at elections and to follow as an MP: it was 'to unite the working classes and the honest portion of the middle classes who were disposed to go with them.'⁹

He won election in 1865 on a narrow electorate. By 1868, with the urban working man largely enfranchised, his Independent Liberal appeal had a larger and dependable audience. The business of electioneering through public meetings and canvassing depended on support by the ward committees that annually returned McLaren's allies to the council. In the 1865 contest McLaren's eldest son, John, canvassed with his friends in affluent and therefore less favourable areas. He reported: 'We have not a majority in the New Town as a whole but I am told that in the Old Town the majority is overwhelming.'¹⁰ His father topped the poll, but it took until 1868 to displace the Whigs with a second successful Independent Liberal.

McLaren's first parliament was dominated by the Reform Bills and he was in no doubt that the franchise should be extended as widely as possible. As events unfolded and the initiative passed to Disraeli, McLaren found the enemy to be feet-dragging Whigs, and he was willing to vote

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against the Liberals by joining the so-called 'tea-room' dissidents who put pressure on Gladstone not to wreck Disraeli's bill. He was one of a small minority of MPs supporting John Stuart Mill's amendment to give women the vote. When it came to the subsequent Scottish Reform legislation, McLaren's fact-finding skills were deployed on seeking to obtain more seats for Scotland and to spread them more equitably according to population. His belief that Scotland was poorly treated by comparison with England and Wales was at the heart of his parliamentary involvement. It contributed to his being given the 'Member for Scotland' nickname, at first probably as a gentle dig at his omnipresence in debates, which for a man in his late sixties was remarkable. He was no proto-Scottish Nationalist but sought equity, efficiency and economy and was as good a cheese-parer as his party leader Gladstone had been when Chancellor of the Exchequer. Why, he typically asked, did it cost £6,000 to run the Lunacy Board in Scotland but only £3,800 in Ireland and £20,000 for the whole of England?¹¹

His own bills to get rid of Edinburgh's clerical tax failed largely for lack of time (until the government eventually intervened to resolve the matter once and for all). It was this frustration that led McLaren to question the administration of Scotland. He was never in favour of restoring a parliament in Edinburgh and in the last months of his life he railed against Gladstone's plan for Irish home rule, but he wanted a Secretary of State for Scotland to be appointed instead of the burden of Scottish affairs falling on the Lord Advocate. He spoke for a majority of his country's MPs when he asked Prime Minister Gladstone in 1869 to consider 'the propriety of providing some additional means for the transaction of public business connected with Scotland.' A commission to take evidence was appointed but nothing came of it. McLaren, however, could take credit for paving the way for the young Lord Rosebery to persuade Gladstone to reform Scottish governance in the 1880s.

The nexus of radical family alliances

One difficult issue for both McLaren and his wife Priscilla, with her deep commitment to women's rights, was the role of John Bright in Gladstone's governments. Despite his Radical principles and popular reputation, he proved a disappointment to the McLaren family, most notably in his lukewarm attitude to women's issues. He and McLaren still worked together but there is scant evidence of their impressing a Radical agenda on public affairs. That, it has to be said, was down to Bright's ineffectiveness as a Cabinet minister, linked to his bouts of ill health, rather than to any slackening of pressure from McLaren and Radical colleagues on the back benches. Increasingly, as McLaren established a parliamentary reputation, he and Priscilla took a prominent place in the nexus of Radical family alliances which came almost to mirror those of the Whig dynasties that formed the bedrock of Gladstone's governments. Frederick Pennington, MP for Stockport, and his wife were particular friends with whom McLaren and Priscilla would stay, from the mid-1870s, either at their London home during the parliamentary session or at their country house in the Surrey hills. English and Scottish Radicals had aims in common: opposition to the entrenched position of the established Church, parliamentary and electoral reform, commitment to the pursuit of peace. Only differing circumstances north and south of the border would impose different policies. Many non-Anglicans were against a national system of primary education unless it was secular and removed religion from the classroom. Robert Dale, a prominent Birmingham Congregationalist, wanted to campaign in Scotland against the bill that finally gave Scotland a government-supported system in 1872. McLaren was among those who persuaded Dale to stay at home since it had taken over twenty years to reconcile the conflicting interests that had stood in the way of a much-needed improvement to school provision. Unlike many United Presbyterians, McLaren, ever the realist, knew that a

voluntary system would always be inadequate and underfunded. He addressed the contentious issue of religious instruction by saying that the Bible and Shorter Catechism should be in the curriculum, but a parent had the right to withdraw his child from the teaching of them. McLaren knew what he was talking about on education: as a young councillor he had founded thirteen schools for thousands of poor children in Edinburgh, using surplus funds in the trust established by Geordie Heriot, jeweller to James VI and I.

McLaren was in the forefront of a campaign, growing in strength from the 1870s, to disestablish the Church of Scotland. This posed a problem for Gladstone when he became MP for Midlothian where many of his voters were disestablishers. McLaren argued that the prime minister had disestablished the Church of Ireland, but Gladstone in his second government had Irish pre-occupations of another sort that precluded action in Scotland. He wrote to McLaren in typically convoluted terms: 'Were the cause of disestablishment sufficiently powerful and mature to force its way to the front in defiance of all competition, its friends need not be deterred from bringing it into activity and prominence at head quarters. But if it has not reached that very advanced stage, my opinion is that the measure is more likely to be thrown back than pushed forward by endeavours to bring the Government or Parliament to entertain it.'¹²

As a champion of working men, McLaren was put to the test when the trade unions sought repeal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act in 1873. He had voted for the legislation two years earlier on the ground that the outlawing of picketing during industrial disputes posed no threat to the overwhelming majority of workers who opposed intimidation. Although, at a 40,000-strong trade-union demonstration from across Scotland, he listened to denunciations of himself as a self-interested large employer, his confidence was not dented and he predicted that he would not suffer at the forthcoming election: 'I would be returned at the head of the poll,' he told his son.¹³

He was never in favour of restoring a parliament in Edinburgh and in the last months of his life he railed against Gladstone's plan for Irish home rule, but he wanted a Secretary of State for Scotland to be appointed instead of the burden of Scottish affairs falling on the Lord Advocate.

He was proved right: working-class Liberal voters still looked to middle-class leadership rather than finding representation from among their own. But the election brought two new concerns. The first was that his fellow MP since 1868, John Miller, defected to a new force known as the 'Advanced Liberals', trade-union led. The Edinburgh Liberals were now in three camps: traditional Whig, McLaren's Independents and the Advanced newcomers. Secondly, the Tories had put up a credible candidate who, though defeated (as was Miller) looked to pose a growing threat, which they clearly were in other parts of the country where Disraeli had won a convincing victory.

In search of a united party

Over the next six years the search was for Liberal unity. McLaren had created an electoral force and ensured that, at the very least, his supporters and the city Whigs shared the spoils, which they did in 1874 with the election of Lord Provost James Cowan as the second MP. The Liberals' organisation across Britain was inferior to the Tories', and the splitting of Liberal votes cost them seats. As the party leadership sought to establish a degree of control from the centre, with the Chief Whip William Adam at the helm, aided by James Reid in Scotland, McLaren came under pressure to bring the Edinburgh factions together. He remained lukewarm but did not stand in the way of his eldest son John, who worked hard to help create the united party that gave the Edinburgh Liberals a resounding victory in 1880. John for years was torn between the law and politics. He sought his uncle John Bright's help in securing a salaried legal position, without success. He then decided that occupying a parliamentary seat would make him the obvious candidate for Lord Advocate if the Liberals won the next election. Bright was again called in aid but was pessimistic about his chances south of the border: 'As a rule they [English boroughs] do not like Reform Club candidates. I mean those chosen by W. Adam or any one who is supposed to be active in London for the party ... I want

The carefully choreographed cortege through the city and the outpouring of tributes were a Victorian norm, but McLaren attained a position in Scottish life which makes regrettable the way in which his name has faded from public memory.

to get out of Parliament, which seems as difficult for me as it is for you to get in."¹⁴

By 1879, John was adopted for Wigtown Burghs and proposed the vote of thanks to Gladstone at the opening rally of the first Midlothian campaign. His father attended the festivities for the great man at Lord Rosebery's house, having hurried back from receiving the freedom of Inverness, testimony to his Scotland-wide reputation. Gladstone's subsequent victory in Midlothian was narrow compared with McLaren's across the city boundary, but John's was narrower still, and he lost the seat at the by-election prompted by his becoming Lord Advocate. He fought another by-election unsuccessfully, and in 1881 it was agreed by Gladstone, Bright and the chief whip that McLaren senior should be persuaded to stand down in favour of his son. The old man took some convincing, but John at last had an easy election to win. His problems were only beginning. He annoyed Gladstone by asking to become a privy counsellor, and he fell out with William Harcourt, who as Home Secretary was his ministerial superior and was a difficult colleague for politicians more adept than John McLaren. A vacancy on the Court of Session bench gave ministers the opportunity to remove him as Lord Advocate and MP.

The Liberal unity of the 1880 election soon disappeared as Gladstone's government wrestled with Irish disruption in parliament and adventures abroad, especially in Egypt, that smacked of Tory jingoism. In Scotland, church disestablishment came to the fore. Because English radical Liberals led by Joseph Chamberlain never understood its grip on party activists, his efforts through the National Liberal Federation to focus on social issues barely penetrated north of the border. McLaren remained an ardent disestablisher. His son Walter unsuccessfully fought Inverness Burghs in the 1885 election on the issue against a 'Church Liberal', that is an adherent of the established Church of Scotland. Duncan McLaren, still combative in retirement, now stood in the way of the change of approach needed

by Scottish Liberals to address the social problems which were increasingly being laid at the door of government rather than being left to voluntary commitment. The division of large cities into single-member constituencies did radicalism no favours, according to Priscilla Bright, who in the wake of the 1885 poll pronounced that all four Edinburgh seats were 'once more in the hands of the Whigs, only they dare not be exactly what the Whigs of old were.'¹⁵ She was correct on both counts: the new MPs did not promote her husband's causes but neither were they just a coterie of landowners and legal bigwigs. McLaren had ensured that the party had moved on, broadening its appeal and mobilising thousands of activists. The new Scottish Liberalism that engaged the recently enfranchised voters, urban and then rural, many of whom were members of churches broken away from the Church of Scotland, kept Unionism and Labour at bay until after the First World War. Then its failure to recognise the importance of government in tackling social problems made all Liberals vulnerable.

In his final months, McLaren broke with Gladstone over Irish home rule and resigned the presidency of Edinburgh South Liberal Association. His son Charles, MP for Stafford since 1880, was on the other side of the growing Liberal divide, but it was Bright's views that concerned McLaren most. Priscilla recorded that he 'was greatly concerned at the silence maintained by my brother John Bright on the matter, when there were so many wishing to know his opinion, for really few men think for themselves and Gladstone never had become the Shibbolith [sic] of the Liberal party.'¹⁶ Bright avoided having to express immediate opposition to the Home Rule Bill in the Commons by travelling to Edinburgh for McLaren's funeral in April 1886.¹⁷

The carefully choreographed cortege through the city and the outpouring of tributes were a Victorian norm, but McLaren attained a position in Scottish life which makes regrettable the way in which his name has faded from public memory. On

his deathbed, the eighty-six-year-old received a letter from Thomas Lipton, the tea merchant, and the scientist Sir William Thomson (later Lord Kelvin) asking him to address a Liberal Unionist rally in Glasgow. There was a hagiographical biography of McLaren two years after his death.¹⁸ His sons Charles and Walter maintained a family presence on the Liberal benches of the Commons until almost the First World War.¹⁹ One of his daughters, Agnes, qualified among the first batch of woman doctors and, converting to Roman Catholicism, encouraged nuns to run medical missions. Priscilla's long widowhood – she died in 1906 – was devoted to the cause of female suffrage and her belief that Liberal leaders could be persuaded to see justice in

the cause. The family monument in the graveyard under the Castle rock has become encrusted with a century of soot from the nearby railway.

Willis Pickard is a former newspaper editor and rector of Aberdeen University. He is a trustee of the National Library of Scotland. His book The Member for Scotland – A life of Duncan McLaren will be published by Birlinn in spring 2011.

- 1 National Archives of Scotland. Dalhousie papers, GD/45/14/642. Andrew Rutherford to Fox Maule, 20 November 1837.
- 2 Ibid., 25 June 1838.
- 3 West Sussex Archives, Cobden papers, 1–8 (MF1–8) and No. 71
- 4 Thomas Pinney (ed.), *The Letters of Thomas Babington Macaulay* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976),

- Vol. 4., letter to Hannah, 30 July 1847.
- 5 Manchester City Library, J. B. Smith papers, MS923.2 S343.
- 6 The 1852 poll book has been analysed by Graeme Morton in *Unionist Nationalism: Governing Urban Scotland 1830–1860* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1999).
- 7 Cobden papers, CP 107, Cobden to McLaren, 6 March 1857.
- 8 Edinburgh City Archives (hereafter ECA), McLaren papers, Box 2, Bright to McLaren, 28 December 1859.
- 9 *The Scotsman*, 2 January 1859.
- 10 National Library of Scotland (hereafter NLS), John Scott Oliver papers, MS24785, John McLaren to Priscilla McLaren, 11 June 1865.
- 11 *Hansard*, July 22 1870.
- 12 H. C. G. Matthew (ed.), *The Gladstone Diaries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968–94), Vol. 10, Gladstone to McLaren, 22 December 1881.
- 13 ECA, Box 3, McLaren to Walter McLaren, 25 August 1873.
- 14 NLS, MS24801, Bright to John McLaren, 25 December 1878.
- 15 ECA, Box 2. Priscilla McLaren, in Inverness for her son's campaign, sent daily letters to her husband house-bound in Edinburgh, 18 November to 2 December 1885.
- 16 ECA, Box 3, Priscilla to a friend Mary, 28 November 1886.
- 17 Keith Robbins, *John Bright* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 256.
- 18 J. B. Mackie, *The Life and Work of Duncan McLaren* (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1888), two vols.
- 19 Walter McLaren represented Crewe (with gaps) from 1886 until his death in 1912. Charles lost his Stafford seat in 1886. He was MP for Bosworth from 1892 and became the first Lord Aberconway in 1911.

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.

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.

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 College, Birmingham; i.cawood@newman.ac.uk.

Liberal policy towards Austria-Hungary, 1905–16

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

Beyond Westminster: Grassroots Liberalism 1910–1929

Supervisor Dr Stuart Ball. Gavin Freeman, University of Leicester; gjf6@le.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.

'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

Research on the Liberal party and Lib Dems' political communication. Any information welcome (including testimonies) about electoral campaigns and strategies. Cynthia Messeleka-Boyer, 12 bis chemin Vaysse, 81150 Terrasac, France; +33 6 10 09 72 46; cynthia.boyer@univ-jfc.fr.

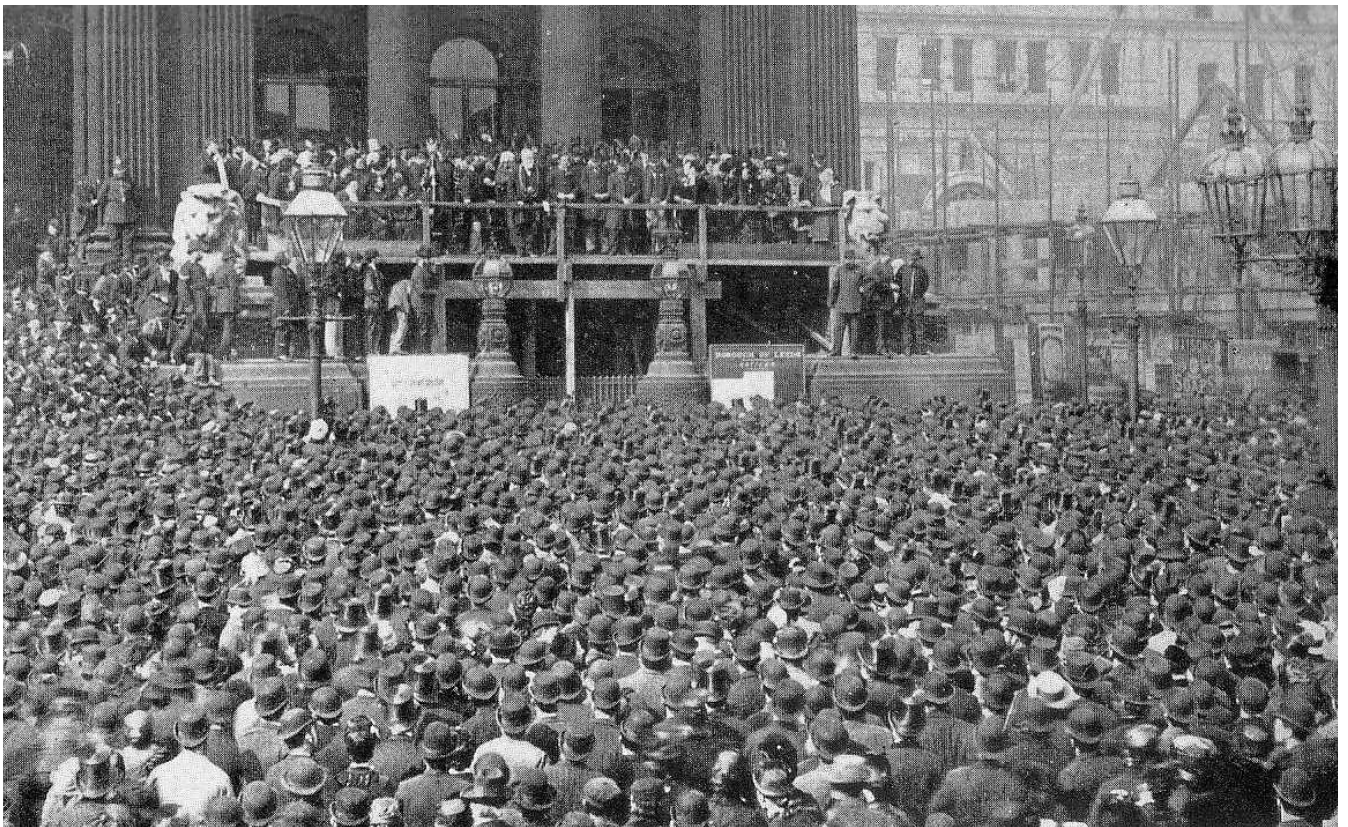
The Lib-Lab Pact

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.

Liberal Heritage

Michael Meadowcroft continues the *Journal's* series in which well-known Liberal Democrats take a look at the Liberal heritage of their home town.

LEEDS AND THE LIBERAL PANTHEON



MORE THAN with most cities, an overview of Leeds Liberalism is underpinned by significant political events. Perhaps most crucial was the ninth annual meeting of the National Liberal Federation held in Leeds on 3 November 1886. Until that year the dominant centre for Liberal organisation had been Birmingham, home of Joseph Chamberlain, who was in many ways the driving force behind modern party organisation.

Herbert Gladstone addressing an election meeting in 1880 from the steps of Leeds Town Hall.

Chamberlain was fundamentally opposed to Gladstone's Irish home rule policy on which the June 1886 election had been fought. For Chamberlain Ireland was the determining issue and, despite being very much on the radical wing of the Liberal Party, he and his allies aligned themselves with the Conservatives as 'Liberal Unionists' which, as a party, was completely merged with the Tories in 1912.

The happy coincidence for the Liberal Party of the ascendancy of the Leeds Liberals for the first

time, together with the national chairmanship being held by a determined Leeds Liberal, Sir James Kitson, probably saved the party for Gladstone. Other officers, from Birmingham, tried to propose a compromise motion urging Gladstone not to exclude Irish representatives from the Commons, but Kitson simply refused to put the motion forward and declared 'purely and simply, without reservation or exception' for Gladstone's plan. After a heated debate his motion was carried by 'very large majority'

LEEDS AND THE LIBERAL PANTHEON

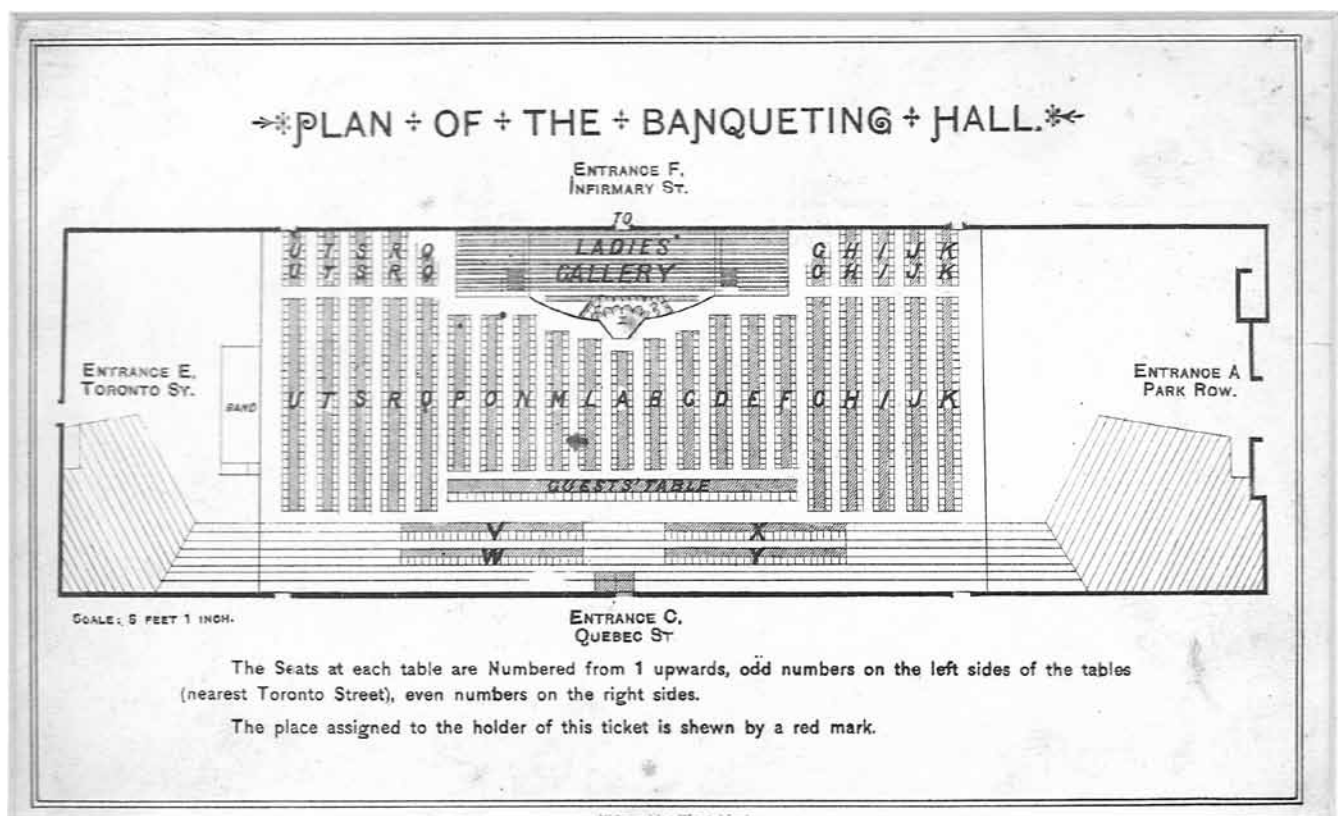
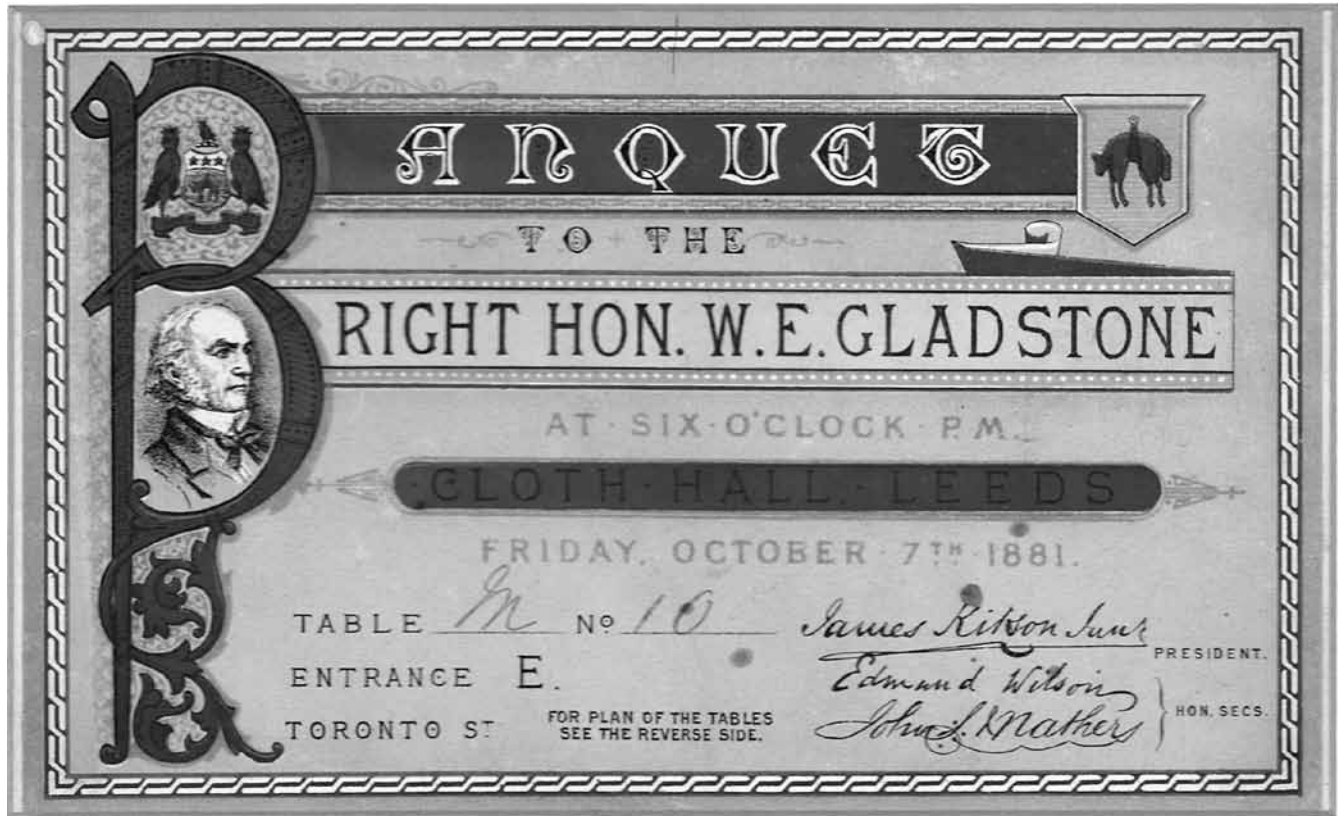
and was endorsed by huge public meetings in Leeds the same evening.

Liberalism was the dominant force in Leeds politics for fifty years before the NLF AGM of 1886. In fact, the Liberals controlled the Leeds Town Council for

fifty-seven years, from its inception in 1835 to 1892, its majority being bolstered from time to time by the cynical manipulation of the aldermanic bench. It had remarkable leaders in that time, not least John Hope Shaw, three times Mayor of Leeds, and

a man with remarkable foresight, not least in getting the council to inaugurate a municipal supply of drinking water to the town from reservoirs to the north of the town as early as 1852.

Despite having a number of civic leaders and MPs of great



stature, and even though they produced buildings and enterprises ahead of their time, the long tenure of office was not in the end beneficial. The party became moribund and failed to perceive the dangers of the rise of Labour as a serious political force.

In June and July 1890 came a victory for organised trade unionism which was to prove significant in the long struggle between Liberal and Labour for working-class support. The Liberal-controlled town council, having during the previous winter been forced to make concessions to the gas workers, including the eight hour day, determined to teach the men a lesson. As the warmer weather reduced the demand for gas, the Liberal leaders sought to enforce the withdrawal of concessions previously made. They alienated a wide range of public opinion so that, when the gasworkers went on strike, they had a great deal of support.

The Council brought in blacklegs from towns outside Leeds and, rather than taking them immediately to the three gas works, the local Liberal leaders took them to the town hall where they were led in patriotic songs! By the time they arrived at the gas works the strikers were ready for them and, in the ensuing confrontation, many of the blacklegs joined the strikers. Eventually the strikers gained just about all their demands and the Liberal Party was discredited as the representative of the working class.

All this was despite the efforts of another remarkable local Liberal. John Shackleton Mathers was a local building society manager and, although he was a member of the town council for seven years, it was as the honorary secretary of the Leeds Liberal Association that his skills were used and his reputation forged. He was described by Herbert Gladstone, MP for Leeds West, as 'a born organiser' and by Sir Wemyss Reid, the editor of the Liberal *Leeds Mercury*, as 'simply the best organiser and wire puller I ever met.'

Mathers was exceptionally shrewd and saw clearly the danger to the Liberal Party of failing to accommodate the legitimate political desires of working-class

Left: Ticket for banquet in Leeds for WE Gladstone, organised by Mathers. A huge marquee was erected on what is now City Square. It housed 2,000 diners and many thousands more who came for Gladstone's speech and to observe the dinner! Mathers charged a differential price – of one guinea to five guineas – depending on how close to Gladstone they were.

men. He worked with Herbert Gladstone to pick off local trade union leaders by getting them adopted as Liberal (or in some cases Lib-Lab) candidates for the town council or as Liberal nominees for the magistrates' bench. Partly through Mathers' efforts the electoral success of the Labour Party in Leeds came years after its comparable victories in Bradford: Fred Jowett was successful in Bradford in 1892, eleven years before the first Labour councillor in Leeds.

In March 1890, three months before the gasworkers' strike, Mathers wrote in prescient terms to Herbert Gladstone, MP for Leeds West and on the way to becoming a key national figure in the party:

There are questions ... coming on in leaps and bounds ... To use the broadest term, I mean Socialism and by that I mean immediately all the questions which concern capital and labour; all that which concerns the very direct interests and comforts of the toilers.

For over five years I have been warning friends that, unless the Liberal Party took up and considered these questions and dealt with them, a great Labour Party would spring up and sweep aside both Tories and Liberals as such and govern for themselves.

You may think this Utopian, it only remains so until the hour, and not a moment beyond, when the masses have accumulated funds to sustain their men for their cause.

Mathers was not heeded. Labour was alienated and increasingly believed that Liberals were incapable of treating them as the equals of the professional and business men that were the public image of the Leeds Liberal Party. Mathers himself died in 1899, at the early age of fifty-five, and no one took up his radical mantle. In 1903, Herbert Gladstone concluded his famous pact with Ramsay Macdonald under which thirty-one Labour candidates were not opposed by Liberals at the 1906 general election in return for an equivalent number of Liberals – including Gladstone himself – being given a free run against the Conservatives.

The pact was mutually beneficial in the short term but it gave Labour its first independent and identifiable group of MPs, the forerunner of Labour's successful drive to replace the Liberals, which, indeed, was Macdonald's aim. In Leeds, as elsewhere, the Liberals increasingly lacked a base and a role. In 1926, the council group split and six Liberals defected to the Conservatives. Labour took control of the City Council in 1928 and all Liberal representation on the council had gone by 1945. It was to be another twenty-three years before they returned. Which is another story.

Michael Meadowcroft was a Leeds City Councillor, 1968–1983, and Liberal MP for Leeds West, 1983–87. He has held numerous local and national offices in the Liberal Party and is currently the Chair of the Leeds Liberal Democrats Campaign Development Group.

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REFLECTIONS ON THE 2009 PARLIAM LONG-TERM TRENDS IN THE RISE OF THE FRE

In the 2009 parliamentary elections in Germany, the Free Democratic Party (FDP) achieved its best result ever in national elections – 14.6 per cent of the vote, up by 4.7 per cent compared to the previous election in 2005. In this article, **Natascha Zowislo-Grünewald** and **Franz Beitzinger** argue that this is the effect of a slow, but steady development of political sentiment in Germany, which is directed against ‘big government’ and towards both the acceptance of and the demand for the principles of self-responsibility and freedom in society.



AS HEINRICH Heine wrote, ‘The Englishman loves liberty as his lawful wife ... he is still ready in case of need to defend her like a man ... The Frenchman loves liberty as his bride. He ... will fight for her

to the death ... The German loves liberty as though she were his old grandmother.’¹

The immediate implication of this quote from Heine’s *Pictures of Travel*, comparing the mindset of the Germans, the English, and the French, seems to be that

MENTARY ELECTIONS IN GERMANY PUBLIC OPINION AND THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

the Germans are not passionately committed to either political or economic liberty. Applied to modern campaigning, this sees its reflection in the assumption that political elections in Germany will never be won by propagating freedom and self-responsibility. And, at first sight, the parliamentary elections of 2005 confirm this prejudice: the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) achieved their second-worst result since 1949 and had to form a grand coalition with the Social Democratic Party (SPD).² The consensus of published opinion is that Angela Merkel 'lost' this election due to her explicit free-market campaigning;³ the mass media has generally commented that people were afraid of too much freedom, and that the common man was yearning for a paternalistic, protective and caring government.⁴

Between the national elections in 2005 and 2009, however, something seems to have happened that contradicts published opinion. In the parliamentary elections of 27 September 2009, the CDU/CSU yet again lost votes and fell back to 33.8 per cent of the so-called 'second votes' (their worst result since 1949). The SPD definitively lost this election and achieved their worst result since 1933 (23 per cent – down 11.2 per cent compared to 2005). However, the Free Democratic Party (FDP) achieved its best result ever with 14.6 per cent of the vote (up 4.7 per cent compared to 2005). Astonishingly enough, the FDP earned this increase in votes by advancing the cause of economic liberty during

the financial crisis. Can elections actually be won in Germany by promoting liberty? Maybe Heinrich Heine got it right when he further reflected in his *Pictures of Travel*:

The splenetic Briton, weary of his wife, may put a halter round her neck and sell her in Smithfield. The flattering Frenchman may perhaps be untrue to his beloved bride and abandon her ... But the German will never turn his old grandmother quite out of doors ... Should freedom ever – which GOD forbid – vanish from the entire world, a German dreamer would discover her again in his dreams.⁵

Economic politics in Germany before the 2009 parliamentary elections

At the climax of the still-ongoing financial crisis, an overwhelming section of the German political class rediscovered the state as a wise and benevolent economic actor. In October 2008, Chancellor Angela Merkel and Federal Minister of Finance Peer Steinbrück together announced that the government would guarantee German citizens' private savings, worth about €1 trillion.⁶ Further examples were the announcement of subsidies to stimulate the purchase of new cars⁷ ('Abwrackprämie'), and a law that allows the expropriation of private banks.⁸ Frank-Walter Steinmeier, vice-chancellor in the grand coalition

and the SPD's front runner for chancellorship in the September 2009 elections in Germany, called for the (partial) nationalisation of the German unit of General Motors, Adam Opel AG.⁹ The two largest parties in Germany based their campaigning on propagating an active role for the state in the management of the economy. The state, it was claimed, needs to control the economy because, as Peer Steinbrück put it in his government policy statement of 25 September 2008, the financial crisis was caused by the principle of *laissez faire*.¹⁰ The financial crisis therefore seemed to promote an understanding of the government as a safeguard against the ferocity of the market economy, on the part of both politicians and the public alike.

However, things have not always been so clear. From 1998 to 2005, Germany was governed by a coalition between the SPD and the Greens (the 'Alliance 90/The Greens'). By the end of the first legislative period, in 2002, the world regarded Germany as the sick man of Europe. Europe's former economic powerhouse seemed to be paralysed by its unwillingness to reform and overburdened by an ever-growing paternalistic state. Even public opinion in Germany demanded a radical change: 'Citizens, to the barricades!' ('Bürger, auf die Barrikaden!')¹¹ might well have been the watchword of 2002. Privatisation, deregulation, and debureaucratisation (as endorsed by Thatcher and Reagan) were commonly accepted

Left: Guido Westerwelle, leader of the FDP, during the 2009 election

LONG-TERM TRENDS IN PUBLIC OPINION AND THE RISE OF THE FREE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

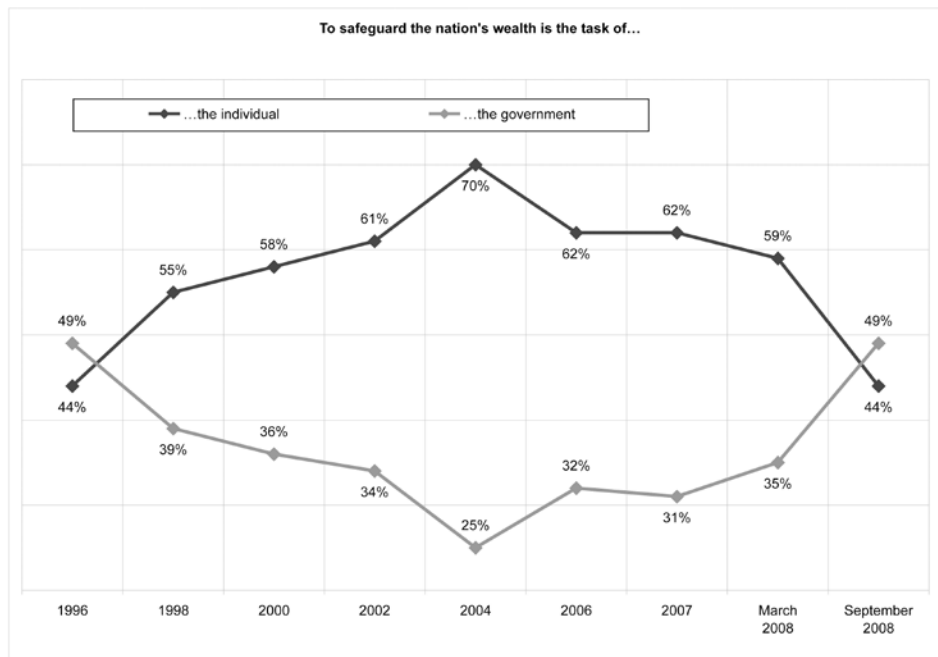


Fig. 1: Acceptance of the principle of 'self-responsibility'¹⁶

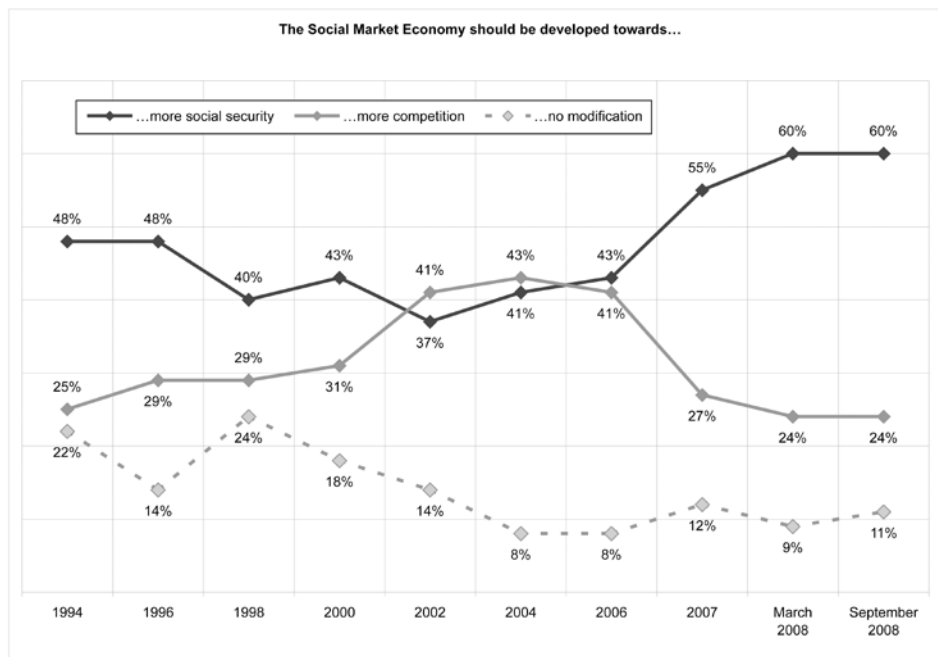


Fig. 2: The future of the social market economy¹⁷

and analysts inside the CDU concluded that the reform agenda had prevented them from winning the election.¹² Following the election, the Christian Democrats were forced to form a grand coalition with the Social Democrats, and the price they paid was the dropping of the Leipzig resolutions. Prolonged and controversial intra-party discussions accompanied the revision of the party program.¹³ In 2009, Angela Merkel decided not to talk about economic policy or any other issue touching on the precarious balance between freedom and self-responsibility. Intra-party criticism, however, harshened during the national election campaign, especially after the 'disillusioning' regional elections of 30 August 2009.¹⁴

What do the Germans want?

The National Association of German Banks (Bundesverband Deutscher Banken, BDB) regularly carries out opinion polls on the Germans' attitudes on economic issues,¹⁵ and, at first sight, the results of these polls seem to indicate that the Germans appreciate a liberal social order and values such as freedom and self-responsibility (see Figure 1).

Over the last decade, roughly 60 per cent of the respondents in the regular BDB surveys said that it was the task of the individual to safeguard the nation's wealth; whereas around 30–35 per cent thought that this was the government's task. As the financial crisis has deepened, however, these numbers have been affected. In the BDB's survey of September 2008, 49 per cent thought that it was the government's job and 44 per cent thought that it was up to the individual. This sees a return to the opinions of the mid-1990s, when about half of the interviewees also held the view that the government was responsible for safeguarding prosperity.

From these figures, it is possible to conclude that German citizens are willing, in principle, to accept their self-responsibility. Particularly as the period from the mid-1990s to 2006 also saw a rise – from 25 per cent to 41 per cent – in the number of people desiring less government influence on the economy. However, probably as a

as being the cure for the German disease. After winning the 2002 ballot, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder committed the Red-Green project to a process of ambitious reform ('Agenda 2010'). Announcing this reform package in his government policy statement of 14 March 2003, entitled 'Courage to Change' ('Mut zur Veränderung'), Schröder declared that he would cut welfare benefits, so as to both promote and demand self-responsibility. The Christian Democratic Union (CDU),

which lost the 2002 ballot, also declared its commitment to freedom and self-responsibility at their 2003 national party convention in Leipzig. At that time, pollsters predicted that the CDU, together with her Bavarian sister party the CSU (Christian Social Union), would have won an absolute majority of seats in the German Bundestag, had there been a national election.

Surprisingly, however, public opinion changed radically during the 2005 election campaign,

result of the financial crisis, people have again lost their faith in the market. By September 2008, the proportion of those in favour of 'the market' playing a bigger role in the economy dropped to 24 per cent. Now, 60 per cent of the respondents are asking for more social security to be provided by the government (see Figure 2).

The belief in economic freedom is not well grounded in Germany. This became obvious during the so-called 'Anti-Capitalism Debate' in the spring of 2005. The equation, in the mass media, between a free-market economy and exploitation gave voice to a public scepticism about the fundamental principles of the market economy. By the time voters went to the polls in 2005, 75 per cent of the interviewees thought that corporate profits were not benefiting society – were harmful, in other words – and 37 per cent viewed high profits as 'morally dubious'. The impact of the current financial crisis has produced much the same reaction. In September 2008, 79 per cent of the interviewees said that the profits of private businesses were not benefiting society, and 46 per cent judged 'high profits' as 'morally dubious'.

Despite the open scepticism of the German public towards the market economy, the proportion of people who lean towards the values of freedom and self-responsibility as such seems to be stable. The same can be said for the part of the population which fervently advocates an all-powerful state as the solution. According to the *Deutscher Wertemonitor*, published by the Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung, the number of respondents who favour individual freedom and self-responsibility as against social solidarity and equality has dropped slightly from 47 to 43 per cent. The share held by the proponents of social solidarity and equality has climbed slightly from 47 to 50 per cent.¹⁸

In 2006, after the first year of the grand coalition's 'regency' in Berlin, the assessment of the CEO of the polling firm TNS Emnid was that conservative voters and almost all business people were profoundly disappointed with the CDU's policies, because they contradicted the resolutions made

during the 2003 Leipzig party congress.¹⁹ About a year later and two years after forming the grand coalition, two-thirds of the CDU's voters were pleased with the government.²⁰ This, however, was grounded first and foremost in a sense of gloating over the Social Democrats' ongoing polling crisis. Another one and a half years later, and the CDU's voters were again highly dissatisfied with the CDU's economic policy. In a poll undertaken by FORSA in March 2009, 74 per cent of the interviewees were afraid that the CDU could become the 'party of nationalisation'; 52 per cent accused Merkel of collaboration with the Social Democrats.²¹

The findings of another study ('*Perspektive-Deutschland 2006*')²² seem to indicate that Germans want to have their cake and eat it: they want freedom from the state but they also want risk protection by the state. More than half of the interviewees (54 per cent) favour a social model that shows notably more market orientation than before; only 13 per cent opt for a society more intensely shaped by government. However, the respondents would also like to see more redistribution: more than three-quarters propose that more government programmes be instituted to narrow social chasms; 38 per cent want the government to cover the population's risks to a larger extent; while 37 per cent would like to see more self-responsibility. Asked to choose between approaches to organising social security, 48 per cent opted for the governmental model and only 34 per cent for the market model.

German society today is divided into two camps. On the one hand, we have the proponents of an all-protective state, who were gradually declining in numbers until the beginning of the current financial crisis. In contrast, the other camp, which has grown notably over the past decade, confesses allegiance to values such as freedom and self-responsibility and fundamentally prefers the market to the state as far as the economic order is concerned. However, the worldview of vast parts of this second camp is not consolidated, as was shown by the changes within public opinion both during the 'Anti-Capitalism

Debate' of spring 2005 and as a result of the current financial crisis.

Trends in public opinion

The Germans as a whole are indecisive. They appreciate the welfare state, but also freedom, and would prefer to have both at the same time. In the summer of 2006, the journalist Bruce Stokes wrote an article entitled 'Germany Stalled' on the German disease and the unwillingness of the government to reform.²³ He stated that: 'It is not clear, though, that Germany's politicians or public have much stomach for further change.' However, this general reproach does not seem to be completely accurate as regards either the politicians or the German public. In fact, a careful interpretation of the opinion polls does not confirm a diagnosis of unswerving belief in big government and a degree of discernable scepticism towards freedom.

The average German appreciates the welfare state, but also some freedom. The long-lasting economic crisis of 2001 brought both mass unemployment to the Germans and losses in net wealth, and the same is feared to be happening or has already happened as a result of the financial crisis. The solution to permanently overcoming the 'German disease' and its accompanying crisis is publicly known and accepted: a programme of liberalisation and deregulation. Indeed, as the surveys mentioned above clearly show, the Germans are aware of the fact that an efficient welfare system has to rely on a market economy, and analysis of the opinion polls points to a growing support for freedom. There are signs of the beginning of a change in values throughout the public and that the dominant egalitarian Zeitgeist shaped by the 1960s and 1970s might now have peaked and be on the decline. This is in line with a prediction by the Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach (IfD) who forecast in 2003 that the value of freedom would, indeed, gain in importance.²⁴

Clearly, the current financial crisis has had an impact on this long-term increase in the appreciation of 'freedom'. However, the fundamental trend seems to

The Germans as a whole are indecisive. They appreciate the welfare state, but also freedom, and would prefer to have both at the same time.

LONG-TERM TRENDS IN PUBLIC OPINION AND THE RISE OF THE FREE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

remain intact, which means that the view has been growing the individual is responsible their own well-being, and not the state. In a poll taken in March 2009 by the IfD, 47 per cent agree with the statement, 'every man is the architect of his own fortune'. Only 28 per cent said that they were defenceless and at the mercy of circumstances – an attitude that promotes reliance on the redistributing state. This the latter number is the lowest in the IfD's surveys since 1990 and represents the expression of a trend in Germany, a 'renaissance of civic values', which is probably the main cause for the increasing support for the FDP, beyond the dissatisfaction of former loyal CDU voters with their party.²⁵ (See Figure 3.)

Naturally, this change in values will unfold only gradually. However, the current financial crisis might prove to be a trigger that speeds up the change in attitudes and, as a result, the delicate trend towards increased liberty might result in a sustainable change in the political landscape in Germany. The results of the German elections to the European parliament in June 2009, as well as the results of the national parliamentary elections in September 2009, seem to be consistent with this hypothesis. Despite accusing 'the free market economy'

and 'capitalist values' of causing the economic crisis and despite demanding massive state interventions such as the nationalisation of tumbling businesses, the parties on the left of the political spectrum did not benefit. In the European elections, Social Democrats fell to the lowest percentage of the vote ever (20.8 per cent). The post-communists ('The Left', 7.5 per cent) and the Greens (12.1 per cent) gained only a few votes. Christian Democrats performed better than expected (37.9 per cent). However, the largest growth was seen by the pro-market Free Democrats (11.0 per cent), who nearly doubled their share of the vote.²⁷

To compound this state of affairs, the results of the national elections in September 2009 were a disaster for the Social Democrats (23.0 per cent). Post-communists performed quite well (at 11.9 per cent), and the Greens gained a little (at 10.7 per cent). The CDU/CSU suffered slight losses (33.8 per cent). The FDP, however, got its best result ever (14.6 per cent). In polls taken at the beginning of July 2009, one of the few German top-ranking politicians favouring economic freedom – the Minister for Economics and Technology, Karl-Theodor Freiherr von und zu Guttenberg (CSU) – was the second most favoured politician, just behind Chancellor

Angela Merkel.²⁸ In his own electoral ward, he got 68.1 per cent of the first votes, the best result of all candidates in the 2009 parliamentary elections. All in all, the FDP received 6.3 million votes. An analysis of voter migration shows that nearly 20 per cent of the FDP's votes (1.2 million) originated from former CDU/CSU voters, about 7 per cent (430,000) from former SPD voters. There can therefore be no doubt that the FDP profited from disillusioned CDU/CSU supporters. Another 930,000 disillusioned CDU/CSU voters stayed away from the ballot box. This voter migration pattern suggests that the reasons for the FDP 'stealing' votes can be found in the economic and fiscal policies of the grand coalition.²⁹

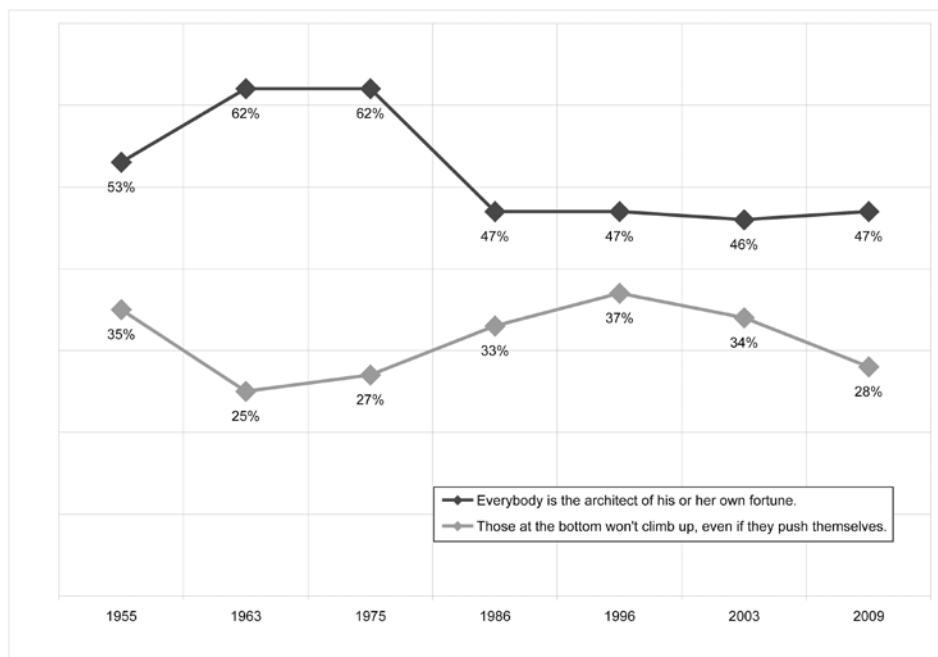
Now, about one year after the election, voters' support for the FDP has melted away. The reason for the disastrous polls since the beginning of 2010 is quite obvious: the Free Democrats have not shown any serious attempt to alter German politics after the election. Apparently, they have broken their election pledge.

Will there be a sudden change in German politics?

The economic theory of democracy laid out by Anthony Downs in 1957³⁰ is grounded in the assumption that political parties strive to maximise their votes, and therefore automatically pursue policies that also maximise the profit of the majority of the voters. Rational voters make their electoral decisions on the basis of information provided by party manifestos, and choose those parties whose programmes match their individual interests to the greatest possible extent. If this is, indeed, true, then the long-term orientations of the voting public should have connotations for the political landscape.

From the findings of the opinion polls described above, and according to the theoretical model of democracy just described, there should be two political camps in Germany. The first should stand for the expansion of social equality through governmental activity, and the second should stand for the strengthening of freedom and self-responsibility.

Fig. 3: Views regarding freedom and self-responsibility²⁶



These two camps should differ decisively as regards their political programmes and their political action. And, indeed, precisely this sort of factionalisation can be found within the German party spectrum (CDU/CSU/FDP vs. SPD/Greens/The Left).

These two political camps, whose major representatives (CDU/CSU and SPD) have been forced to form a grand coalition from 2005 to 2009, should be expected to strive for the greatest possible and, above all, most visible differentiation as far as their party-ideological direction and actual actions are concerned. Yet, despite trying to establish distinctive profiles, the CDU/CSU and SPD were striving to demonstrate an overriding spirit of harmony in government to the public. Those who criticised the ongoing social-democratisation of the CDU³¹ desired a political commitment to more individual liberty, more individual responsibility, and more economic freedom; the CDU's leading circles, however, fear such a political agenda.

The attitude of that part of the electorate which is actually in favour of self-responsibility and freedom is not rock solid, as was seen during the Anti-Capitalism Debate in the spring of 2005 and is being seen again during the financial crisis.³² Consequently, there is no clear incentive for politicians to publicly speak out for restraining the government and strengthening individual responsibility. Indeed, it is safer to advocate the opposite. Therefore, political programmes can be expected to increasingly concentrate on the negative effects of more self-responsibility and the alleged accompanying weakening of the state. The CDU's new political strategy to move further to the political left³³ is an example of this.

Politics is a business like every other business. However, 'political markets' and 'economic markets' differ markedly. In political markets, the realisation of political profit does not necessarily result from the creation of new political knowledge and, thereby, the establishing of political market leadership. On the contrary, politicians can also try to generate 'revenue' through politically

The shifting political sentiment in Germany is, indeed, an incentive for politicians to recalibrate their campaigning. If the growing acceptance of economic liberty and the corresponding values of self-responsibility and freedom prove to be sustainable, more politicians will (have to) join this camp.

sanctioned distortions and favouritism,³⁴ and for politicians in general, this kind of 'plundering' entrepreneurship seems to have been a more profitable strategy. Rather than creating new political knowledge, certain social groups can achieve a clearly definable benefit through welfare state transfers. In the current financial crisis, examples of these groups are the banking sector and the automotive industry. However, creative rather than plundering entrepreneurship should be the desired politico-economic approach. Only the former is able to generate solutions for social problems.³⁵

In the medium term, there will be no paradigm shift in German politics. The institutional framework for political action still gives strong incentives for political entrepreneurs to act in a 'plundering' way and to work against the deconstruction of the paternalistic welfare state. However, pro-market arguments are likely to become increasingly visible in German politics in the future, and, as a result, a political party committed to economic liberalism and 'bourgeois virtues',³⁶ filling the void left by Angela Merkel's recent strategy of defeating the SPD by imitating social democracy, will presumably have a real chance to become an important power in German politics. (The Free Democratic Party, however, missed this chance.) The shifting political sentiment in Germany is, indeed, an incentive for politicians to recalibrate their campaigning. If the growing acceptance of economic liberty and the corresponding values of self-responsibility and freedom prove to be sustainable, more politicians will (have to) join this camp.

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LIBERAL HISTORY QUIZ 2010: ANSWERS

(See page 19 for the questions.)

1. John Stuart Mill
2. Lord Rosebery (Actually our wording was slightly sloppy here, as Lord John Russell was Prime Minister for eight months in 1865–66, a shorter period than Rosebery's fifteen months in 1894–95. Russell's earlier period as PM, from 1846 to 1852, fell before our cut-off date of 1859, though that wasn't what we intended! In the end we accepted either Rosebery or Russell as a correct answer.)
3. North Devon
4. David Alton
5. George Dangerfield
6. Isle of Ely; Ripon
7. Diana Maddock
8. King Street, St James, London SW1
9. Dadabhai Naoroji
10. Liverpool
11. Isaac Foot
12. Dick Taverne
13. Sir William Vernon Harcourt
14. A J Sylvester
15. Vince Cable
16. Des Wilson
17. Sir John Acton (later Lord Acton)
18. Tawney Society
19. Sir Charles Dilke
20. Jenny Randerson

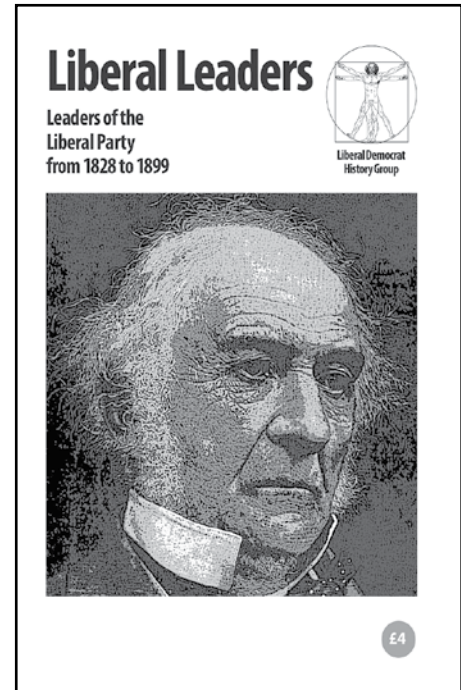
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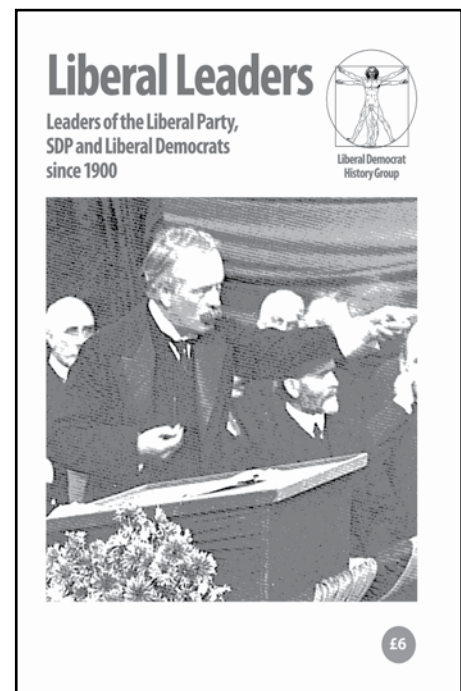


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REVIEWS

Too short a history

Chris Cook, *A Short History of the Liberal Party: The Road Back to Power* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010)

Reviewed by Duncan Brack

CHRIS COOK, the prolific author and historian, and his publishers, Palgrave Macmillan, are to be congratulated on keeping this long-running series going; the 2010 edition of this short history of the party is the seventh, in a sequence which started in 1976. As one of the comments on the back cover says, 'The great strength of Chris Cook's party history is that it is a work of reference and record. Dr Cook provides a highly readable narrative.'

That's certainly true: this volume is the most comprehensive and up-to-date of the available concise histories of the party. The bulk of its contents are essentially the same as the previous, 2002, edition, with four new chapters replacing the previous final chapter, bringing the history up to summer 2010. As a result, the book provides a greater level of detail on the Liberal Democrat period than it does on the histories of the predecessor parties.

Previous editions had the starting date of 1900 in the title; in fact that was always a bit misleading, since the book's first two chapters provide a decent, though short, summary of nineteenth-century Liberal history. The next eight chapters cover the Edwardian heyday of the party and then its decline, to 1945; a further five chapters take us up to 1987; and the remaining eight chapters, almost 40 per cent of the book's length, cover the Liberal-SDP merger and the story of the Liberal Democrats.

That's not to say, however, that the book couldn't have been rather better. My review of the last edition, which appeared in *Journal* 37 (winter 2002–03) highlighted a number of flaws – and unfortunately most of them are still present in the current volume.

Some of the problems have been fixed. The section of the book relating to the October 1974 election is no longer written in the present tense, the index is no longer wrong (though it's still a bit skimpy) and the book's been re-set, which means it now appears in a much clearer typeface than hitherto.

But too many factual errors remain uncorrected. Peter Knowlson, a member of the Liberal negotiating team over merger with the SDP, has strangely morphed into someone called Andy Millson. The post-merger name of the party is given as Social and Liberal Democratic Party, which it never was; it was always Social and Liberal Democrats. And plenty of new errors appear in the final four chapters: Patsy Calton MP is misnamed as Patsy Catton; Bill Newton Dunn MEP becomes Bill Newton Gunn; the date of the anti-Iraq war march in which Lib Dems participated is given as 15 February 2004 (it was 2003); the February 2006 by-election apparently took place in Dunbarton and West Fife (it was Dunfermline and West Fife); Nicol Stephen MSP supposedly became leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats in 2003 (actually it was 2005), and then, strangely, resigns as Labour MP for Glasgow East in 2008; in 2010 Simon Wright is elected as MP for Redcar (in fact it was Norwich South); a list of coalition Lib Dem ministers is given which omits Andrew Stunell; and so on.

Events and people are mentioned without any explanation of what or who they were – for example, as in the last edition, the Lloyd George Fund is referred to several times without us being told where it originated (in the sale of political honours); Violet Bonham Carter makes an

appearance without us being told she was Asquith's daughter; in 1976 (though from the context you'd think it was 1975), we are told that Cyril Smith seemed about to resign, but not what post he was thinking of resigning from (actually, Chief Whip); and so on. The same thing occurs in the new chapters: for example, the Butler Report (on the evidence for Iraqi weapons of mass destruction) is mentioned but never explained, as is Charles Kennedy's 'embarrassment' over the 2005 conference debate on the Royal Mail; details of shadow cabinet reshuffles are given but with no background on the people being reshuffled; etc., etc.

Information is often incomplete: the 2001 conference debate on all-women shortlists is referred to but its outcome is not; the number of constituency seats won in the 2003 Scottish elections is given, but the number of list seats isn't – and three of the constituencies appear to be gains, whereas actually only one was; the total Lib Dem vote was supposed to have fallen, though actually it rose; and apparently the 2006 federal conference 'took issue' with the abandonment of the 50p top



A Short History of the Liberal Party The Road back to Power



CHRIS COOK



income tax rate, whereas in fact, of course, it voted for it.

Speaking as someone who's edited a fair number of books in the past, I would say this book hasn't been near an editor – or at least, not one who knew anything about the subject. History books ought not to make so many simple mistakes. And the English, while clear enough, is often clumsy and inelegant, for example as in describing the outcome of the 2007 local, Scottish and Welsh elections as 'mixed' three times in three successive sentences. A decent editor ought to have fixed that.

More seriously, the book's contents are heavily imbalanced. As I observed in my review of the last edition, a good party history ought to include a description of the party's leading personalities, its internal structures and ways of functioning, key elements of its strategy (or lack of one) at crucial moments, and party philosophy and policy. It should show how it related to the outside world (i.e. what difference it made), its underlying bases of support in the electorate, and, of course, its electoral record.

This book, like its previous editions, really only scores well on the last point, Liberal psephology, where it provides a comprehensive record of local, by- and general election achievements. If it had covered all the other elements as thoroughly as this, it would be an excellent source – and also, of course, a good deal longer. As it is, it is really quite unbalanced, lacking, in particular, any real consideration of Liberal policy and ideology. For example, the chapter on Jo Grimond's period as leader refers to his important policy innovations, such as Liberal support for UK entry to Europe, and industrial democracy, in less than half a sentence, whereas the party's opinion poll and electoral record is examined in painstaking detail. The 1986 defence debate at the Eastbourne Assembly – the occasion when the Liberal-SDP Alliance began to fall apart – is referred to with no explanation of the background whatsoever, while the same chapter looks at the Alliance's electoral record in impressive detail. (Pleasingly, however, the 1986 vote at Eastbourne is not

This book, like its previous editions, really only scores well on the last point, Liberal psephology, where it provides a comprehensive record of local, by- and general election achievements.

represented as Liberal adoption of unilateral nuclear disarmament (a common mistake), though the 1981 vote at Llandudno against Cruise missiles, wrongly, is.) The party's strong environmental policy stance is almost never mentioned. The 2010 election campaign is dealt with in two pages, and the results then described in eight – though the analysis is purely geographical; there is no attempt anywhere in the book to look at the socioeconomic or attitudinal underpinnings of the party's voters or its members.

Overall, this is a frustrating book. Parts of it are actually quite good – particularly the first couple of chapters, on the pre-1900 period, and the last, which provides a perceptive analysis of the case for a coalition and the progress and outcome of the coalition negotiations. But in between there's just too many mistakes, too much on the electoral record and not enough on anything else.

Duncan Brack is Editor of the Journal of Liberal History.

Modernising the state

Steve Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (Yale University Press, 2009)

Reviewed by Mark Pack

THE TRADITIONAL picture of 1688 is of a rather English revolution – one much politer, less violent, more limited and rather more sensible and rational than the bloody versions of revolution seen in other countries. In this work Steve Pincus sets out to challenge that view.

In his view, the Glorious Revolution was not simply a quick and painless transfer of power at the top of the state but a wide-reaching and fundamental alteration to the state, politics, society and culture – all deliberately planned by opponents of James II. They were not seeking simply to oppose him but also to offer the country a different route to modernisation. The Glorious Revolution was not, as in the traditional version, a defence of the English way of life against an errant monarch who had blundered for a few years but, in Pincus's eyes, the creation of a new way of life. This view, he argues, returns historical interpretation to a position much closer to that held by many in the eighteenth century.

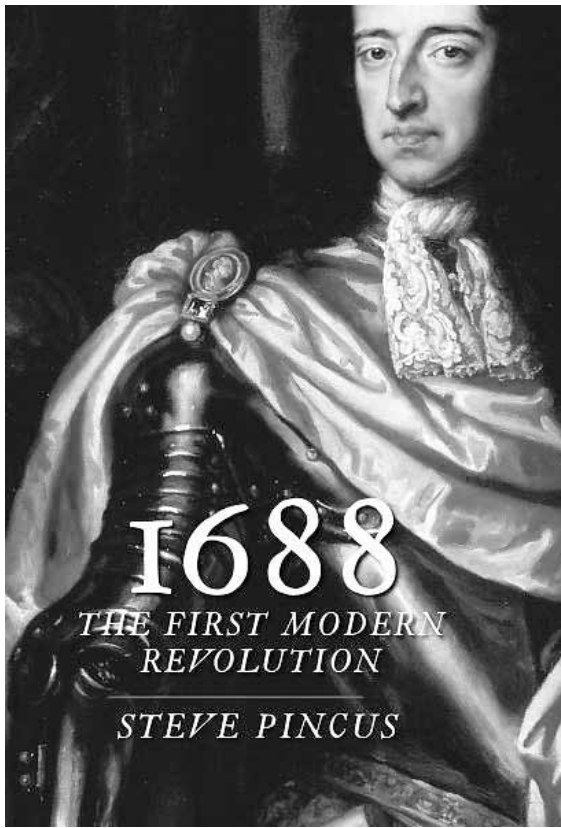
Rather than James II's approach of centralisation, intolerance of dissidents and territorial empire, his opponents created a participatory state set on a course of continuous evolution. Instead of James II taking the country

down a path leading towards a country in the style of Louis XIV, the revolutionaries looked to Holland for a radically different, alternative vision of the future.

Holland, too, was a country where the military was at the centre of the government's efforts, with a centralised state at home and military intervention abroad. However, it was also a state that valued political participation rather than an absolute monarch, tolerated different religions and encouraged manufacturing rather than focusing on protecting a landed empire. The driving motor of society and government was commerce, not the monarch. Pincus therefore argues that 'the revolution pitted two groups of modernisers against each other.'

He also, as a result, asks us to see 1688 not as a short, English revolution but rather as an event that played out over several years and had important repercussions across the world, including India, the West Indies, North America and continental Europe.

Moving into more theoretical territory, he therefore also positions the Glorious Revolution, and not the French Revolution, as the first modern revolution. Part of this argument is about the bloody nature of 1688 in his eyes: 'Though we have come to view



the Glorious Revolution as bloodless, aristocratic, and consensual, the actual event was none of these things ... the English endured a scale of violence against property and persons similar to that of the French Revolution.'

The case is an impressive, sweeping one, and it is a laid out in a long book, rooted in years of research and buttressed by pages of footnotes. It is a case, though, that does not fully convince.

Take the striking argument that the Glorious Revolution was as bloody as the French Revolution. A footnote tells us, 'Statistics that highlight the bloodiness of the French Revolution inevitably include the Napoleonic Wars ... By including the Nine Years' War (1689–97) and the wars of Ireland and Scotland – all direct consequences of the Revolution of 1688–89 – the percentages of dead and wounded are comparable to the French case.'

However, for many the bloody reputation of the French Revolution is based not on its wars but on its civil violence. It is the guillotine and not the battlefield that shapes the view of a bloody revolution. Hence, making a like-for-like comparison based on including the wars has merit, but does not form a good basis for the

claim that 'the English endured a scale of violence against property and persons similar to the French Revolution', especially given the domestic implication many will take from that wording and given only the scattered and incidental subsequent comparison of violence off the battlefield in France and Britain.

Part of the book hinges on what is considered a revolution, with Pincus suggesting that revolutions should not be seen as a struggle of the new to usurp the old but rather as a staged process in which the existing power structure seeks to change and then in turn is challenged by an alternative route to change. It is a theory that prompts thoughts across many centuries and countries; in particular, whether or not the crucial early stage of revolutions is when the existing establishment starts to break down existing power structures in its own desire to bring about change – but thereby also opening up the possibility of a different form of change replacing the establishment. It is an intriguing idea, although one that in itself cannot really be supported by a book that focuses on just the one revolution.

In addition to the novel interpretation the book offers of both 1688 and revolutions more generally, it also offers an unusual reading experience as, at the end of the introduction, Pincus points readers with different interests to start reading the main book at different chapters inside. That offer reflects the breadth of a work that has been heavily praised for the detail of its research and which, whilst not convincing all fellow historians of the strength of its case, has certainly opened up new viewpoints to debate. The concentration on presenting those viewpoints means that those looking to understand the full cast of personalities or the story behind James II's accession to power will mostly not find it here.

As a result, this controversy and length, yet narrow focus, make the book more for the student of the period than for the causal reader looking for an accessible introduction.

Mark Pack ran the Liberal Democrat 2001 and 2005 internet general election campaign and is now Head of Digital at MHP Communications. He also co-edits Liberal Democrat Voice (www.LibDemVoice.org).

Prophet of democracy

Hugh Brogan, *Alexis de Tocqueville: Prophet of Democracy in the Age of Revolutions* (Profile Books, 2009)

Reviewed by **Sylvana Tomaselli**

THE PRAISE lavished on the 2006 hardback edition which adorns this, its paperback version, would be difficult to better. Described as 'an incomparable portrait of one of the sharpest and most sympathetic writers of all time', 'lively, comprehensive, well researched and exceeding well-written', '[a] magisterial account', as well as '[w]arm, witty, intimate, exhaustive, digressive, autumnal, and not in the least idolatrous' by well-known literary figures and academics on both sides of the Atlantic, this biography has been ranked alongside some of the greatest produced in the last

century, most notably Nicholas Boyle's *Goethe*. Shortlisted for the Orwell Prize, Hugh Brogan's *Alexis de Tocqueville: Prophet of Democracy in the Age of Revolutions* was awarded the Richard E. Neustadt Prize.

The praise is well merited. *Alexis de Tocqueville* is the first comprehensive biography in English of the greatest nineteenth-century French liberal, who formed much of Europe's view of America and its democracy, and indeed helped fashion America's own self-perception and understanding of its unique political culture. Through his influence on J. S. Mill, Tocqueville further

played a significant role in shaping British political thought and liberalism more widely, especially in relation to the liberal conception of the threats posed to it by mass democracy. A towering intellectual figure, Tocqueville was also actively engaged in much of the turbulent politics of nineteenth-century France. With the publication of *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution* in 1856, he was to become one of his country's most arresting historians. To do justice to such a personage was no mean task, and Brogan of course also faced the more mundane challenges encountered by biographers of lesser men: documents lost or destroyed, closed or only recently opened archives, indecipherable hand-writing, and so forth.

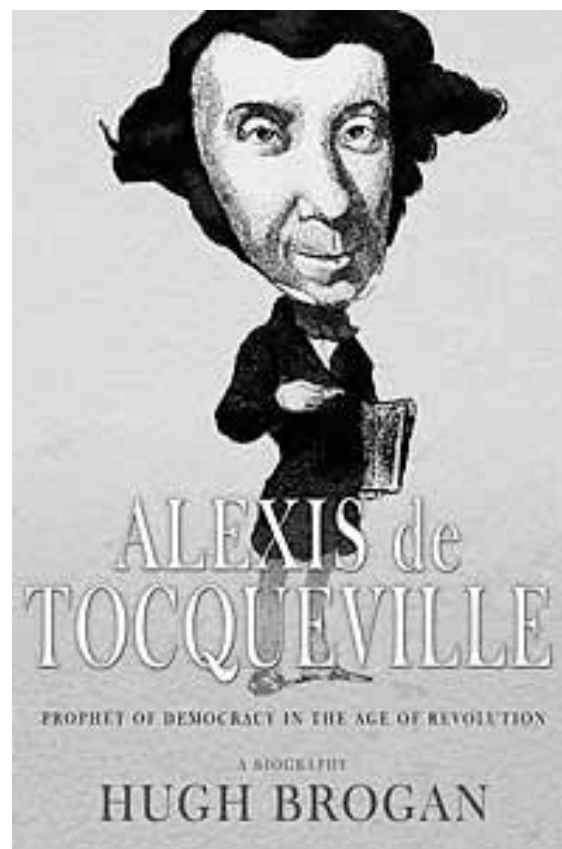
The author of *Tocqueville* (1973) and co-editor with Anne P. Kerr of the *Correspondance et Conversations d'Alexis de Tocqueville et Nassau William Senior* (1991), Brogan was by no means a newcomer to his subject. Nor, given the largely uncontested relevance of Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, was the celebrated Frenchman's work ever much neglected. But Brogan brings to his subject both the right sensibility and at least one particularly valuable area of expertise. As the author of the *Longman History of the United States of America* (1985), *American Presidential Families* (with Charles Mosley, 1993), and *Kennedy* (1996), Brogan's reading of *Democracy in America* benefits from a detailed knowledge of, as well as long-term perspective on, the social and political history of North America. More tangible still in his rendition of the journey Tocqueville and his companion, Gustave de Beaumont, undertook is Brogan's feel for the period, the various people the travellers met, and the land and riverscapes they went through.

Examining America's penitentiary system was the official reason for Tocqueville and Beaumont to cross the Atlantic, though it was politically very convenient for them not to be in France at the time. Using their respective reports, published and unpublished materials, their correspondence with colleagues, friends and relations as well as independent sources on prison

conditions and the governance of such institutions, Brogan produces an account of what the visitors saw of and learnt about incarceration and punishment, what they missed or misinterpreted, and what they ought to have noted or what they could not – an account that is well worth reading in and of itself. This can be said of a number of the sections of this biography, but amongst the most memorable is the description of the trip the friends undertook from Cincinnati in early December 1831 to Memphis. That winter proved the harshest America experienced in half a century. The Ohio and Cumberland rivers froze, as did the Mississippi. The two men decided to travel over land. Tocqueville fell ill and the men had to take refuge in a cabin so cold that the water Beaumont poured himself froze before he could drink it. Later in the same leg of their trip, they were to see Choctaws, victims of the Indian Removal Act of 1830, on their way from their ancestral lands from which they had been forcibly removed in this terrible winter to Indian Territory, now eastern Oklahoma.

Whether in his poignant rendition of such a harrowing sight or in providing sufficient historical and political context to make the actions or inactions of Tocqueville comprehensible to his readers, Brogan writes effectively. He succeeds in covering the different facets and various phases of Tocqueville's life without losing sight of the complexities of the issues involved, whether emotional, political or intellectual. As can be expected of a biography today, it is not shy about matters of health and sex, and follows the vicissitudes of his engagement and marriage as well as those of his relations with women other than his wife before and after their wedding. This reviewer would gladly have traded these for lengthier analyses of Tocqueville's intellectual relations with contemporaries such as J. S. Mill or his debt to figures from France's past, such as Montesquieu, who pioneered the approach that Tocqueville sought to adopt, that is, to seek to determine the causal relations between all aspects of a society

(from the status of women within it to its attitude towards work, money, religion, education and the arts and sciences) and its political institutions, with due consideration also to the impact of its geographical and climatic circumstances. While Montesquieu is not entirely ignored, Benjamin Constant, a major figure in nineteenth-century French political thought, goes unmentioned. There are good reasons why this is so – namely that it is unclear whether Tocqueville read him or took him seriously, if he did – but they could have been made explicit. We are given a taste of Tocqueville the imperialist, but more could have been said about his stance on Algeria and on France's colonial ambitions more generally. These are personal preferences and do not detract from what is an impressive and valuable scholarly achievement. Some readers might be taken aback by the undisguised critical presence of the biographer within this work. Brogan does stand in judgement upon Tocqueville. This is particularly, though not solely, true of his assessment of *Democracy in America*, one weakness of which, he tells us, is its 'inadequate



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treatment of political parties' (p. 160) or that Tocqueville met many political actors who could have been good informants had he only asked the right questions. Done as it is, openly and unashamedly, Brogan's expression of his frank opinions actually strengthens his story and often draws attention where it should. Finally, as is not uncommon with biographers writing about noblemen and women, Brogan does appear at times to be *à la recherche du snobisme* and to project onto

Tocqueville the assumptions and prejudices one might expect of a member of the Normand nobility. We, who live in times when referenda are denied us or their results disregarded until we vote as we should, will understand that one does not need to be the scion of an illustrious family to be concerned about mass democracy.

Sylvana Tomaselli teaches the history of political thought papers at Cambridge, where she is a Fellow of St John's College.

the party's policy approach in practice being heavily informed, implicitly or explicitly, by ideas of social rights. The final thematic chapter, by Andrew Russell, considers political strategy, and sets in a historical context the strategic dilemma facing the party in the 2005 parliament – a dilemma for which Liberal Democrats might now be forgiven for feeling somewhat nostalgic.

The thematic chapters are well complemented by the broader analytical chapters on the influence of classical liberalism, social liberalism and the 'centre' on party policy. The inclusion of Roy Douglas and Vince Cable as exponents of classical liberalism – the one a prominent classical liberal activist since the 1940s, the other the Liberal Democrat Shadow Chancellor at the time of writing and now Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills – has an attractive symmetry to it. Richard Grayson and Steve Webb correspondingly outline the social liberal case, emphasising the extent to which the social liberal willingness to use state power to promote greater equality and sustainability, as essential prerequisites of freedom, has informed the

Liberal thought

Kevin Hickson (ed.), *The Political Thought of the Liberals and Liberal Democrats since 1945* (Manchester University Press, 2009)

Reviewed by **Peter Sloman**

THIS IS, as Kevin Hickson notes in his introduction, the fourth major academic collection of essays on Liberal and Liberal Democrat politics to have appeared over the past thirty years, following on from the volumes edited by Vernon Bogdanor and Don MacIver in 1983 and 1994 and a 2007 special issue of the *Political Quarterly* edited by Richard Grayson.¹ In contrast to the three earlier collections, however, this book focuses almost exclusively on issues of political thought and policy development within the party. In its organisation and intellectual approach, it represents a companion volume to *The Political Thought of the Conservative Party since 1945*, also edited by Hickson,² and it has a dual objective of drawing scholarly attention to centrists within the party as well as to strands of thought on the right and left, and of fostering interaction between academics and active politicians in the discussion of political thought. This latter ambition is achieved by bookending six thematic chapters with contributions outlining classical liberal, social liberal, and centrist approaches to Liberal political thought at the front of the book, and with commentaries by parliamentary exponents of these approaches – Vince Cable, Steve

Webb, and David Howarth – at the back. It is striking that not only have all three parliamentary contributors had academic careers of their own, but three of the academic contributors (Roy Douglas, Richard Grayson and Alan Butt Philip) have also stood as Liberal or Liberal Democrat parliamentary candidates, whilst Duncan Brack and Russell Deacon are also active in Liberal Democrat politics.

The quality of the contributions is consistently high throughout. In the thematic chapters, Matt Cole on constitutional reform, Russell Deacon on decentralisation, Duncan Brack on political economy and Alan Butt Philip on internationalism all provide lively and comprehensive accounts of Liberal (Democrat) thought and policy on the model of the essays in the Bogdanor volume. Although the volume was published well before the 2010 election, journalists and scholars looking to set the policies of the coalition government in the context of Liberals' historic policy commitments will find these chapters invaluable. In a spirited chapter on social morality, Bruce Pilbeam argues that rhetorical fidelity to the writings of John Stuart Mill has not prevented



The political thought of the Liberals and Liberal Democrats since 1945

Edited by
Kevin Hickson

mainstream of Liberal Democrat thought. Mark Garnett and David Howarth search for a Liberal Democrat centre, though they find it in rather different places: Garnett in the idea of Liberalism as a force for political moderation, embodied by successive party leaders since the Thorpe era and reconstructed in a centre-right direction under Menzies Campbell and Nick Clegg; Howarth in a 'core liberalism' where Liberals can unite around the goal of a society in which individuals enjoy the freedom and capacity to make their own life choices.

One paradoxical achievement of the contributions to this volume is to reveal just how difficult classical and social liberalism – not to mention the 'centrist' strand of Liberal thought – are to pin down. Hickson, in the introduction, suggests that the distinction between classical and social liberalism is broadly analogous to that between negative and positive liberty, but alternative definitions appear throughout the volume: for instance, Douglas argues that 'classical liberalism pivots on the idea of personal liberty' and notes that classical liberals differ amongst themselves over the legitimacy of state intervention to remedy 'extreme disparities of wealth and poverty', whilst Grayson suggests that the classical–social liberal distinction may be most useful as a shorthand means of distinguishing between less and more egalitarian and statist positions in Liberal Democrat policy debates. Both Grayson and Brack allude approvingly to David Howarth's argument, developed in the 2007 volume *Reinventing the State*, that most self-described economic liberals in the party are actually not classical liberals – defined by a belief 'that all the state should do is guarantee rights and then move out of the way' – but 'minimalist' social liberals, who share with more 'maximalist' social liberals a recognition that political freedom requires a measure of material redistribution but stop short of recognising Rawlsian supplementary fairness principles as justifications for further intervention.³ Both of the 'classical liberal' authors in this book can be regarded in Howarth's terms as minimalist social liberals;

Overall, however, this is an extremely valuable addition to the literature on post-war Liberalism, combining scholarly rigour with often passionate argument about the nature of Liberalism and its implications for the future of the party.

yet their concerns for free trade, land value taxation, and a smaller or simpler state indicate the influence of a distinctive classical liberal tradition within the party, which is not fully captured by the more philosophical criteria Howarth uses. Perhaps this bears out Howarth's suggestion, in his contribution to the present volume, that Liberal thought has frequently been at its most fertile and distinctive where classical and social liberal ideas have interacted and combined.

In a couple of respects, the volume falls slightly short of what it might have been. Recurrent hints of divergent Liberal views on the welfare state – from Cable's reminder that Jo Grimond supported education vouchers, to Grayson's observation that social liberals have tended to support diversity of provision in the public services in principle but to shy away from it in practice – suggest that a chapter on social policy might have been well justified. Perhaps, too, the commentaries by Cable, Howarth and Webb at the end of the book would have been of greater value if they had discussed the arguments developed in the preceding chapters as well as the influence of the different ideological traditions on contemporary Liberal Democrat policy; the compilation schedule

may, of course, have prevented this. Overall, however, this is an extremely valuable addition to the literature on post-war Liberalism, combining scholarly rigour with often passionate argument about the nature of Liberalism and its implications for the future of the party. Hickson and his contributors should be congratulated on their achievement. As with many similar academic texts, the price (£60) will be prohibitive for many; but it is well worth reading, so you should certainly get your library to buy it.

Peter Sloman is a doctoral student at The Queen's College, Oxford. His research focuses on economic policy development in the Liberal Party, 1929–1964.

- 1 Vernon Bogdanor (ed.), *Liberal Party Politics* (Oxford, 1983); Don MacIver (ed.), *The Liberal Democrats* (1996); *Political Quarterly*, 78, 1 (2007), special issue on the Liberal Democrats.
- 2 Kevin Hickson (ed.), *The Political Thought of the Conservative Party since 1945* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
- 3 David Howarth, 'What is social liberalism?', in Duncan Brack, Richard S. Grayson and David Howarth (eds.), *Reinventing the State: Social Liberalism for the 21st Century* (Politico's, 2007).

Of pies and politics

Ophelia Field, *The Kit-Cat Club: Friends Who Imagined a Nation* (HarperPress, 2008)

Reviewed by Mark Pack

FOUNDED IN the late 1690s by London bookseller Jacob Tonson, utilising the premises and consuming the food of pie-maker Christopher Cat, the Kit-Cat Club evolved into a club with a cast of prominent members of the cultural, political and social circles of the time. The origins of the club were literary, with Tonson regularly feeding aspiring authors at Cat's pub in return for the promise of a first publication option on their works. Over time this evolved

into the Kit-Cat Club, a pioneer in mixing politics, culture and professional interests in one club, such areas having previously been kept separate in organisations that served but the one niche. The combination of the rich and politically powerful with artists and authors in search of patronage was an effective one and, in contrast to the highly stratified nature of society at the time, the club was a meritocratic forum, founded and hosted by non-aristocrats. However, its place in



history has suffered somewhat because, as G. M. Trevelyan put it, 'All the good talk over the pies and wine, Congreve's wit, Wharton's fascinating impudence, and Addison's quiet humour, is lost forever without record. The Kit-Cat Club had no Boswell.'

This lengthy work – over 500 pages including index, along with a pointer to further information online – seeks to remedy this and concentrates primarily on five men from amongst the fifty-odd members: Joseph Addison, William Congreve, Richard Steele, Jacob Tonson and John Vanbrugh.

In politics, the club brought together a group of influential players who pursued an ultra-Whig course; whilst in poetry, theatre and music the club helped to shift authority from the Court both through its patronage role for performers and artists and also through its role in setting trends in fashion and manners. The club's role in Whig politics was reinforced by the Tory–Whig 'paper wars', with the club's marshalling of writers and patronage an important weapon in these propaganda exchanges. Government posts and sinecures were deployed to support club

members as part of a deliberate Whig policy to create a wider sympathetic climate of opinion. They aided supportive writers and encouraged complimentary cultural trends, including toleration, at a time when political disputes often featured questions of nationality or religion.

The presence on the throne of a Dutch King – William III – also spurred the club's members to sketch out a strengthening of English identity. Their choice of food – pies – was English rather than Continental cuisine, and its members looked to develop a strong English strand in the arts. The literary magazine was born from the club's membership, with *The Tatler* and then *The Spectator* appearing. The latter, in particular, championed English culture in the form of Shakespeare, Milton and Spenser. Not all their moves succeeded (an attempt to rebuff Italian opera with a new form of English opera did not take off) but sufficient were successful to help shape a new English sense of culture, including manners and styles of speaking which brought different parts of the social spectrum together rather than driving them apart.

The turn of the century saw an unusually high number of elections and, in a period long before the development of party headquarters, the Kit-Cat Club often acted as an informal organising point for Whigs, helping to coordinate several key individuals who sought to exercise electoral influence. However, just as electoral needs helped create a role for the club, so the later reduction in electoral pressure as a result of the passage of the Septennial Act (which moved elections to a nominal seven-year cycle) and the dominance of the Whigs under Walpole reduced the call for the club's political role and helped explain its decline in the second and third decades of the eighteenth century. Although Tonson's death in 1736 marks a formal end to the club's life, the changed political circumstances and the deaths of other key initial members had long since taken the edge off its role.

The Kit-Cat Club certainly brought together influential people who played a major role in shaping their age, including

Robert Walpole and a clutch of peers and MPs. Nine Kit-Cat members served on the 1708 commission which drew up plans for the union between England and Scotland. Three of the four members of the Whig Junto were Kit-Cat members. In 1709 a Kit-Cat held every senior post in Ireland's colonial administration save one. For all but nine years between 1714 and 1762 the prime minister was a Kit-Cat Club member (and eight of those years had the brother of a Kit-Cat member in the office). And so on.

However, whilst such activities are well documented in this book, less clear is how important the club itself was. It may have brought influential people together, but were they any the more influential for the club's existence? Had it not existed, would the cast of people or their influence have been significantly different? Many of the club's members were boyhood friends after all, and it is unlikely that the absence of the Kit-Cat Club would have resulted in them not continuing to know and communicate with each other via other means. As a forum for bringing men together to eat and drink (for the Kit-Cat club was an exclusively male enterprise), fostering personal relations, spreading news and offering opportunities, the club provided the networking benefits that other clubs – and indeed particular schools and universities – have provided at other times. The Kit-Cat Club had a stellar cast that makes its story an interesting and lively one, but the book does not make the case that it had any special influence beyond that provided by numerous other networking opportunities.

What the book does unquestionably do, though, is provide detailed and enjoyable portraits of some of the individuals and activities at the centre of political and cultural life at the time. Detailed research is presented through a vivid account as the people and their times are brought to life.

Mark Pack ran the Liberal Democrat 2001 and 2005 internet general election campaign and is now Head of Digital at MHP Communications. He also co-edits Liberal Democrat Voice (www.LibDemVoice.org).

LETTERS

James Bryce

In *Journal of Liberal History* 66 (spring 2010) David S. Patterson, in his article on Emily Hobhouse, referred to James Bryce, who in 1914–15 led the UK investigation into German atrocities in Belgium, as a ‘venerable and respected scholar-diplomat’. The Rt Hon. Sir James Bryce, OM, GCVO, FRS (Viscount Bryce from 1914) was, of course, very much more than that.

After attending the High School of Glasgow (two years behind Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, nearly a century ahead of the undersigned, and where his father, Dr James Bryce, was a mathematics master in 1846–74), he attended the Universities of Glasgow and Heidelberg and Trinity College, Oxford. He was elected a Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford in 1862, called to the English Bar (Lincoln’s Inn) in 1867 and served as Regius Professor of Civil Law at Oxford in 1870–93.

He was Liberal MP for Tower Hamlets, London in 1880–85, and for Aberdeen South from 1885 until he was appointed Ambassador to the United States in 1907 when it was said, as from his *The American Commonwealth*

(1888), that he knew more about the US Constitution than anyone in the US. He served in four Liberal administrations, being Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office in 1886, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in 1892–94, President of the Board of Trade in 1894–95 (when he also chaired a Royal Commission on Secondary Education) and Chief Secretary for Ireland in 1905–07 (having been born in Belfast in 1838). He was responsible for a wide range of legislation including, appropriately, the 1886 International Copyright Act, wrote other books on history, democracy, international relations, jurisprudence, travel and biography, contributed the chapter on ‘Flora’ to his father’s *The Geology of Arran and Clydesdale*, participated in the Hague Tribunal in 1913 and was President of the Sir Walter Scott Club of Edinburgh in 1914–19. He also served on the Royal Commission on the Medical Acts, as President of the British Academy, as a Carnegie Fund Trustee for the Scottish Universities, had honorary degrees from thirty-one universities and found time to climb Mount

Ararat in 1876 (being later President of the Alpine Club in 1899–1901).

His younger brother, John Annan Bryce (who also attended the High School of Glasgow and thereafter the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh and Balliol College, Oxford), after a distinguished career overseas (during which he was a magistrate in Bombay and a member of the Legislative Council of Burma), was Liberal MP for Inverness Burghs in 1906–18.

As H.H. Asquith wrote, ‘If I was asked who among the persons directly or indirectly involved in politics in our time was the best educated, I would be disposed to single out James Bryce. No man in these days can take all knowledge for his province, but Bryce came as near to being what may be called a universal specialist as any of his contemporaries.’ More recently there have been significant references to James Bryce in Stephen Graubard’s *The Presidents* (Allen Lane/Penguin Books, London, 2004) in the Preface and the Appendix (‘Bryce’s and Tocqueville’s America – A Prefiguring of 20th Century America?’)

Sandy S. Waugh

Liberals and the left

In relation to the special issue of the *Journal of Liberal History* on Liberals and the Left (issue 67, summer 2010), Jo Grimond’s statement in Colne Valley in 1963 that he wanted to abolish the working class is typical. In a lecture he gave to a summer school for young Americans in July 1968 (which I organised at Westfield College, University of London), he made it abundantly clear that he considered the era of class-based politics in Britain to be over. The special interests he thought might then justify seeking separate representation were women, youth and ethnic minorities.

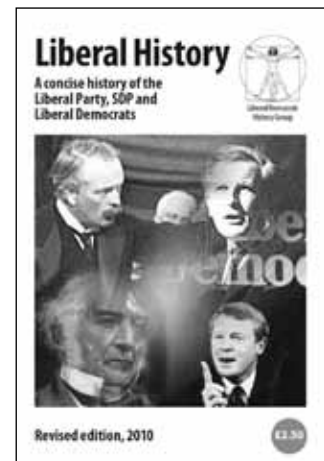
I think Matt Cole’s article suffers from concentrating on the period 1959 to 1964. I several times heard Jo formulate the objective of replacing the Labour Party between 1956 and 1959 (e.g. Cambridge University Liberal Club, spring 1959). After the relatively disappointing 1959 election result he was forced to retreat to the immediately doomed strategy of ‘realignment’. Most of my closest political allies joined the Labour Party in the early 1960s because whatever the virtues of Grimond’s ‘realignment’, it was not worth

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perpetual Tory rule. Many came back in the SDP in the 1980s. My attempt to square the circle was to radicalise the party's 1948 co-ownership policy to make it compatible with Labour's Clause IV (see the New Orbits pamphlet, *Controlling Interest*).

Foreign issues were of course important to Young Liberals pre-1965: Suez was my initial motive, others had done National Service in Kenya or Aden. Michael Steed happened to be in South Africa at the time of the Sharpeville massacre. Perhaps it was different outside Cambridge, but our anti-American demonstrations were against the Bay of Pigs invasion and I only kept the University Liberals in the local 'Hands Off Cuba' Committee by securing the latter's promise to do absolutely nothing during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962.

Peter Hain was much disappointed with the 1970 election result (Michael Steed took me to a meeting Hain convened) and probably led a further outflow of talent.

Historians of the Young Liberals do not give enough emphasis to the Union of Liberal Students. In 1962 societies in both Cambridge and Oxford were created, with over 1,000 paid members (though many were social members, or politicos from the other parties) and our voting strength at the Llandudno Assembly was significant. We secured the reference back of the draft transport policy, which in our view wrongly endorsed the Beeching Plan for the railways.

I'm sure there is a connection to the years Peter Hellyer describes. He wonders where are today's Red Guards. Surely the SDP bureaucratized everything in order to tame 'Liberal anarchism'?

Dr Peter Hatton

The 2010 election: missed opportunity

While John Curtice (*Journal of Liberal History* 68, autumn

2010) has identified the geography of the Liberal Democrat failure in the election of 2010, he has missed the failure of policy and tactics. Nick Clegg made the party attractive to many voters but his appeal was very general: he failed to give voters a sufficiently specific and urgent reason for voting Liberal Democrat.

The crucial stage was the second leaders' debate on foreign affairs, when Gordon Brown, questioned about the war in Afghanistan, indicated that he was willing to fight further wars in the Yemen and in Somalia – but was not challenged by either Clegg or Cameron. This was Clegg's opportunity to denounce the failing war and advocate withdrawal from Afghanistan, a policy that would have attracted many voters from Labour and the Conservatives.

His failure was no surprise. Under Charles Kennedy the party had acquired a *distinctive* stance, including its opposition to the Iraq war, but this was steadily thrown away under his successors and by the party's foreign policy spokesmen, Ed Davey and Michael Moore, who tamely endorsed Labour–Tory support for the Afghan war.

The Liberal Democrat failure in 2010 was thus one of judgement and policy, and perhaps, of political courage.

Dr Martin Pugh

The Gower primary of 1905

In his excellent account of the elections of 1910 (*Journal of Liberal History* 68, autumn 2010), Mark Pack refers fascinatingly to the 'open primary' held in the Gower constituency in November 1905 to decide on the Liberal candidate. I hope I may venture a comment, since the only account of it that I know of in print is my own very first article, published (alas!) 51 years ago, in a totally obscure publication probably unknown to any other living reader.

The primary arose because of the moribund nature of

the Gower Liberal Association, which met on 19 August 1905 for the first time for five years: it discovered that both its chairman and treasurer were actually dead! The sitting Liberal MP was standing down and there was no candidate. Intense local bickering between different areas in the constituency then led to the contest for the candidacy between T. Jeremiah Williams, a wealthy Morrington tinplate owner, and Jay Williams, a highly suspect financier of local origins.

Jeremiah (despite his name) won comfortably, 14 districts to 7; 165 'delegates' to 110; and 2,801 votes to 2,251, but the primary left much bad blood. It certainly distracted the Gower Liberals over voter registration, and helped towards Jeremiah's defeat in the general election two months later, by yet a third Williams, Labour's John (a miners' agent who had considered running in the Liberal primary himself!). At least, though, the rejection of Jay Williams was fortunate, since he was later imprisoned for forgery.

The Gower primary was unique in Welsh political history. But it may have been a symptom of weakness rather than vitality amongst local Liberals, as they geared themselves up to confront the challenge of the working class.

Kenneth O. Morgan

Samuel Morton Peto and his relatives

As from Robert Ingham's review in the *Journal of Liberal History* 68 (autumn 2010) of Adrian Vaughan's *Samuel Morton Peto – A Victorian Entrepreneur* (2009), Sir Samuel (created a Norfolk Baronet in 1855) was the father of Ann Peto who married James Alexander Campbell (the elder brother of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman) in 1854. Ann's bridesmaid was a former school friend, (Sarah) Charlotte Bruce, and that was when Henry (as best man)

first met Charlotte, whom he married in 1860.

Thus Henry (CB) and Charlotte first met six years before their marriage and not in the year of their marriage, as stated by Roy Hattersley in his error-strewn short biography, *Campbell-Bannerman* (2006). The Peto family was represented by Sir Samuel's eldest son and heir, Sir Henry Peto (2nd Norfolk Baronet from 1889) as a family pall-bearer at CB's funeral in Meigle, Perthshire on 28 April 1908.

The Campbell Adamson descendants of Sir Samuel and Ann Peto and James Alexander Campbell continue to own and occupy most of the Stracathro Estate in Forfarshire (Angus) which CB's father purchased in 1847. Hugh A. Campbell Adamson of Stracathro and his elder brother, James S. Campbell Adamson of the nearby Careston, are the nearest living relatives of CB.

James Alexander Campbell – whose daughter-in-law, Mrs Morton Campbell, acted as CB's hostess after he became a widower in 1906 – was a Conservative MP in 1880–1906. Sir Basil Edward Peto (created a Devonshire Baronet in 1927), a younger son of Sir Samuel by his second marriage, was Conservative MP for Devizes in 1910–18 and for Barnstaple in 1922–23 and 1924–35, although the whip was withdrawn from him for a few months in 1928. Major Basil Arthur John Peto, a younger son of Sir Basil, was Conservative MP for King's Norton, Birmingham) in 1941–45. Sir Basil's grandson, Sir Christopher Henry Christopher Peto (3rd Devonshire Baronet from 1971) was Conservative MP for Barnstaple in 1945–50.

Dr Sandy S. Waugh

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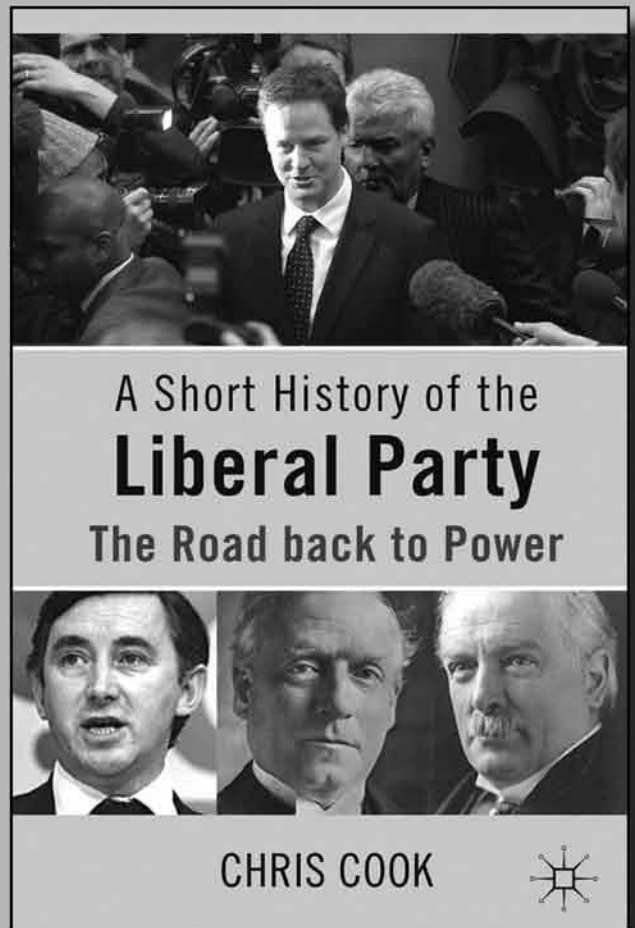
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A Liberal Democrat History Group evening meeting

THE GREAT REFORM ACT OF 1832: LEGACY AND INFLUENCE

Soon after becoming Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg promised 'the most significant programme of reform by a British government since the 19th century ... the biggest shake-up of our democracy since 1832'. But how do the Coalition Government's constitutional changes actually compare to the changes brought in by the Great Reform Act of 1832?

Dr Philip Salmon of the History of Parliament Trust will talk about the background to the passing of the Great Reform Act and its impact on British political history. **Dr Mark Pack**, co-editor of Lib Dem Voice and former Head of Innovations at Liberal Democrat HQ, will draw comparisons between 1832 and the Coalition Government's reform agenda. Chair: **William Wallace** (Lord Wallace of Saltaire, government whip in the Lords).

7.00pm, Monday 24 January 2011 (immediately following the History Group AGM at 6.30pm)
Lady Violet Room, National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2HE

A Liberal Democrat History Group fringe meeting

LORDS REFORM 1911–2011

The 1911 Parliament Act, introduced in the wake of the rejection by the House of Lords of Lloyd George's People's Budget and the two general elections of 1910, was the first successful reform of the powers of the upper house and gave constitutional supremacy to the elected House of Commons.

Now, one hundred years after the 1911 Parliament Act, the Liberal Democrat History Group's fringe meeting will examine the development of Lords reform since and look forward to the Coalition's plans for the most far-reaching changes to the House of Lords since the Liberal government's reforms of 1911 ended the upper house's ability to block legislation.

Speakers will include **Paul Tyler**, Lib Dem spokesman on Constitutional Reform in the House of Lords; others to be announced. Chair: **Baroness Ros Scott**.

8.00pm, Friday 11 March 2011
Suite 3, Jurys Inn Hotel, Sheffield
