

WELSH WOMEN LIBERALS

- 2 Viscountess Rhondda, *This Was My World* (MacMillan: 1933), p. 92.
- 3 Patricia Jannad, *Women, Marriage and Politics 1860–1914* (Clarendon Press: 1986), p. 7.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 233.
- 5 Kenneth. O Morgan, *Wales In British Politics 1868–1922* (University of Wales Press: 1980), p. 57.
- 6 Russell Deacon, “‘Statues and newspaper wars’: Cardiff town and city politics in Cardiff (1868–1908)”, *Morganwug*, 2010, vol. LIV, p. 2.
- 7 Ursula Masson, ‘Liberalism, gender and national memory’, University of Wales Institute Cardiff, Department of Humanities Open Seminar series, 3 May 2007.
- 8 *The Western Mail*, 14 March 1895.
- 9 *The Times*, 31 March 1915, p. 10.
- 10 Deidre Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows: A History of Women in Twentieth Century Wales* (University of Wales Press: 2000), p. 45.
- 11 Viscountess Rhondda, *My World*, p. 142.
- 12 Nora Phillips had died in 1915.
- 13 *The Dictionary of Welsh Biography 1941–1970* (The Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion: 2001), p. 264.
- 14 Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, p. 252.
- 15 *Liverpool Mercury*, 19 April 1895, p. 7.
- 16 *South Wales Daily News*, 25 November 1904.
- 17 *Brycheiniog*, vol. XII, 1966/67.
- 18 *The Times*, 28 April 1911, p. 8.
- 19 Viscountess Rhondda, *My World*, p. 148.
- 20 J. Graham Jones, ‘Lloyd George and the Suffragettes at Llanystumdwy’, *Journal of Liberal Democrat History*, 34/35, Spring/Summer 2002, pp. 3–10.
- 21 Oliver Fairclough, ‘*Things of Beauty: What Two Sisters Did For Wales*’ (National Museum Wales Books: 2007).
- 22 Robert Blackburn, *The Electoral System in Britain* (St Martins Press: 1995), p. 69.
- 23 Professor Ramsey Muir was a leading figure in the Liberal Summer School movement and the National Liberal Federation.
- 24 *Daily News*, 3 January 1930.
- 25 *Dictionary of Welsh Biography 1941–1970*, p. 23.
- 26 *The Times*, 19 October 1932, p. 16.
- 27 Olwen Carey Evans, *Lloyd George Was My Father* (Gomer: 1985), p. 87.
- 28 Mervyn Jones, *A Radical Life: The Biography of Megan Lloyd George* (Hutchinson: 1991), p. 78.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 112
- 30 J. Graham Jones, ‘A breach in the family, the Lloyd Georges’, *Journal of Liberal History*, 25, Winter 1999–2000 p. 36.
- 31 Russell Deacon, ‘Before Torrington there was Carmarthen’, conference paper at the LSE conference ‘Torrington ’58: Liberal survival and revival, 1945–1979’, 14 June 2008.
- 32 Beti Jones, *Welsh Elections, 1885–1997* (Yr Lolfa: 1999), p. 48
- 33 Ivor Thomas Rees, *Welsh Hustings 1885–2004* (Dinefwr Publishers: 2005), p. 215.
- 34 Steve Belzak, ‘Swinging in the Sixties to the Liberals: Mary Murphy and Pontypridd Urban District Council’, *Liberal History Journal*, 68, Autumn 2010, pp. 26–34.
- 35 *Ibid.*
- 36 Lord Hooson to author, 4 February 2003.
- 37 Rees, *Welsh Hustings*, p. 107.



undertaken previously. As the author rightly points out, there has never been any defined role for former British PMs, and there have never been more than five of them alive at any one time. When Margaret Thatcher was first elected in May 1979, there were indeed five such incumbents: Macmillan, Douglas-Home, Wilson, Heath and Callaghan. How former prime ministers have reacted and responded to the sudden loss of high office (and all its attendant prestige) and coped with the challenge of retirement has varied enormously from one individual to another. This impressive tome goes right back to the first PM Sir Robert Walpole, who resigned in February 1742.

Relatively few of the figures carefully delineated in this book chose wholly voluntarily the precise moment of their departure. The one exception certainly was Stanley Baldwin in May 1937 who reported ‘an enormous relief’ when the time eventually came to cast aside the burdens of responsibility of high office. Baldwin is also reported to have decided ‘to make no political speeches, neither to speak to the man at the wheel nor to spit on the deck’ (pp. 2–3). To a

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Walpole to Blair in retirement

Kevin Theakston, *After Number 10: Former Prime Ministers in British Politics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010)

Reviewed by Dr J. Graham Jones

THIS IS a most fascinating, superbly readable book. It is indeed surprising that

no survey of the role of former prime ministers in British public and political life has ever been

large extent, he succeeded for the next decade, but few other former prime ministers have displayed equal charity and consideration towards their successors. Even fewer were able to return to high office under their successors. The most obvious exceptions were A. J. Balfour under Asquith, Lloyd George (in war time) and Baldwin, and, more recently, Douglas-Home, who served with some distinction as Foreign Secretary under Ted Heath.

There is very little that is positively new or really original in this study. No archival research has been undertaken in its preparation. But the author has read very widely a positive array of biographies, memoirs and autobiographies, political and general histories of the period, the entries in the new *Dictionary of National Biography*, newspaper columns and websites. His apparent effortless mastery of the history of the period is most impressive. Also, Theakston has a good eye for relevant comparisons, and can provide helpful statistics which help guide the reader through the study. Equally useful are his references to contemporary equivalents of sums of money. The impoverished Herbert Asquith, we are told, left just £9,345 upon his death in February 1928, 'about £300,000 in today's money' (p. 124). During the long 1930s, Lloyd George pocketed a total of some £65,000 from the advances, royalties and newspaper-serialisation earnings from his six-volume mammoth *War Memoirs*, a sum 'equivalent to £2.4 million today' (p. 128).

Of necessity, the earlier entries are relatively brief – until we come to the Duke of Wellington. There are some graphic descriptions in this book, among them the depiction of Sir Robert Peel being thrown from his horse, trampled, and then lingering in great agony until his death a few days later (p. 78).

Readers of this *Journal* will have much to enthral them. Among the many entries certain to interest is that on Lord Palmerston, who died while still prime minister just two days short of his eighty-first birthday on 18 October 1865, active until the end, a serial womaniser, fully capable of eating, drinking and following avidly the course of political life even while on his

death bed (pp. 82–83). The section on W. E. Gladstone is also a good read, pinpointing his most belated retirement in March 1894 aged eighty-four, his exceptionally strained relationship with Queen Victoria throughout, his distaste for the government of his successor Lord Rosebery in 1894–95, and his general good health and vigour during most of his last years. He was indeed 'someone iconic for the century ... a man who ... had epitomised, symbolised and provided a background to an entire age' (p. 99). There is much interesting material, too, on the exceptionally long time span which Rosebery lived after resigning as prime minister in December 1898.

A distinct air of sadness surrounded the last days of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who survived for no more than seventeen days after standing down in April 1908 and actually died 'on the premises' at 10 Downing Street – the only PM ever to do so. He simply could not be moved from there after Asquith had taken over because of the gravity of his condition. This was indeed the shortest ever post-premiership in British history (p. 7). His possible desire to die 'in harness' had been thwarted by the selfish anxiety of King Edward VII not to have his holiday at Biarritz interrupted by the death or resignation of a serving prime minister (p. 120). C-B's successor as prime minister, H. H. Asquith, survived for rather longer after being unceremoniously ousted from number 10 at the height of World War I in December 1916. Theakston tells us that often thereafter, although remaining leader of the Liberal Party, he 'just stagnated and slumped into an easy life with his books, his family and the social round' (p. 121), his political career cruelly interrupted by deeply humiliating shock electoral defeats at East Fife in December 1918 (after representing it for fully thirty-two years) and later at Paisley in October 1924. Sadly, his last years were dogged by ever-escalating money worries.

The section on Lloyd George's long post-ministerial career, with 'the goat' confined to 'the wilderness' for more than twenty-two years, is truly masterly. As the last Liberal PM, Lloyd George deserves special consideration.

Like other revisionist historians, Theakston insists that LG 'remained a critical player and at the centre of British politics' at least until August 1931, 'and to a less extent after that' (p. 129). The profound antipathy towards him of three of his prime ministerial successors – Baldwin, MacDonald and Chamberlain – is rightly pointed up, as indeed is Lloyd George's key role in formulating new radical policy initiatives between 1924 and 1929. LG had certainly not been 'fossilised' by continuous membership of the Commons since April 1890 (p. 131). But, regrettably, there are one or two factual slips here. Major Goronwy Owen, the Liberal MP for Caernarfonshire from 1923 until 1945, was the brother-in-law of Major Gwilym Lloyd-George, not of Lloyd George himself (p. 132). Also, it is far from certain that Lloyd George 'fathered a child with his long-term mistress (and later second wife) when aged 66' (p. 7). It is equally likely that the father was Colonel Thomas F. Tweed with whom Frances Stevenson had a passionate affair in 1927–28.

There is much else of great interest here too. Theakston warmly commends Douglas-Home and Callaghan for settling into the role of esteemed elder statesman following their resignations in 1965 and 1980 respectively. The 'long sulk' of Edward Heath, from which he never really recovered, is well chronicled, as is the reluctance of his successor Margaret Thatcher to accept that her 'glory days' were well and truly over following her enforced resignation in November 1990: 'The telephone goes and immediately you think, oh goodness me, the United Nations is sitting. Then you realise that it's no longer you any more' (back cover). Harold Wilson, the victim of dementia, we are told, soon became 'an almost forgotten figure' after his decision to stand aside in March 1976, an apparently surprise move to many, but one upon which he had resolved two years earlier.

In a final short chapter entitled 'Comparative Perspectives', the author surveys very briefly post-prime-ministerial careers in other countries. There is obviously much more scope to expand this section

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significantly, which has a rather 'potted history' air about it.

Perhaps the only real disappointment here is the failure to provide photographs of at least some of the prime ministers described in the volume. There is also no general bibliography of

relevant sources, but the footnote references are always full and genuinely helpful.

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Survival and revival

Mark Egan, *Coming into Focus: The transformation of the Liberal Party 1945–1964* (VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2009)

Reviewed by Malcolm Baines

LIBERAL PARTY history during the fallow years between the failure of Lloyd George's 'last hurrah' – the 1929 election campaign – and the Orpington by-election victory of March 1962, has long been neglected by academics and party members alike. What awareness there is largely revolves around Beveridge, the split between Liberals and National Liberals and Churchill's offer of a Cabinet post in 1951 to the then Liberal leader, Clement Davies. By contrast, Mark Egan's book attempts to put some organisational flesh on the party's grassroots during the post-war part of this period. He succeeds admirably, and anyone interested in the party's organisation, youth groups and local government representation will find much background not readily available elsewhere.

Coming into Focus aims to provide a different perspective on much of what has been written on the party's history in the immediate post-war period. Other historians and sociologists have looked at Liberal Party survival in that period in the context of either the high politics of its relationship with the Conservative Party or sociological explanations revolving around an antipathy to collectivism or the survival of an older form of society in the Celtic fringe where Nonconformity remained strong and the trade unions weak. Egan is unusual in concentrating on the party itself in the constituencies across the UK.

In style, it does come across as the book of the D.Phil. thesis, with lots of tables providing, for example, information about the regional

distribution of Liberal borough councillors, how interviewees joined the Liberal Party and sources of Liberal Association income, interspersed with commentary and book-ended by short essays on the historiographical background to Liberal survival and a review of how the 1945 party had changed by 1964. Egan has researched local Liberal records avidly and supplemented these with interviews with some 140 Liberal activists from the period and it is the use of this data which gives weight to the book's argument.

Coming into Focus begins with the aftermath of the 1945 election and points out that the party's representation of twelve MPs elected to Westminster was not matched again for over twenty years. The party's electoral weakness in the post-war period is highlighted by the fact that the party came first or second in only thirty-six seats in 1945, as compared to eighty-three at the previous general election in 1935. Egan compares this with the party's improved position in 1964 – highlighting in particular the growth in local government representation as well as the fact that all the party's MPs were elected in three-way contests – and asserts that 1964 did amount to a significant step on the road to revival. It leaves hanging, however, the significance of the 1970 election in which only six MPs were elected to parliament, many with only wafer-thin majorities.

Egan goes on to make the very powerful point that none of this would have been relevant without there being local Liberal

organisations in place. This is very much the focus of the book, which deals in turn with constituency and district organisations, the role of the Young Liberals, the attitudes of the party's activists and its representation in local government.

On local organisation, Egan looks at funding, candidate selection, and decisions to contest elections and by-elections. He compares what happened on the ground – as reflected in the Liberal Association records he has reviewed and his interviews with activists – to the theory of British political organisation as set out in the Robert MacKenzie's classic, *British Political Parties*, and to the results of the surveys carried out contemporaneously by the American political scientist Jorgen Scott Rasmussen and used in his book, *The Liberal Party: A Study of Retrenchment and Revival*, published in 1965. Interestingly, Egan points towards the local district parties, often based in small towns, being the key building blocks of Liberal organisation rather than constituency parties themselves. He also emphasises the importance of the Young Liberals and the Union of University Liberal Students to the Liberal Party during that period, especially as a vehicle through

