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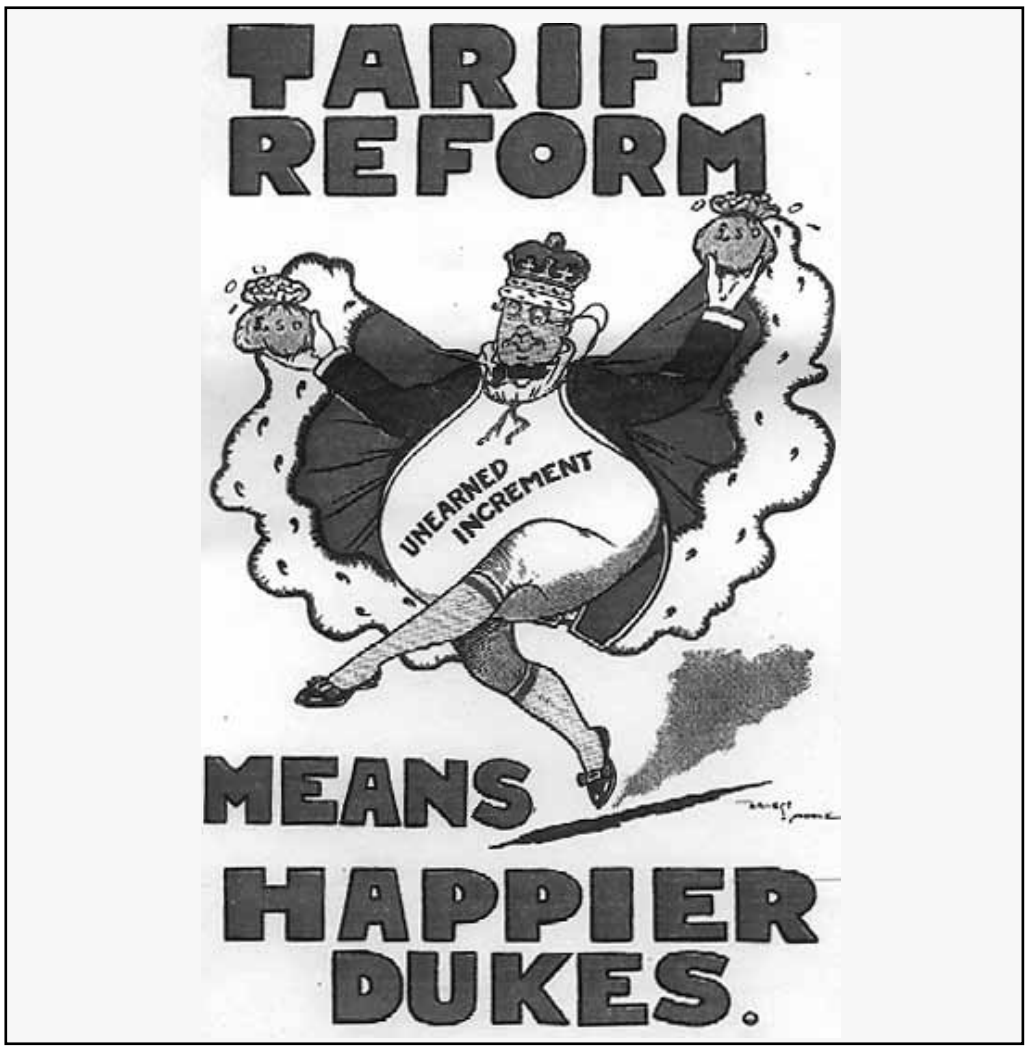


Taxing the land

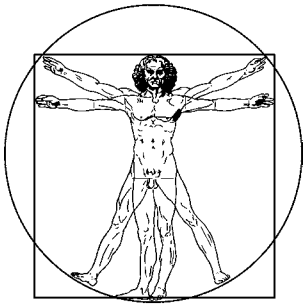
Roy Douglas
The Lloyd George land taxes

David Dutton
Liberal National leader Charles Kerr, Lord Teviot

Nancy LoPatin-Lummis
The Liberal electoral agent in the post-Reform-Act era

Graham Lippiatt
The King of Showland Pat Collins, Liberal MP for Walsall, 1922–24

Mark Pack
Peace, Reform and Liberation Launch of History Group's new book



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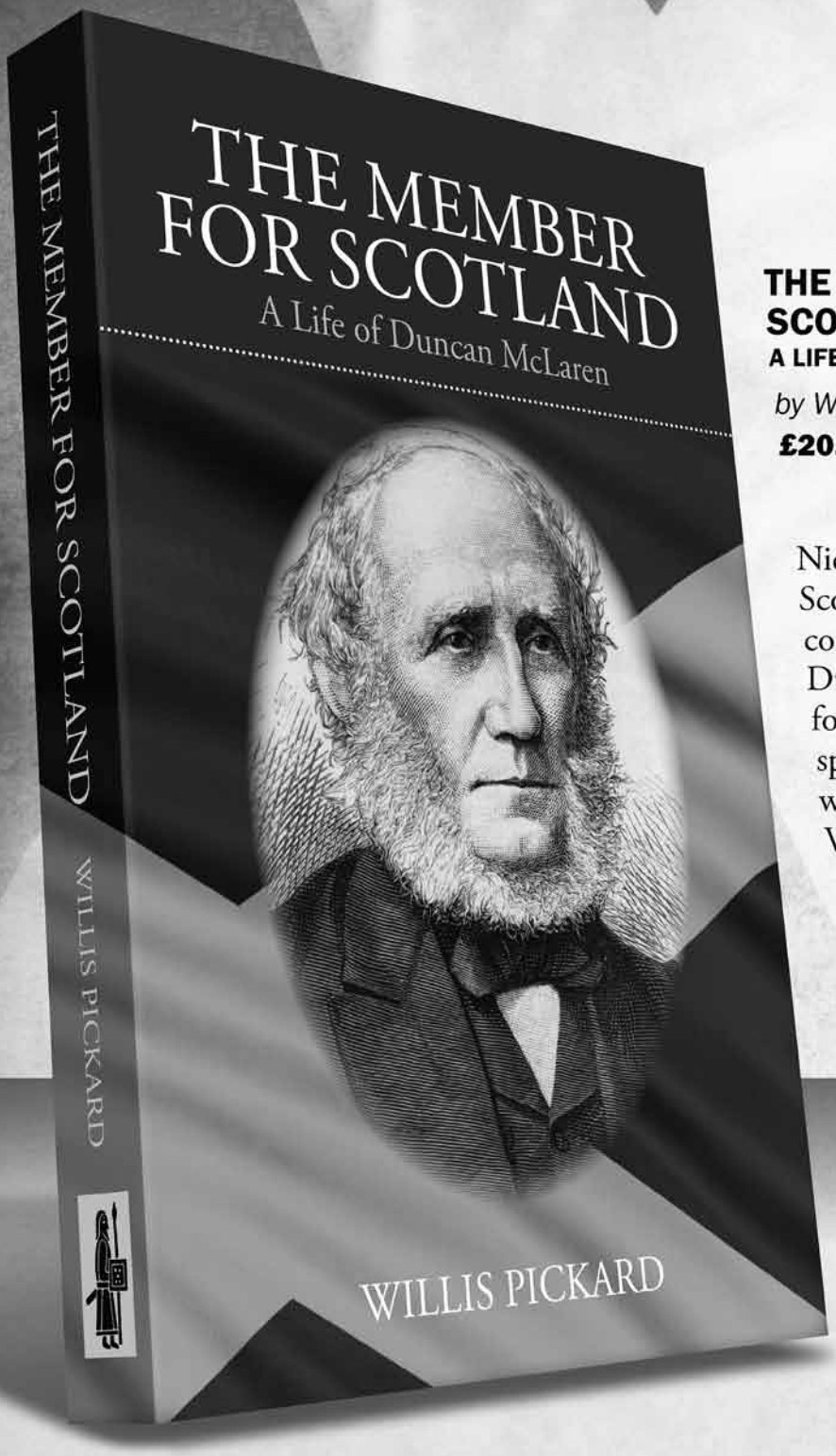

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Editorial/Correspondence

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Duncan Brack (Editor)
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Patrick Mitchell
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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.

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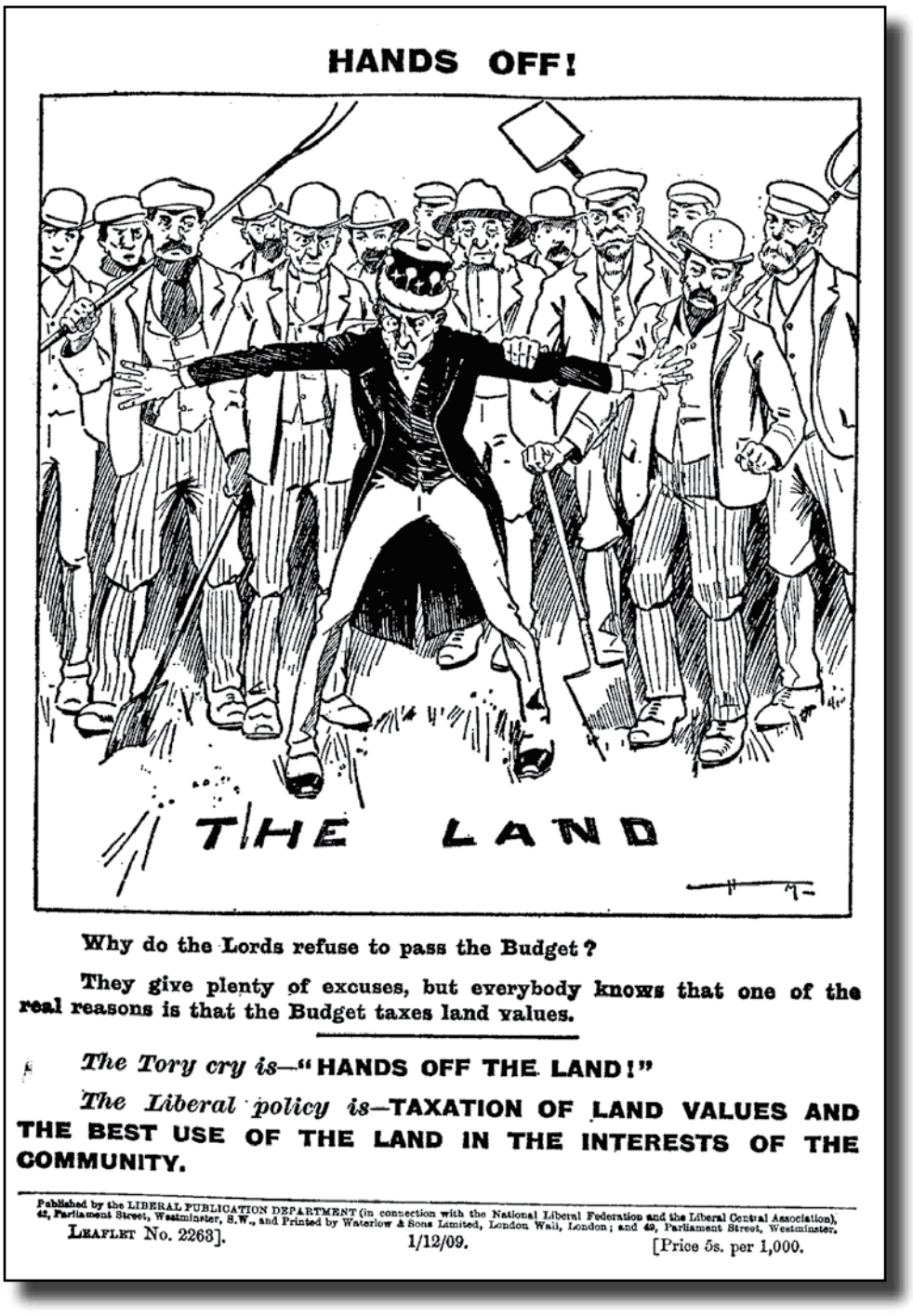
THE LLOYD GEOR

Why did the land taxes which Lloyd George introduced in his 1909 budget cause such a tremendous fuss? They represented a very small addition to the general tax burden, for they were designed to raise just £½ million in the ensuing fiscal year. Even by 1909 values, and in the context of early twentieth-century budgets, this was not much: about 0.3 per cent of the proposed taxation. Yet the Chancellor's proposal to introduce land taxes, and a general land valuation which was essential to make them work properly, precipitated a huge constitutional crisis and enormous public excitement. **Roy Douglas** tells the story.



RGE LAND TAXES

That excitement can only be understood in the context of earlier events. In all parts of the United Kingdom, 'land' already had strong overtones, which resonated with many people. There had been many occasions, well within living memory, when public attention had been focused on matters which related to land and land rights. In the early 1880s, Irish peasants had conducted a savage 'land war' against oppressive landlords, and, for the remainder of the decade, troubles centring on Irish land constantly attracted attention throughout the British Isles. During the same decade, a less terrible, but still sometimes violent, 'land war' broke out in the Hebrides. This did not attract much attention in England, but the Scottish newspapers featured it as major news day after day. A good many residents in Scottish towns were of recent Hebridean extraction and viewed these matters with great interest. Wales also seemed to be on the verge of a 'land war', and it was in that connection that a young solicitor named David Lloyd George first attracted press attention in 1886. From the 1880s onwards, English agriculture was profoundly affected by a dramatic fall in prices, first of grain and later of meat, as a result of cheap imports. The overwhelming majority of farmers were tenants in those days. A great many of them were driven out of business, but landlords were forced to reduce the rents of those who remained. When farm rents fell, the wealth and prestige of landowners was gradually eroded. They could no longer function as the centre of local activities and the people who could finance agricultural improvements, and at times give assistance in money or kind to the 'deserving poor'. They were seen increasingly as mere receivers of rent.

A Liberal leaflet prepared for the January 1910 election; the peer is probably meant to represent the Marquis of Lansdowne. (*Liberal Pamphlets and Leaflets 1910*)

Agricultural labourers, the worst treated of all major occupation groups, were leaving the country. A Royal Commission was told in 1881 that 700,000 farm workers and their families had emigrated in the previous nine years, and the process continued thereafter. Many workers in the towns and mines were beginning to wonder whether their own, often deplorable conditions were also somehow related to the land problem. They, too, had no share in the very valuable landed property of the United Kingdom.

Many of these experiences, in various parts of the British Isles, involved some kind of conflict between owners of land and people who did not own land. While the ownership of most kinds of property bore some relation to the useful activities of the owner or his recent predecessors, the ownership of land usually did not. Perhaps some remote ancestor had performed a service (not necessarily a creditable one) to a sovereign in the distant past; perhaps the land had been taken by force; perhaps it had been awarded by a compliant legislature, without reference to the interests of other people; perhaps, notably in Scotland, a chieftain who once had both rights and duties had gradually assumed the powers of absolute ownership.

In 1879 a book appeared – *Progress and Poverty* – by the American economist and philosopher Henry George. Its influence was enormous. '"Out of Henry George by either Bellamy or Gronlund" was a true pedigree of the convictions held by nearly all the leading propagandists who set socialism on its feet in Great Britain between 1886 and 1900', wrote Sir Robert Ensor in his volume in the Oxford History of England series.[1] He might have added that George's influence on Liberals was every bit as strong.

Henry George confronted the paradox that the enormous technological developments of the previous century or so had not destroyed poverty. He saw the root of poverty and social injustice – urban as well as rural – in the prevailing system of land ownership. Here he was using the word 'land' not in its legal sense but in its economic sense, to mean more or less the same as 'natural resources'. No human being has created 'land', yet life is only possible through access to 'land'. Some people owned a great deal of land and others owned none at all. Landless people were therefore compelled to pay a ransom to those who owned land, and that was what caused poverty. In a modem society there is no way of dividing land so that everybody gets a fair share; but what can be done is to ensure that everybody gets a fair share of the value of land. As we will note, some of George's critics described him as a 'socialist'; but this is quite inaccurate. George himself was explicit on the point. 'The antagonism of interests is not between labour and capital, as is popularly believed, but is really between labour and capital on the one side and landownership on the other.'[2]

Land Value Taxation, commonly abbreviated as LVT, was seen as the way to resolve the problem of poverty. George and his supporters proposed that all land should first be valued. That valuation would consider only the value of a

site (including any minerals lying beneath it), but would exclude the value of anything put on it, or in it, by human activity. It would therefore exclude buildings, machinery, crops, drainage and so on. A tax would then be levied on the basis of that valuation. It would be small at first, but would gradually increase. The revenue produced would be devoted to public purposes, and any left over would be distributed. Other taxes would be reduced correspondingly. Some people thought that the yield of LVT would be so great that no other taxes at all would be required. Those people were called 'Single Taxers'. Henry George and his followers argued that LVT would produce many other benefits as well as the eradication of poverty.

Many Liberals, probably most, would not have gone all the way with Henry George, and would certainly not have called themselves 'single taxers'.[3] They did, however, see the merit of LVT. Resolutions at the National Liberal Federation conferences at Birmingham in 1888, at Manchester in 1889, and at its more famous conference at Newcastle in 1891, bear the strong imprint of Henry George's ideas. The principle could very easily be applied to 'rates', which were then the main source of local government finance. These were currently assessed on the total value of a piece of property. All that was necessary was to switch the assessment to the value of the site alone: what was called Site Value Rating (SVR). This idea was widely discussed. By 1906, no fewer than 518 local authorities had subscribed to the principle that they should be permitted to levy rates on the basis of site values.[4] Nor was SVR a matter of interest exclusively to Liberals and Socialists. A number of others, such as Sir Albert Rollit, at that time Conservative MP for Islington South, though later a Liberal candidate, also evinced a measure of sympathy.[5]

Many Liberals, probably most, would not have gone all the way with Henry George, and would certainly not have called themselves 'single taxers'. They did, however, see the merit of LVT.

1906 and after

The huge Liberal landslide of 1906 was greeted by most land taxers with great joy. Free trade versus tariff reform had been the key issue in most constituencies, but nearly all land taxers were also free traders, and in many places land reform had also played an important part. It has been noted that 52 per cent of Liberal candidates specifically endorsed land taxation.[6] Prime Minister Campbell-Bannerman soon met a delegation claiming to represent more than 400 MPs, calling for progress in that direction. There was a powerful argument for the view that LVT would have a great and beneficial effect on the housing market, and that SVR would substantially relieve poor householders.[7]

Nowhere was the idea of LVT in one form or another more popular than in Scotland. In the 1906 general election, the large majority of elected Scottish MPs was committed to the principle. The new Secretary of State for Scotland, Jack Sinclair, later Lord Pentland, who had once been Campbell-Bannerman's personal secretary, was enthusiastic for land reform. Even more enthusiastic in that cause was Alexander Ure, Scottish Solicitor General and later Lord Advocate. Later in the year, the Liberal government proposed a bill for the valuation of Scottish land. The bill passed the Commons with big majorities, but in 1907 it was rejected by the Lords. A similar bill followed in 1908; this time the Lords merely proposed wrecking amendments. Without prior valuation, it was difficult to see how LVT or even SVR could be made to work satisfactorily.

In the period between the general election of 1906 and the budget of 1909, the House of Lords had given offence to a lot of other people as well as Scottish land taxers. Government bills which had failed to reach the statute book because of action by the House of Lords included the Education Bill and the Plural Voting Bill of 1906, the Scottish Smallholdings Bill of 1907, another Scottish Smallholdings Bill of 1908, plus a Licensing Bill of the same year.[8] It was obvious that a lot of other legislation that Liberals wanted would be similarly wrecked if it ever reached the House of Lords.

On top of those troubles, in 1909 there was a serious economic recession, which was accompanied by a high level of unemployment. By-elections were running strongly against the government. By April 1909 the Liberals had lost ten seats to the Conservatives and their Liberal Unionist allies, one to Labour and one to an independent Socialist. Some of the twenty-one seats which they had held during that period were retained with much-reduced majorities.

The budget

When Asquith succeeded the dying Campbell-Bannerman as prime minister in 1908, Lloyd George became Chancellor of the Exchequer, and in the following year was required to present his first budget. The prospects were daunting. Nobody doubted that a good deal more revenue would be required to meet existing commitments.[9] In the previous year, parliament had approved the first old age pensions, for which £7 million would be required. While old age pensions were the most important new item of social expenditure, the Chancellor anticipated further spending for invalidity and unemployment insurance.

There was also a developing naval race with Germany, which demanded £3 million more for warships. At that moment there was still uncertainty about the measure of naval construction which would be needed. In particular, there was much discussion, in the Cabinet and elsewhere, about how many 'Dreadnought' battleships were required, and when the budget was introduced there still seemed to be some prospect that current estimates might be reduced a little.

In addition to these items, there would be other new calls on state expenditure in the coming financial year. As a result of the economic recession, existing taxes had produced £3.2 million less than the anticipated yield. As everybody at the time believed firmly in the principle of 'balanced budgets', this would need to be compensated for in the current year. £0.95 million would be required for miscellaneous purposes, particularly for improvements on main roads. In all, £14.15 million would be needed over the estimates for the previous year.

It took a long time to work out how all this was to be met in the 1909 budget, and special attention was focused on the possibility that some of the money would be raised from land. On 5 September 1908, Lloyd George sent a memorandum to Sir Robert Chalmers, chairman of the board of Inland Revenue, expressing interest in a land tax.[10] He mentioned the possibility of 'a general tax on ground rents and on

all lands situated within the area of towns and within a certain distance of towns', and also the possibility of taxing mining royalties and waste land. But the document fell far short of the proposals which he would eventually submit to parliament.

Papers at the Public Record Office include a number of documents submitted shortly afterwards by interested people. These included the Liberal MP Josiah Wedgwood, who pressed strongly the ideas of Henry George, and the Lord Chancellor, Lord Loreburn, who pointed out some (not insuperable) difficulties.[11] Asquith circulated the Cabinet with three critical documents he had received from Liberal MPs, without implying personal approval for their strictures. To these Lloyd George responded in detail, also observing that:

> It is known that, although the overwhelming majority of the Party in the House are pledged to the taxation of land values and urgently press it upon the Government, there are at the outside six Members sitting on the Liberal side of the House who oppose it in principle. They have never mustered more than three in the Division Lobby when the Government proposals bearing on this subject have been submitted to the House.[12]

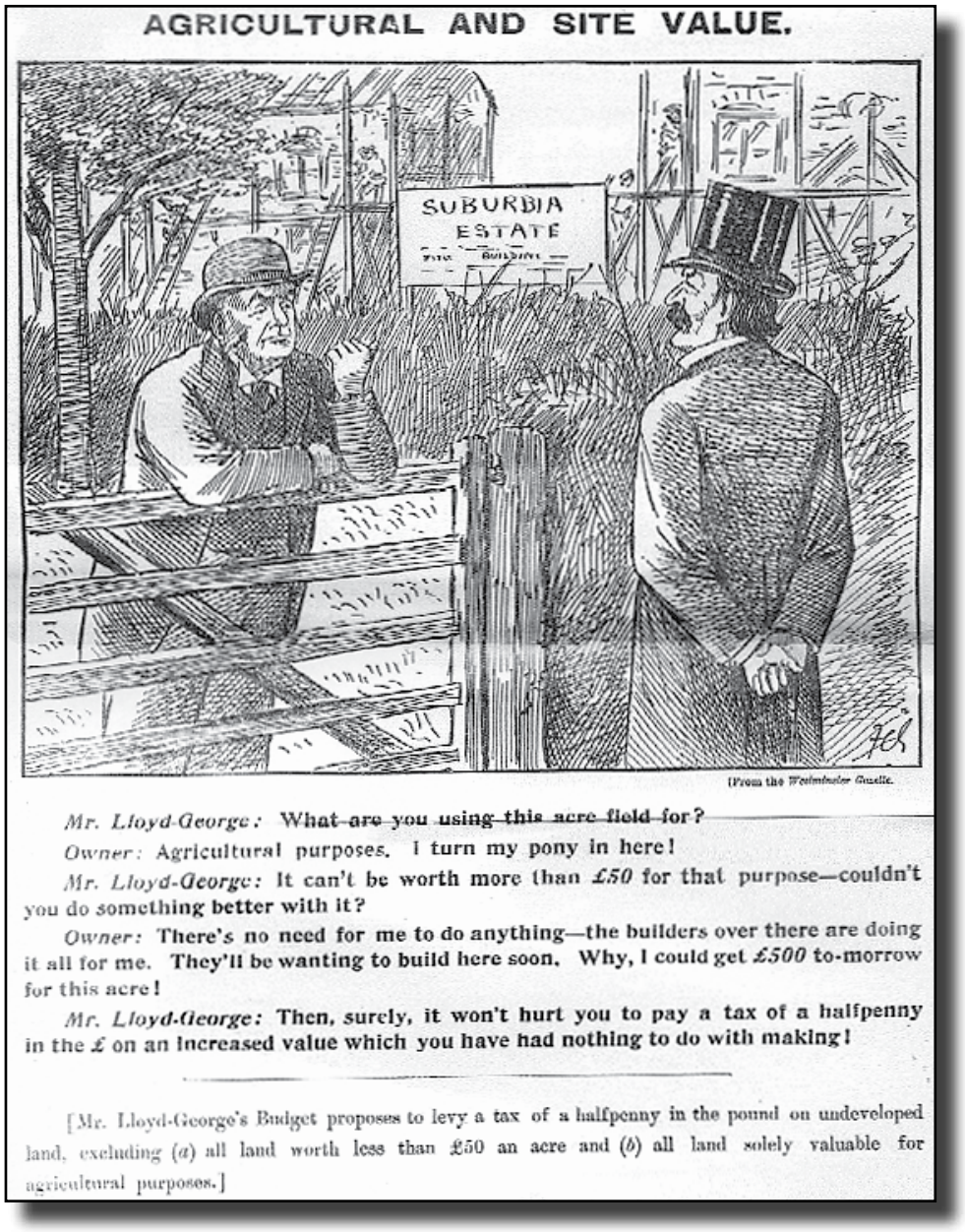
Gradually the proposals took shape in the form which would be submitted to the Cabinet, and then to the House of Commons, in the budget of 1909.

There remained a great constitutional problem. The House of Lords had a huge Conservative majority, made up largely of people with great territorial interests, who obviously hoped to wreck LVT – and, for that matter, much other legislation on which Liberals had set their hearts. There was one hope of overcoming this difficulty. A custom – some called it a convention of the constitution – seemed to have grown up, to the effect that, while the Lords might wreck other kinds of bills from the House of Commons, they would not interfere with an annual Finance Bill, which had been introduced by a budget. In 1894, for example, on the advice of the Marquis of Salisbury, they had let through Sir William Harcourt's budget, with its controversial death duties proposals which many of them obviously detested.

Could land valuation be incorporated in the 1909 budget, and then LVT follow a year or two later? Prima facie, the answer seemed to be no, for the Speaker would not allow anything which was not related to current taxation proposals into the Finance Bill. To get over that one, Lloyd George contrived some land taxes, with a sort of tenuous link between them and a general valuation. The object of his current strategy, so far from being a general confrontation with the House of Lords, was to circumvent the Lords.

While the land taxes presented special difficulties, they represented only a very small part of the extra taxation which would be required. To meet the anticipated shortfall, Lloyd George contemplated raising an extra £14.2 million in taxation. £3.5 million more would be raised in income tax and a new super-tax on high incomes, £2.85 million more in extra death duties, £2.6 million more in liquor licences, £1.6 million more on spirits, £1.9 million more on tobacco, £0.65 million more in stamp duties and £0.6 million more on cars and petrol. Only £0.5 million was anticipated from land taxes.[13]

There were several land proposals in the budget of 1909. First, there would be an increment value duty of 20 per cent on the amount, if any, by which the site value of a piece of land exceeded its earlier site value. This sum would be payable on sale or long lease, or on the death of the owner. Second, there would be a reversion duty of 10 per cent on the benefit accruing to a lessor on the



In the excitement over the 1909 Budget, the details were often forgotten. This Liberal leaflet, based on an 'FCG' (Francis Carruthers-Gould) cartoon in the *Westminster Gazette,* appeared well before the Lords' rejection of the bill. (*Liberal Pamphlets and Leaflets 1909*)

determination of a lease of land. Third, there would be an annual duty of ½d in the pound – roughly 0.21 per cent – on the site value of undeveloped land, and a similar tax on the capital value of minerals. At the same time all land was to be valued, and a distinction was to be made between 'site value' and 'total value'.[14]

When the budget proposals were considered in Cabinet, there had been deep doubts. Sir William Harcourt's son 'Loulou' slipped a card to a colleague, Walter Runciman: 'This Budget will ensure the triumph of Tariff Reform.'[15] Lord Carrington, a great (and, by accounts, a very good) Lincolnshire landowner and president of the Board of Agriculture, later recorded that 'When the Budget was introduced into the Cabinet … I said tax the landowners in the towns if you like, but leave alone the hard-working farmers and the landowners, and we entirely abandoned a tax on the land that grows the food of the country; practically all agricultural land has no fresh taxation whatever.'[16]

From the middle of March onwards, no fewer than fourteen Cabinet meetings were devoted largely to discussions of budget proposals – by no means exclusively those relating to the land taxes and valuation. Despite all reservations, the large majority of the Chancellor's proposals, including the general valuation of land, were broadly agreed. The active support of Prime Minister Asquith appears to have been of major importance in producing that agreement.[17]

Aftermath

The Chancellor introduced his budget in the House of Commons on 29 April 1909. The immediate political and press reactions were more or less predictable. Austen Chamberlain, for the opposition, considered that 'the cumulative effect … would be to bring about … at no very distant date, a revolution in our country life which would strike directly the well-to-do, but which would, glancing from their shoulders, fall with added weight upon those of the poor and labouring classes.' The Conservative press was more explosive. To the *Morning Post*, 'Henry George, the Socialist, has found in his namesake … the first responsible Minister in any civilised country to embody in a legislative proposal the peculiar theory associated with his name.' *Outlook* decided that 'Probably the most vicious of the schemes adopted by Mr Lloyd George is connected with the Taxation of Land Values.' To the *Daily Mail*, 'The net result … is that capital is more heavily taxed in Great Britain than in any other civilised country of the world … Tax is piled on tax till no one will know where he stands.' On the Liberal side, the *Morning Leader* rejoiced that 'Mr Lloyd George has provided for the long over-due Taxation of Land Values, urgently demanded by the urban municipalities and by the rural occupier.' *ReynoId's* was mildly critical, declaring that 'The Budget is a long way from the ideal, but a beginning has been made, and it will be for future Liberal financiers to carry to their logical issues the democratic principles of taxation which Mr Lloyd George has so heroically enunciated.' For the Labour Party, Keir Hardie declared at a meeting in Birmingham that 'the proposal to get at a portion of the unearned increment of land … was a beginning in the right direction.'[18]

In the week which followed the budget speech, the government lost two more by-election seats: Stratford-on-Avon fell to the Conservatives, and the Attercliffe division of Sheffield to Labour. Apart from the first flurry, there was little immediate sign of great enthusiasm. The real importance of the valuation was not yet made clear. Even *Liberal Magazine* does not bring out sharply its full significance.

A Budget Protest League was formed. The middle classes and above – more or less the only people who paid income tax in those days – would certainly not like the big increase. Working-class voters would also be upset. 'Beer up, baccy up, and they call this a People's Budget!' snorted a working-man on a Conservative poster. Yet there seems to have been tacit acceptance that the Finance Bill would pass the Commons safely, whereupon the Lords – no doubt grumbling furiously – would reluctantly let it through. From the opposition's point of view, the value of the whole exercise would not be to defeat the budget, but further to undermine a government which was already weakened.

***Outlook* decided that 'Probably the most vicious of the schemes adopted by Mr Lloyd George is connected with the Taxation of Land Values.' To the *Daily Mail*, 'The net result … is that capital is more heavily taxed in Great Britain than in any other civilised country of the world … Tax is piled on tax till no one will know where he stands.'**

Then supporters of the budget began to fight back. They made it clear that the budget stood or fell as a whole. In June, Liberal MPs set up a Budget League, with R. B., later Viscount, Haldane as president and Winston Churchill as chairman of the executive. Churchill served as Lloyd George's adjutant, and was a particularly enthusiastic advocate of the taxation of land values.[19] In July there was a by-election in the marginal High Peak division of Derbyshire. The Liberal MP, Oswald Partington, accepted ministerial office, and – as the law then stood – needed to resign his seat and stand at a by-election. His campaign centred on a defence of the budget. Partington was returned on a heavy poll, with both Liberal and Conservative parties increasing their vote on the previous general election figures. The contest was a straight fight between the same two candidates as in 1906, and so there could be no question either of changed personalities or of third parties influencing the result.

The Chancellor began to change his whole strategy. Instead of seeking to slip the budget's land valuation past a reluctant House of Lords, he now prepared to use it to challenge the Lords. At the end of July 1909, Lloyd George delivered his famous Limehouse speech, in the East End of London. Today it sounds quite mild, but it infuriated the opposition, who spoke of 'slimehouse'. In October he made a much funnier and more provocative speech in Newcastle. Knowing that there were no Liberal Dukes, he claimed that 'a fully-equipped Duke costs as much to keep as two Dreadnoughts; and Dukes are just as great a terror and they last longer.' This sort of thing drove the Lords to fury. On 30 November, the House of Lords rejected the budget by 350 votes to 75. They argued that by this action the budget was being submitted to the people. lf the government wanted it to pass, they must call a general election on the issue. If it was carried in a new House of Commons, the Lords would let it through. It was clear that the crucial issue was the land valuation and taxes.

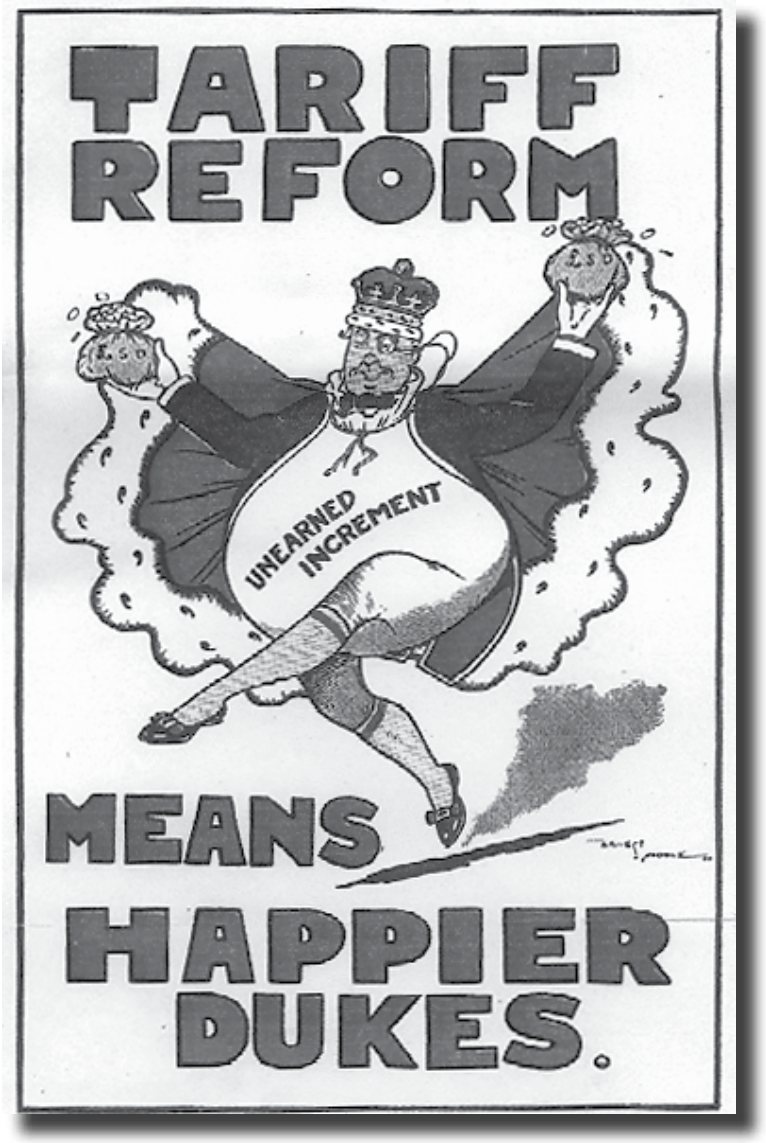
The government was compelled to call the demanded general election. The issue was declared to be 'Peers *versus* People'. Although there had been doubts in the minds of

some Liberals in earlier stages of the controversy, by the time of the general election these had been resolved. The only MPs who had been elected as Liberals in 1906 who sought election under any other designation in 1910 were some of the mineworkers who transferred to Labour (but who solidly supported the budget) and Harold Cox in Preston, the one Liberal who had opposed old age pensions, and who stood as an Independent Liberal – finishing badly at the bottom of the poll.

An official Liberal leaflet published at the beginning of the campaign made the issue clear. A Marquis (probably meant to be Lansdowne, the opposition leader in the House of Lords) holds back a crowd of people who seek access to 'The Land'. At the end of the text are the words:

> *The Tory cry is* – 'Hands off the land!'
>
> *The Liberal policy is* – Taxation of land values and the best use of the land in the interests of the community.[20]

By now both sides seemed tacitly to accept that the alternative to the budget was 'tariff reform', that euphemism for protection, which had been so decisively rejected in 1906. A happy-looking man in peer's robes (oddly, with a Marquis's coronet) holds two moneybags, and has the words 'Unearned Increment' across his ample abdomen. The slogan is, 'Tariff Reform means happier Dukes'.[21] As Liberals never ceased to point out, tariff reform required food taxes, which would inevitably bring hunger to many poor people.



This Liberal leaflet, produced for the January 1910 election, suggests the peers' preference for tariff reform rather than the taxation of the unearned increment of land values proposed in the 1909 Budget. Note that the Duke actually wears a Marquis's coronet. (*Liberal Pamphlets and Leaflets 1910*)

General election and after

At the general election of January 1910, the Liberals lost their overall majority, and were reduced to almost level pegging with the opposition: 275 Liberals, 273 Conservatives and Liberal Unionists. Forty Labour MPs could be added to the Liberal total for most purposes. The Irish Nationalists, with eighty-two, held the balance of power.

Electoral swings varied greatly in different parts of the country. The substantial increase in Labour representation is attributable to the decision of most of the mineworkers' MPs who had hitherto sat as Liberals to transfer allegiance, and the Liberal decision not to oppose them. Apart from that, there was little difference from 1906 in the north of England and Scotland. A few seats changed hands each way. In the south of England, however, the swing against the government was enormous. The Liberals had, perhaps, hoped to 'do an 1885' and win the farm labourers' vote. They had, after all, introduced old age pensions, which saved many old people from the workhouse, and relieved younger relatives of others from a serious burden of support. They had, with considerable difficulty, pressed ahead with rural smallholdings, and had good reason for thinking that the new budget pointed the way to much more radical and general changes. Yet results among the rural poor in the south were not encouraging. All the familiar pressures were exerted upon them by the wealthier classes with apparent success. In some places it was argued by opponents that LVT would operate to the labourers' detriment – echoing the views of Austen Chamberlain and much of the Conservative press when the budget was announced.[22]

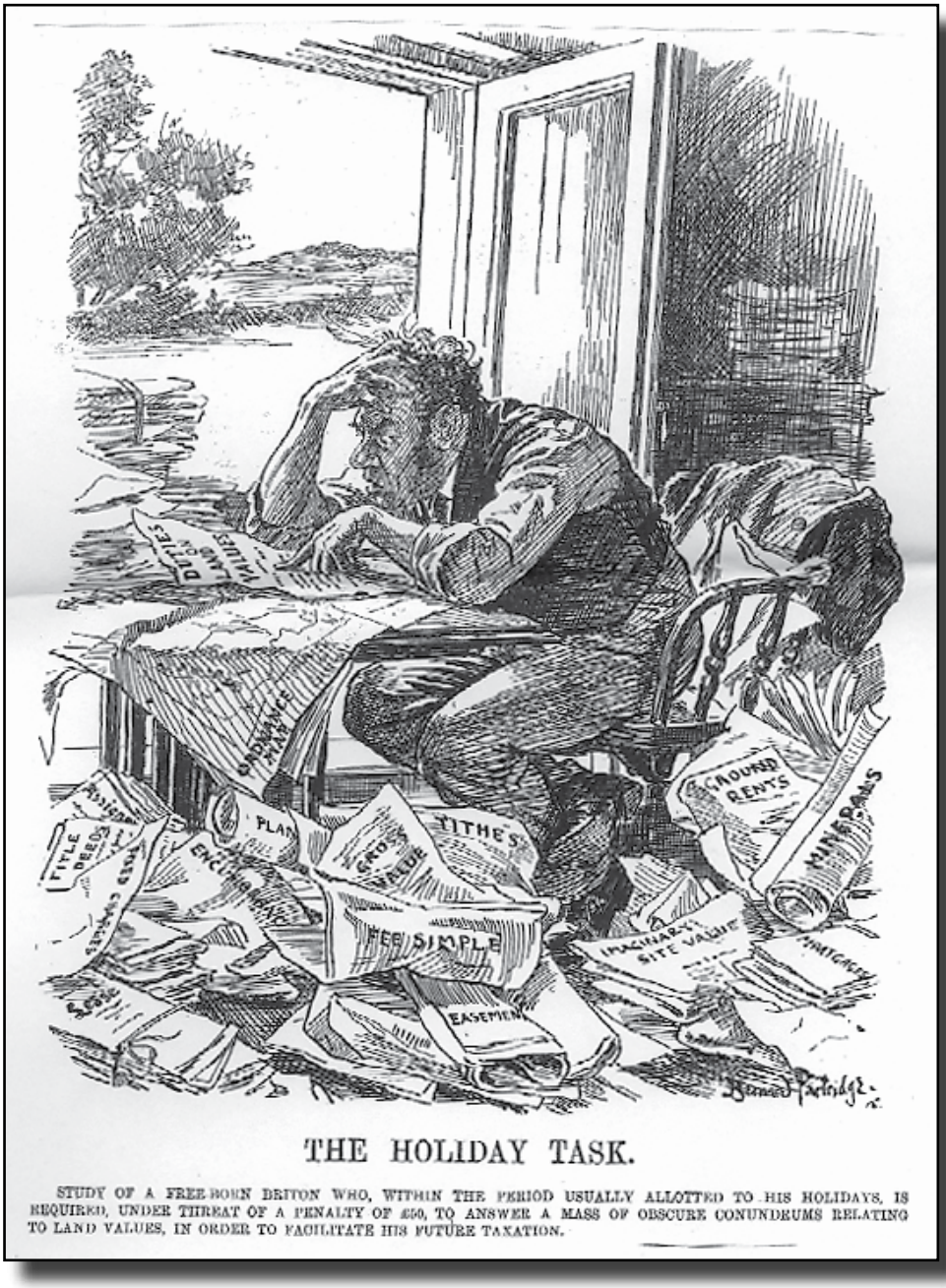
At first there was some doubt as to how the Irish Nationalists would vote when the Finance Bill was brought before the new House. The deep antagonisms of the 1880s had been largely damped down by a series of land purchase measures, some of Liberal and some of Conservative origin, culminating in George Wyndham's act of 1903. The Irish parliamentarians were a good deal less interested in radical land reform than they had once been. There was also an important factor which disposed some of them actually to oppose the budget, for the increased liquor taxes displeased distillers who had been major contributors to Nationalist funds. In the end most, but not all, of the Nationalists were swung to the government side. They were

probably persuaded that they had some chance of getting home rule from the Liberals, but none at all from the Conservatives.

The overall result was that the government secured a substantial majority for the Finance Bill in the new House. The Lords kept their word, and it became law. The various taxes, including the little land taxes, took effect. The much more important land valuation began. A great new struggle between Liberals and Lords also began; but most of that struggle is not our concern here. Suffice to say that the upshot was that the House of Lords lost all power to interfere with a Finance Bill, while nearly all other bills could proceed to enactment if they passed the House of Commons in three successive sessions of parliament. The maximum duration of parliament was reduced from seven years to five.

After 1910

There had been one fundamental tactical error in the land valuation. Many years later, Sir Edgar Harper, who had been chief valuer on the board of the Inland Revenue, and was a good friend of the land taxers, explained the problem.[23] Far too many questions were asked, many of them quite unnecessary for the valuation. The valuation process, which should have been quick and cheap, proved extremely protracted. Whether for this reason exclusively, or perhaps for others as well, the valuation which was an essential condition precedent for proper land value taxation, or even site value rating, did not appear, and land taxers began to show anxiety. *Land Values*, monthly organ of the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values[24] was complaining in February 1912 about the unnecessary questions, and expressed the view that 'the reactionary element in the Ministry – especially the Department whose duty it was to prepare and introduce a Bill for the reform of the rating system – blocked progress.' It referred to a 'Memorial signed by 173 Members of Parliament and presented to the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer 'urging the hastening of valuation and the levy of a national tax on land values'.[25]



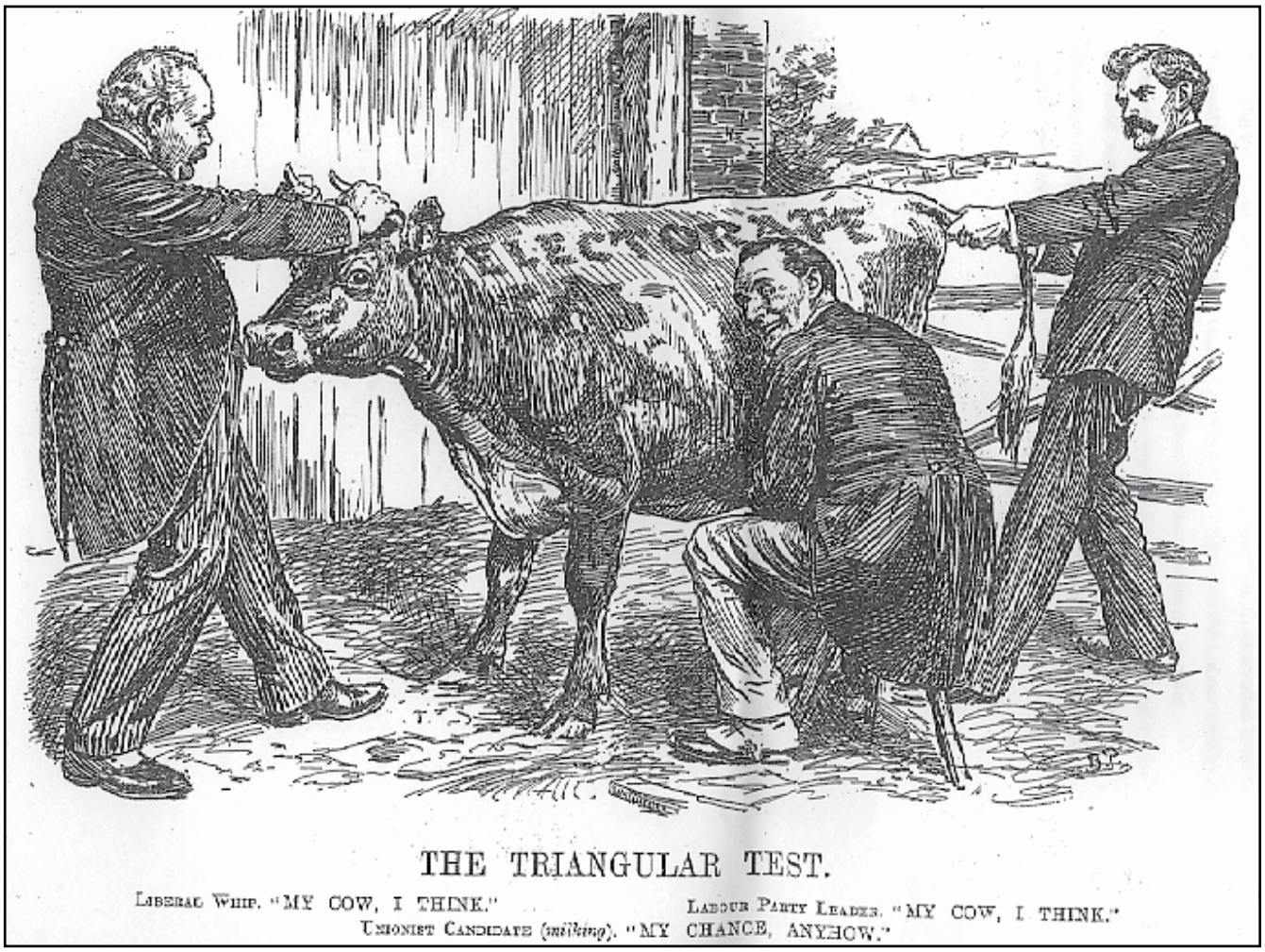
THE HOLIDAY TASK.

STUDY OF A FREE-BORN BRITON WHO, WITHIN THE PERIOD USUALLY ALLOTTED TO HIS HOLIDAYS, IS REQUIRED, UNDER THREAT OF A PENALTY OF £50, TO ANSWER A MASS OF OBSCURE CONUNDRUMS RELATING TO LAND VALUES, IN ORDER TO FACILITATE HIS FUTURE TAXATION.

A major weakness of the Liberal proposals for land value taxation was the innumerable and unnecessary questions accompanying the valuation – the primary reason for the delay in introducing the tax. (*Punch*, 24 August 1910)

At this point we should note a change of name, though not of substance. In May 1912 the Conservative and Liberal Unionist parties, which had long been indistinguishable for practical purposes, were formally united, and for some years they preferred to use the designation 'Unionist'. That practice will be followed in this paper.

Later in 1912, several by-elections pointed convincingly to the popularity of land value taxation. Land taxers, we may guess, made efforts to ensure that adopted Liberal candidates were enthusiasts for their cause. In north-west Norfolk on 31 May, E. G. Hemmerde held a by no means safe seat. *Land Values* claimed that 'Land Reform became the burning question of the fight, and during the last few days almost silenced all others'.[26] Even more spectacular was the Hanley by-election on 13 July. The seat had been held by a miners' MP who had originally sat as a Liberal, but transferred to the Labour Party, and was not opposed by the Liberals in the two 1910 general elections. At the by-election which followed Edwards's death, Labour nominated a defender. The Liberal candidate, R. L. Outhwaite, was an especially keen land taxer, and made the issue the dominant question in his campaign. The Unionists evidently expected to win the seat on a split progressive vote. A cartoon in *Punch*, published while the campaign was in progress, showed the Liberal chief whip, the Master of Elibank, pulling at one end of the cow 'Electorate', and Ramsay MacDonald, chairman of the



Labour Party, pulling at the other. Each says, 'My cow, I think'. Seated between them on a milking stool and smiling, the Unionist candidate, says, 'My chance, anyhow.'[27] But matters did not turn out that way. Outhwaite was elected, joining Josiah Wedgwood, the equally enthusiastic Liberal land taxer who sat for the contiguous constituency of Newcastle-under-Lyme. The loss of Crewe by the Liberals at a by-election shortly after the Hanley victory and the loss of Midlothian in September could be explained by the intervention of Labour in constituencies where there had been straight fights in 1910.

The 1912 by-elections seemed to show that the cause of land value taxation, when well argued, was popular in a very wide range of constituencies. But, for reasons which still do not seem wholly clear, the land taxers' urgent purpose of getting the land valuation complete so that LVT could commence, was not achieved. Lloyd George himself must bear a share of responsibility for not keeping a close watch on how the valuation was proceeding.

Land campaign

There seemed little doubt that 'land' was a great popular issue, even though some of the more cautious Liberals were anxious not to press too hard or too fast with LVT. If 'land' could be presented in some other form, this might win a great deal of public support and create a prelude to the next general election. Thus a new 'Land Campaign' developed, which could be regarded as a sequel and extension to the great budget controversy.[28] In June 1912, an unofficial Land Enquiry Committee was set up by Liberals at the insistance of Lloyd George and with full support from Asquith. The chairman was Arthur, later Sir Arthur, Acland, a former Liberal MP. Members included Seebohm Rowntree, author of important studies on poverty in York, and some noted land reformers of various kinds, including Baron de Forest, C. Roden Buxton and E. G. Hemmerde. The committee reported in the following year, and in October 1913 a Liberal Land Campaign began, based on its findings.

Special attention was given to the plight of agricultural labourers, who were by far the worst treated of all major occupational groups. A minimum wage was to be established, as had already been done for some other trades. Hours of labour would be regulated and adequate housing provided, where necessary by state action. Commissioners would receive the power to provide allotments and smallholdings, if necessary by compulsory purchase. Farmers would receive increased rights against landlords, including new protection against damage by game. Provision was made to ensure that the cost of increased labourers' wages would not be borne by the tenant farmer, but would be transferred to the landlord through reductions in rent. There was much more in the same vein.

Initial reactions proved highly favourable. 'Swindon was electric. I have rarely addressed such an enthusiastic meeting,' wrote Lloyd George to Percy Illingworth, the new Liberal chief whip, after one of the early meetings. 'Winston found the same thing at Manchester. His allusions to our programme were received with wild cheering.'[29]

The *Punch* cartoonist Bernard Partridge expected the competition between the Liberal and Labour candidates at the Hanley by-election to deliver the seat to the Unionists; in fact, the Liberal R. L. Outhwaite, who had fought the campaign mainly on the programme of land value taxation, was elected. (*Punch*, 10 July 1912)

Illingworth shared the Chancellor's enthusiasm. Reporting on proceedings at the National Liberal Federation meeting at Leeds a month or so later, he declared. 'The Prime Minister's speech last night was I think the best I ever heard him make. "Land" went like hot cakes at the delegates' meeting.'[30]

The Land Enquiry Committee published its Urban Report in April 1914. It dealt with such matters as urban housing, land acquisition and urban tenures. It proposed a system of local rating which would allow considerable discretion to local authorities as to how far they applied SVR.[31] Reactions were notably less enthusiastic than those given to the Rural Report; and how far it would eventually be solidified into government and Liberal policy was still uncertain.

What seemed clear in the summer of 1914 was that the land taxes proposed in Lloyd George's budget of 1909 had started a chain of events which was still very far from complete. There were plenty of signs that not only the Liberals but their Unionist opponents as well were now thinking of reforms, largely tied up directly or indirectly with land, which were much more extensive than had been generally visualised half a dozen years earlier. The land taxes had played a major part in that shift.

Not with a bang ...

The end of the Lloyd George land taxes is intimately bound up with the fate of the Liberal Party in the early aftermath of the 1914 war, and neither story can be properly understood without considerable reference to the other. The complex politics of the 1914 war are mainly outside the present account. Suffice here to say that when Lloyd George formed a coalition in December 1916, Asquith and his closest associates were omitted, although a serious and confidential attempt was made to incorporate them towards the end of the war.[32] When the fighting ended in November 1918, Lloyd George was prime minister of a three-party coalition government which still did not include Asquith or his immediate followers. Almost immediately, a general election was called. The Labour Party broke away from the government and operated thenceforth in complete independence. As the election campaign developed, Lloyd George and the Unionist leader Bonar Law issued letters of support, commonly nicknamed 'coupons', to the candidates whom they favoured. For reasons which are peripheral to the present story, most recipients of the 'coupon' were Unionists, but quite a lot were Liberals and a few were members of smaller parties.

When polling took place, the coalition's nominee was usually successful. Of the elected 'couponed' candidates, 332 were Unionists, 132 Liberals and 16 members of other parties. All those leading Liberals who had not received the 'coupon', including Asquith, were defeated, but thirty lesser fry scrambled home. Forty-eight 'uncouponed' Unionists, sixty Labour and eighty-nine others, mainly from Irish parties, were also victorious. Lloyd George remained prime minister, but the large majority of his putative supporters was now Unionist.[33]

At the time of the general election, Liberal headquarters were firmly in the hands of Asquith and his associates. They had not formally condemned the coalition, explicitly stating the Liberal candidates 'should be free to promise support for the coalition government' on certain conditions. After the general election, however, big differences began gradually to appear among Liberal MPs, which corresponded roughly, though not exactly, with receipt or non-receipt of the 'coupon'. On 3 February 1919, a meeting of twenty-three Liberal MPs who were considered not to be supporters of the government was convened. Thereafter, most of them acted as an opposition group.

Unionists still deeply disliked the 'land taxes', and the valuation even more so. On the other side, many people who had supported the famous budget palpably wished to see taxes and valuation revised considerably. On 25 July 1919, it was announced that a Select Committee had been appointed 'to enquire into the present position of the [Land Value duties and valuation and to] make recommendations with regard to their retention, alteration or repeal.' A coalition Liberal, Sir Thomas Whittaker, who had sat in parliament since 1892 and had published a book on the land question, was chosen as chairman. Other members of the committee were seven Unionists, two coalition Liberals, two non-coalition Liberals and two Labour. The Select Committee soon disagreed on its terms of reference, and at the end of October adjourned for a fortnight.[34] In the course of that fortnight, Whittaker died, and a by-election was mounted in his constituency, Spen Valley.

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The Spen Valley by-election greatly exacerbated divisions among Liberals. Although Whittaker had received the 'coupon', the local Liberal Association nominated Sir John Simon, who had been a minister before the war and ranked as an 'Asquithian', as candidate. To this the coalitionists retorted by nominating a certain Colonel R. C. Fairfax. Nobody in politics seemed to know much about Fairfax, but he was described as a coalition Liberal, though he used the local Unionist office as his headquarters. This was the first by-election since 1918 at which two candidates described as Liberals opposed each other. Labour also nominated a candidate. In the event Labour was elected with a small majority over Simon, with Fairfax trailing third.

Not long after Spen Valley polled, another Liberal MP died. Sir John M'Callum of Paisley had not received the 'coupon', but had been returned in a very close contest, with fewer than 400 votes separating three candidates. The local Liberals chose Asquith himself as candidate. On 12 February 1920, Asquith was victorious with a fair margin over Labour, with an obviously unsuitable Unionist a bad third. The net effect of these two by-elections was to make the Liberal schism almost total.

Meanwhile, the Select Committee which had been looking at the land taxes continued its work, but soon ran into complete deadlock.[35] Among the evidence offered was a submission of evidence by Dundas White of the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values, recommending that a tax on the value of all land should be substituted for the existing duties. One section of the Select Committee declared that it would resign if this evidence was admitted, the other that it would resign if the evidence was not admitted. The Select Committee could do no more than publish the evidence already received from others.

The next stage in the story was the budget statement by the coalition Unionist Chancellor of the Exchequer, Austen Chamberlain, on 19 April 1920. The government proposed to repeal the land value duties, to forego the collection of arrears, and to refund the duties paid. In the course of his budget speech in April 1920, Chamberlain proposed abolition of both the land value duties and the valuation. On its face, the argument was clear-cut. The duties, he said, 'have produced hardly any revenue, and … are, with the exception of the mineral rights duty, either wholly or partially in abeyance.'[36] The mineral rights duty could survive as a separate tax. As for the valuation, it referred to values as at 30 April 1909, and with the repeal of the duties it no longer had fiscal significance. Here we may observe that nobody – certainly not Lloyd George – had ever intended the duties to produce much revenue. A serious implied criticism of the valuation was that it referred to a particular date, far in the past. Land values, as everybody knows, are constantly changing, and any useful valuation requires frequent, certainly not less than annual, revision.

On 14 July 1920, the Committee of the Whole House voted separately on a proposal to terminate the valuation; a proposal to repay the duties; a proposal to cease the increment value duty; a proposal to terminate the reversion duty and a proposal to terminate the undeveloped land duty. In these votes, the numbers supporting the government view ranged from 193 to 220, the numbers to the contrary from eighty to ninety-one. Predictably, all, or almost all, of the Unionists voted with the government, and all the Labour and 'Asquithian' members voted against it. The most remarkable feature of the divisions was how the coalition Liberals split. The number supporting the government view ranged from twenty-four to thirty-two, the number voting against it from nineteen to twenty-five. On the repayment issue, those opposing the government even exceeded its supporters by one vote.[37] Thereafter the Finance Bill soon proceeded to formal enactment.

The irony of the situation was complete. Lloyd George, head of the government at whose instance the duties and the land valuation were repealed, had been the instigator of the same duties and valuation eleven years earlier. We may only speculate as to what were his real thoughts on the matter. In the debate which followed Austen Chamberlain's budget speech, Asquith proposed that the epitaph on the duties should be 'not *Requiescat* but *Resurgam*.' Some time, perhaps, we will see the Day of Resurrection.

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Dr Roy Douglas is Emeritus Reader at the University of Surrey. He fought five times as a Liberal parliamentary candidate. He is the author of fifteen books on historical subjects, including The History of the Liberal Party 1895–1970 *(1971) and* Liberals: The History of the Liberal and Liberal Democrat Parties *(2005).*

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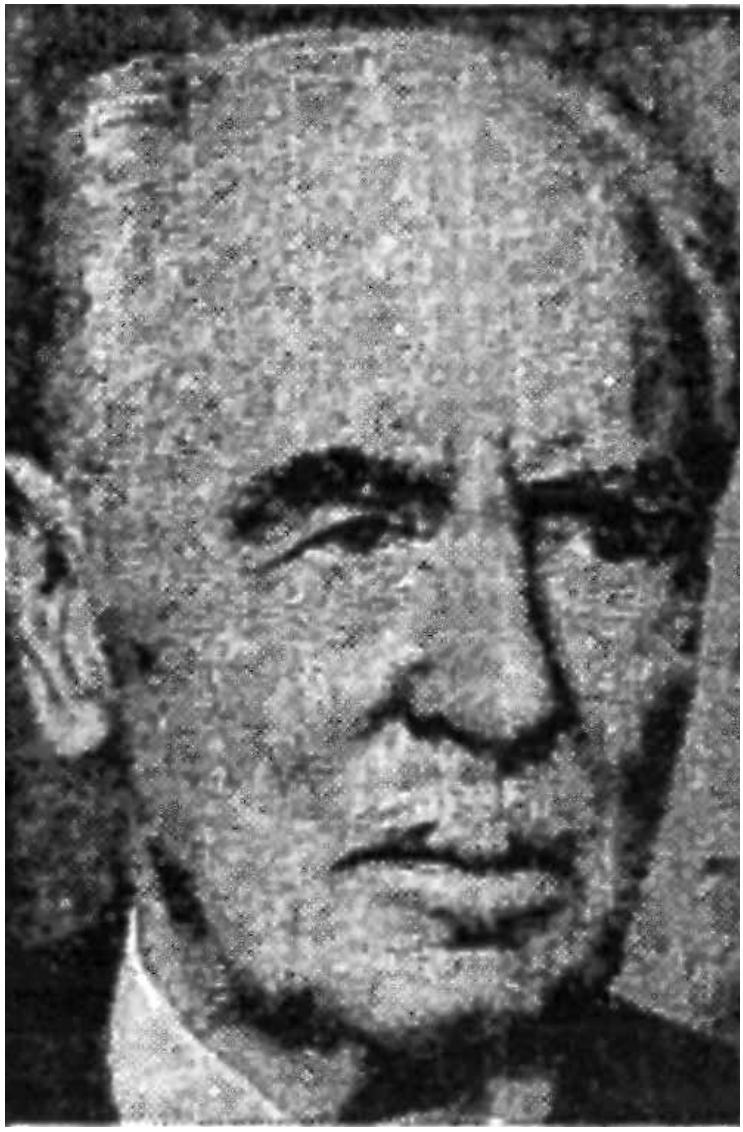
LIBERAL NATI
CHARLES KERR

Charles Iain Kerr, first Baron Teviot, is best remembered for the eponymous agreement which he reached with Lord Woolton, the chairman of the Conservative Party, in 1947, by which Conservatives and Liberal Nationals regularised their constituency arrangements after more than a decade and a half of electoral cooperation. His political career, however, spanned four decades from the end of the First World War. **David Dutton** examines his life and career.



Charles Iain Kerr, First Baron Teviot (1874–1968)

ONAL LEADER
R, LORD TEVIOT

Kerr was born in 1874, the elder son of Charles Wyndham Rudolph Kerr, grandson of the sixth Marquess of Lothian. At the age of eighteen he left Britain to seek his fortune in Canada where he worked for three years as a miner. Later he went to South Africa where he also engaged in manual work. But on his return to London he became a stockbroker, rising eventually to become a senior partner in Kerr, Ware and Company. After service in the First World War, during which he was awarded the DSO and Military Cross and was mentioned in despatches, he embarked upon a political career. Family ties determined that he would seek advancement in the Liberal interest. His cousin, Philip Kerr, the eleventh Lord Lothian, had served as private secretary to Lloyd George and was active in Liberal politics throughout the inter-war years. But the 1920s were a difficult time for an aspiring Liberal politician and, like many others, Kerr struggled unsuccessfully to secure election to the House of Commons, as his party slipped inexorably into electoral third place, squeezed between the upper and nether millstones of its Conservative and Labour rivals. He contested Daventry in the general election of 1923 and came within 1,600 votes of victory. In the same constituency the following year (one of generally poor Liberal performance), Kerr came tantalisingly close to success, reducing the gap with his Tory opponent to just 200 votes. Then, in a by-election in Hull Central in 1926, occasioned by the defection of the sitting Liberal member, J. M. Kenworthy, to Labour, Kerr ended up in a distant third place, nearly 9,000 votes behind the Conservative runner-up. In this contest Kerr gave hints of what would become the central tenet of his political creed, his opposition to socialism. While the sort of Labour policies now espoused by Kenworthy were largely compatible with Liberal beliefs, Kerr argued that it was Labour's long-term objectives, upon which Kenworthy was conspicuously silent, which needed to be considered.[1] Throughout his career Kerr seemed to find it easier to say what was not Liberalism than what was, but at this stage, in his espousal of traditional Liberal causes such as free trade, he gave no indication that he was outside the party's mainstream. Finally, in what was, at least in terms of votes secured, a comparatively good Liberal year, he came within 650 votes of victory in Swansea West in the general election of 1929.

Such electoral disappointments seem to have persuaded Kerr to transfer his attention to the sort of backstage organisational work for which his talents in any case best suited him, and he became chairman of the executive committee of the National Liberal Federation and of the Liberal Publications Department. Early in the new decade, however, Kerr had to confront the choice which faced all Liberals as the party once again split into two rival factions, divided by attitudes to the minority Labour government headed by Ramsay MacDonald and disagreements over the continuing relevance of the doctrine of free trade. For Kerr the choice was simple. A convinced anti-socialist, he allied himself in 1931 with John Simon's group of Liberal Nationals. Resigning all offices within the Liberal Party, he declared that he was 'so out of sympathy with the majority of the parliamentary party and the party organisation in their attitude of supporting the present Government, which I consider to be against the interests of the country and detrimental to the future of the party, that I do not wish to hold any position in the party machine and thereby either directly or indirectly support this policy'.[2] In a somewhat strange but revealing comment the *Manchester Guardian* noted at this time that Kerr had 'never been an assertive Liberal'.[3]

For Kerr the choice was simple. A convinced anti-socialist, he allied himself in 1931 with John Simon's group of Liberal Nationals.

Simon made good use of his organisational abilities in constructing the new party, and the following year, with the elevation of Sir Robert Hutchison, another Liberal National defector, to the peerage, Kerr was selected as candidate for the by-election in Montrose Burghs. With a strong Liberal tradition, and in the absence of Tory intervention, it looked a safe seat. Hutchison had defeated his Labour opponent by more than 12,000 votes as recently as the general election of October 1931. This time the outcome was complicated by the arrival of a Scottish Nationalist candidate. Even so, the reduction of Kerr's majority to just 933 votes was a considerable disappointment: a reflection perhaps of a generally lack-lustre campaign on all sides, but a possible indication too that traditional Liberal voters were as yet unready to accept the Liberal Nationals as authentic exponents of their creed.[4]

Kerr's career as an MP was largely uneventful, though he did attract attention when moving the Address to the King's Speech in November 1934, dressed in the uniform of the Royal Company of Archers, the king's bodyguard in Scotland. His contributions to parliamentary debate were not always of the highest order. In his maiden speech in October 1932 he suggested resolving the unemployment problem by resettling the unemployed and their dependents in the underpopulated Dominions. This idea was being widely discussed at this time, but when, later in the same speech, he appealed to the Labour opposition to drop its censure motion on the government as a 'gesture of goodwill and cooperation', Kerr showed his inexperience.[5] But perhaps the most extreme example of what has been described as Kerr's 'mixture of eccentricity with naivety'[6] came when he addressed the Scottish Liberal National Association in May 1938. Here he spoke of a plot to unseat the government and unwisely coloured his remarks with racist overtones:

> You would hardly credit the terrible, low-down, wicked efforts that are being made to undermine everything we hold dear. There are people in a very big way in this country who support Communism, though not outwardly. There is a lot of money behind this, and I regret to say that a great bulk of the people working in that direction are of the Jewish race.[7]

Anti-Semitism was more widespread in those pre-Holocaust days than it has since become, but, with his vague suggestion of a Jewish conspiracy, Kerr was moving to a different plane. Not surprisingly, his remarks created an outcry – with Sir Maurice Block, chairman of the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council, insisting that his claims were 'utterly fantastic and untrue'. 'We naturally look to Colonel Kerr as a man of honour to substantiate his statement or make amends.'[8] Meanwhile, Kerr wrote to *The Times* to explain, somewhat lamely, that he had merely been attacking the idea of Liberals working with Labour in a 'popular front' movement and that many of his best friends were Jews.[9] After a few days' reflection, however, Kerr was obliged to issue an unqualified apology:

> I have come to the conclusion that under the circumstances I had no right whatever in my remarks on the Communist and anti-God movements to refer to the Jews. Doing so has created a completely wrong impression, and I now express my sincere regret at having done so.[10]

But were Kerr's remarks merely a case of extreme political ineptitude? It is striking that his sentiments and even his vocabulary – for example, the phrase 'anti-God' to describe communist activity – bore a striking resemblance to those being voiced at this time by the notorious Captain Archibald Ramsay, Conservative MP for Peebles and South Midlothian, a crypto-fascist who was rapidly emerging as one of Hitler's leading apologists in Britain and the only sitting MP to be imprisoned in 1940 under Defence Regulation 18B. Interestingly, Ramsay's home, Kellie Castle, was situated inside Kerr's parliamentary constituency. More significantly, there is a suggestion that a meeting in London referred to in Kerr's speech, from which he had derived his information about the 'Judaeo-Bolshevik' danger, had been attended by Ramsay.[11] The two men were associated in the United Christian Front and, the following year, Kerr, along with several former members of the British Union of Fascists, joined Ramsay's so-called 'Right Club', a 'stage army of increasingly desperate fascists and pro-Nazis'.[12] There is no evidence that Kerr's dalliance with the far-right went any further than this. Yet it is difficult to deny that he had travelled a long way from the original Liberal affiliation under which he had entered the political arena.

It was Kerr's organisational skills rather than his inner political beliefs that carried forward his political career, and he was an obvious choice for the position of Liberal National chief whip in 1937.

For all that, it was Kerr's organisational skills rather than his inner political beliefs that carried forward his political career, and he was an obvious choice for the position of Liberal National chief whip following the unexpected death of Sir James Blindell in 1937. This promotion carried with it the junior post of Lord Commissioner of the Treasury in the National Government. He was promoted to be Comptroller of HM Household early in 1939 but, at much the same time, announced that he would not be defending his seat at the next general election, widely anticipated for that year, for reasons of health. Kerr was sixty-five years old and had experienced some health problems at the turn of the year. But the fact that he lived on comfortably into his tenth decade gives some credence to the contemporary suspicion that other factors were involved. *The Fascist* dropped clear hints that his retirement was related to his apparently anti-Semitic remarks of a year earlier.[13] None the less, with the prospect of a general election postponed for the duration of hostilities, Kerr was elevated to the peerage in June 1940 as Baron Teviot. Later that year he was elected to succeed Lord Hutchison as chairman of the Liberal National Organisation.[14]

For the remainder of the Second World War Teviot performed the sort of patriotic good works that might have been expected of a semi-retired politician supporting Churchill's coalition government. He visited China in 1942 as a member of a cross-party delegation and was clearly impressed by what he saw, telling a Liberal National lunch on his return in March 1943 that 'the Chinese people were being prepared to accept a new constitution which perhaps would be the best democratic organisation in the world, and from which we, with our old-fashioned democracy,

might learn something'.[15] Later that year he chaired an inter-departmental committee set up to consider and report on the progressive stages by which, 'having regard for the number of practising dentists, provision for an adequate and satisfactory dental service should be made available for the population'.[16] Reporting in 1944, Teviot's committee unanimously recommended that a comprehensive dental service should be an integral part of an overall National Health Service. It was a significant contribution to the planning of the post-war welfare state.

As the war neared its end, attention inevitably refocused on the domestic political agenda. The years of conflict had been particularly damaging for the organisational infrastructure of the smaller political parties, and the Liberal Nationals faced the additional difficulty that the circumstances and attitudes which had brought them into existence in the early 1930s had become a matter of history rather than current politics. Teviot, however, became one of the strongest advocates, particularly after Labour's landslide victory in the general election of 1945, of the idea that the threat of socialism in Britain compelled Liberals and Conservatives to join forces in opposition to this alien political tradition. First, it was necessary to see whether the divided forces of Liberalism could be reunited – but only on this limiting basis which in practice precluded independent Liberal action. Teviot believed that a number of Liberals, dissatisfied with the performance of the parliamentary Liberal Party, might come over to the Liberal Nationals in the 'not so distant future'. For that reason it was necessary to play down links with the Conservatives for the time being in case such an association frightened away potential Liberal defectors.[17]

Two sets of negotiations were held in 1943–4 and in 1946, in which Teviot played a prominent part. In the circumstances, the talks went on longer than the basic situation merited, encouraged perhaps by a strong feeling within many constituencies that reunion must be the way forward. Both sides seemed reluctant to admit that the question of Liberal independence, which for Liberal Nationals would mean severing their links with the Conservative Party and therefore exposing themselves to probable electoral suicide, posed an insuperable hurdle. In the last resort this was not a step that Teviot was prepared to contemplate. By the last months of 1946 it was clear that Liberal reunion was a non-starter and that he would need to pursue a different option of even closer association with the Conservatives.

By this time, of course, the Liberal Nationals had suffered a considerable reverse as a result of the 1945 general election, their House of Commons strength reduced to just eleven unequivocal adherents. In the negotiations which now began, with Teviot leading for the Liberal Nationals and Lord Woolton for the Conservatives, the latter held almost all of the cards. The Conservative chairman brushed aside Teviot's complaint that it was a pity to find Conservative candidates being adopted in what he considered to be traditional Liberal National seats, and he effectively put a gun to the head of the smaller party. Woolton suggested that jobs might be found for competent Liberal Nationals in the Conservative organisation but, 'if they delayed for two or three months, I should have completed my staff and would then undertake no obligation in the event of amalgamation'.[18] The Conservatives were fully aware of the weakness of the Liberal National position, while the latter knew that, the longer they delayed, the more their residual strength up and down the country was likely to be eroded. In such circumstances agreement was soon reached and the terms of the Woolton–Teviot pact were announced in May 1947.

The agreement probably offered Liberal Nationals as much as Teviot could have reasonably expected. On the one hand the position in the constituencies, where the Liberal National organisational infrastructure was often crumbling or already dormant, was regularised. In those where Liberal Nationals and Conservatives both had an existing organisation, a combined association should be formed under a jointly agreed title. Where only one of the parties had an organisation, encouragement should be given to all potential members, from either tradition, on the basis of joint action against socialism. And the selection of parliamentary candidates should be based on a joint list drawn up in consultation by the two parties' headquarters. Successful candidates would sit in parliament as Liberal-Unionists, a somewhat strange title given the fate of a similarly named group which had disappeared from the political landscape just before the First World War. All of this guaranteed the survival in the immediate future of Liberal Nationalism as a concept, even if the outlook in the longer term suggested probable absorption by the big battalions of the Conservative Party. At a national level Liberal National prospects looked a little brighter with structures such as the Liberal National Organisation, the Liberal National Council and the annual conference carrying on much as before. The Liberal National Party thus retained the form, appearance and structure of a national movement with officers and finances separate from those of the Tories. Teviot, then, still had a political party to help manage. Indeed, there were those who believed that the very fact that he enjoyed being the chairman of a political party was an important factor in keeping the movement in existence.[19]

Teviot, then, still had a political party to help manage. Indeed, there were those who believed that the very fact that he enjoyed being the chairman of a political party was an important factor in keeping the movement in existence.

Other Liberal Nationals, however, were more inclined to accept the logic of the situation and amalgamate fully with the Conservatives. After all, if the modern Conservative Party was as liberalised as Liberal Nationals repeatedly claimed, what was the point of maintaining even the semblance of a separate identity? John Simon, now like Teviot in the House of Lords, was one of their number. There, he accepted the Conservative whip, sat on the opposition front bench and even attended some meetings of Churchill's Consultative Committee, the shadow cabinet of the day. In the wake of the 1945 general election Teviot had become Liberal National whip in the upper chamber, but his task was not an easy one. By 1949 there were, in theory, still thirteen peers in receipt of the National Liberal whip. The problem, however, was that the group was predominantly elderly and, as Teviot admitted, 'with very few exceptions … our people hardly ever attend and there are many days when [Simon] and I are the only National Liberals there'. And even Teviot's presence could not be taken for granted: 'I

try and get there as much as I can, and take part in debates on occasions, but my attempt to earn my living must come first and I am very busy in this direction'. This gave a considerable advantage to the mainstream Liberal Party in its ongoing efforts to undermine the National Liberals' claims to legitimacy and viability. The former 'appear to have a lot of people with nothing else to do but attend the House of Lords'.[20] This was not a picture that the elderly and hard-pressed Lord Samuel, leading the mainstream party in the upper chamber, would have recognised. Both Liberal factions were in fact struggling to maintain a presence in the House of Lords. After the 1945 general election Lord Salisbury, Conservative leader in the upper house, had suggested that National Liberal peers should take the Conservative whip. But it remained Teviot's view that it was best to retain this token of independence, not least because it contradicted the Liberals' claim that the National Liberals had been swallowed up by the Conservative Party. In response to Simon's suggestion that the next general election might be the time to bite the bullet and accept full amalgamation with the Tories, Teviot remained non-committal: 'we will just have to deal with this fence when we get to it'.[21] In practice the two men had to agree to differ. Simon 'admire[d] very much [Teviot's] public spirit in sticking to your task as Chairman of the Organisation', but could give no absolute assurances as to his own future actions. 'So far, I have made my contribution in council and debate without any formal change of name. But I would not like you to think that I am pledging myself to continue indefinitely in this ambiguous position.'[22]

Teviot retained his posts within the National Liberal hierarchy until September 1956. In the intervening years he was probably his party's most prominent spokesman, restating repeatedly and consistently, if not entirely convincingly, the justification for the National Liberals' continuing existence.[23] It was, he insisted, the threat of socialism which made common action between Liberals and Conservatives imperative.[24] By the late 1940s this argument carried some weight. The Conservatives made a huge effort to overturn Labour's parliamentary majority in the general election of February 1950. Their narrow failure to do so was widely attributed to the intervention of as many as 475 independent Liberal candidates. Persuading Liberal voters to join the effort to unseat Labour was therefore central to the election campaign of October 1951, especially as the Liberals now restricted their challenge to just 109 seats. But Teviot's intervention was bound to irritate the proudly independent Liberal Party headed by Clement Davies. 'In view of your Broadcast and the Liberal Manifesto', he told Davies,

> it appears that there is no fundamental difference between the Liberal and Conservative ideas. Because of the serious crisis through which our country is going, and the great danger to our future if a Socialist Government is again returned, with great respect I suggest to you that there is a great opportunity here to enhance the Liberal position in the country, and that all Liberals in constituencies where there is no Liberal candidate should be urged to vote for the candidate who is 100 per cent against Socialism, which is anathema to Liberalism.[25]

The Liberal Party, however, was not to be so easily seduced. Indeed, some Liberals such as Megan Lloyd George regarded the Tories rather than Labour as their mortal foe. Furthermore, it was by no means clear that, in the Conservative attempt to attract the Liberal vote, the existence of the National Liberals as a separate entity was any particular asset. As a result the Tories pursued something of a dual strategy. If the presence of candidates from joint National Liberal and Conservative local associations, sporting hybrid party affiliations, attracted votes that straightforward Tories would have struggled to secure, all well and good. But at the same time the Conservatives sought to woo the Liberal Party directly, a policy that culminated in Churchill's unsuccessful offer of ministerial office to Clement Davies in the wake of the 1951 general election victory. Bilateral negotiations between the Tories and the independent Liberals inevitably caused Teviot considerable concern. 'Rumours are spreading all over the place', he once complained, 'and I am in a very awkward position … all I can say to those who are continually ringing up is that I know nothing, the answer to that is "Well you ought to".'[26]

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After 1951, of course, Teviot's stance needed a subtly different emphasis. The socialist 'threat' had visibly receded and he now stressed the importance of the National Liberals, or more accurately the Liberal-Unionist contingent in the House of Commons, in keeping Churchill's government on broadly progressive and 'Liberal' lines. Nineteen MPs had been elected under a somewhat confusing variety of labels, a convenient figure granted that the government's overall majority in the new parliament was just seventeen seats, giving Teviot's group the rather spurious claim that they were 'holding the balance'. Writing in 1955, Teviot spelt out the importance of his parliamentary colleagues:

> The function of the group is to consider at its weekly meetings short- and long-term policy, with particular regard for the point of view of those Liberals throughout the country who believe that in today's political conditions Liberal principles must be constantly stressed, but can only be translated into effective policy by working in full alliance with one of the major parties. Socialism is the negation of Liberal principles, whereas the [Conservative] Government's record of achievement since 1951 is one to which any Liberal could be proud to have contributed.

Still, though, Teviot drew back from formal amalgamation:

The fact that National Liberals have established a method of expressing their political views in constructive government does not mean that they should sacrifice their identity either in the constituencies or in Parliament. There are very real advantages to the nation in maintaining a distinctive channel through which the flow of Liberal and Conservative thought can be brought together. We would respectfully suggest that the National Liberal Council outside Parliament and the Liberal-Unionist group within provide what the

independent Liberal party cannot, a means of making Liberalism a continuing and effective force in our national life.[27]

Teviot was eighty-two when he stepped down from the chairmanship of the National Liberal Organisation. He continued to make occasional contributions to Lords debates for the next five years or so. His style was to be brief and to the point. Many of his interventions seemed designed to hold back the mounting tide of permissive and liberal reform. At the end of one short speech on the Commonwealth Immigration Bill of 1962 – which proved in fact to be his last parliamentary performance – he declared: 'As your Lordships know, I never speak for long: I always just state my case and then sit down, which I am going to do now.'[28] His brevity could at times be his undoing, with his bald and unadorned statements leaving him open to criticism or ridicule. In 1960, in a debate on crime and punishment, he asked the Lords to consider the possibility of making the death penalty match the actual crime that had been committed. This, he argued, would serve as a real deterrent.[29] But Lord Chorley, who spoke immediately after Teviot, found his words 'really quite fantastic'. Was it seriously being proposed that a killer found guilty of murder by stabbing should himself be stabbed? Did Teviot truly believe that any public executioner could be found, prepared to carry out such a sentence?[30] But it was in a debate following the trial of Penguin Books for the publication of D. H. Lawrence's celebrated novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, in 1960, that Teviot gave full vent to his reactionary views. He was appalled by the jury's decision that the publishers should go unpunished. The book was a 'disgusting, filthy affront to ordinary decencies', 'far worse than anything that I could possibly have thought could be published in this country'.[31] Its portrayal of sexual love and emotions disgusted him, for if love 'is abused it seems to me that it becomes the work of Satan, indecent and quite dreadful'.[32] For good measure Teviot used the occasion to condemn the Wolfenden Report of 1957, which had recommended the legalisation of homosexual acts between consenting adults – 'to which I equally take the greatest exception'. 'What are we coming to?' he asked, accompanied by the laughter of one unnamed peer.[33] Teviot's words now seem to belong to another age, but there is no doubt that he spoke for a substantial body of public opinion at the time.

Teviot died in London on 7 January, 1968 at the age of ninety-three. He thus almost survived to see the end of the political party in which he had spent the overwhelming majority of his career. The National Liberal Council was wound up on 14 May 1968 and its accumulated funds were transferred to the Conservatives. For all of that career, however, he had borne the title of 'Liberal' in one guise or another.

His case prompts several conclusions. The Liberal Party which Teviot joined after the First World War was an extremely broad church, containing both radicals who moved easily towards Labour and traditionalists who found much that was congenial in the Conservative Party of Stanley Baldwin, and its internal cohesion and unity were under severe strain long before the final parting of the ways in 1931–2. Teviot's 'liberalism', such as it was, related largely to concepts of sound finance, small budgets and limited government. Towards the end of the Second World War he was criticised for his warnings about the size of the nation's budget, even though it was difficult to see how this could be avoided in the context of the global conflict. 'The progressive increase in the Budget', insisted *The Times*, 'twice accelerated by world wars in which the State itself is necessarily the great consumer and spender, is the mark of an inevitable evolution.' These 'formidable totals' represented 'a redistribution'.[34] Teviot did not live long enough to see such thinking as that put forward by *The Times* challenged by the New Right of the 1970s and 1980s.

On social matters, the majority of his views were conservative, reactionary even, if not necessarily Conservative. After one particularly blimpish speech in the House of Lords in which he had railed against unaccountable television 'personalities' who interviewed senior Cabinet ministers on programmes such as *Panorama* and called for more governmental control of such activities, the maverick Tory peer, Lord Boothby, interjected, 'And the noble Lord is a Liberal'.[35] It was an appropriate, disbelieving comment not just on Teviot's speech, but on his whole career. For all that, as the joint architect of the 1947 agreement with Lord Woolton, he helped ensure that the National Liberal tradition survived, in however attenuated a form, for twenty years more than might otherwise have been the case.

Teviot's 'liberalism', such as it was, related largely to concepts of sound finance, small budgets and limited government.

David Dutton has written histories of the Liberal and Liberal National Parties and contributes regularly to the Journal of Liberal History.

1 *Manchester Guardian*, 26 Nov. 1926.
2 Kerr to Arthur Brampton, president of the National Liberal Federation, 30 Apr. 1931; *Manchester Guardian*, 9 May 1931.
3 *Manchester Guardian*, 9 May 1931.
4 The full result was: Kerr (Lib Nat) 7,963; T. Kennedy (Lab) 7,030; D. Emslie (Scot Nat) 1,996. Kerr increased his majority to 8,566 in the general election of 1935 in a straight fight with Labour.
5 House of Commons Debates, 5th Series, vol. 269, cols. 858–61. The leader of the Liberal Party, Herbert Samuel, welcomed Kerr as a 'personal friend', regretting only that he was not 'in even closer political association than is the case as yet'. Ibid., col. 861.
6 M. Pottle, 'Charles Iain Kerr, first Baron Teviot' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 31 (OUP, 2004), p. 411.
7 *Manchester Guardian*, 28 May 1938.
8 Ibid.
9 *The Times*, 28 May 1938.
10 *Manchester Guardian*, 31 May 1938.
11 R. Griffiths, *Patriotism Perverted: Captain Ramsay, the Right Club and British Anti-Semitism 1939–40* (Constable, 1998), pp. 83–5.
12 M. Pugh, *'Hurrah for the Blackshirts!' Fascists and Fascism in Britain between the Wars* (Pimlico, 2006), p. 281.
13 *The Fascist*, June 1939, cited in Griffiths, *Patriotism Perverted*, p. 149.
14 *The Times*, 7 Aug. 1940.
15 Ibid., 25 Mar. 1943.
16 Ibid.. 14 Aug. 1943.
17 Bodleian Library, Oxford, Conservative Party Archive, CCO 3/1/64, notes of meeting at 24 Old Queen Street, 21 Mar. 1946.
18 Bodleian Library, Oxford, Woolton MSS 21, fos. 52–3, memorandum of conversation with Teviot and William Mabane 25 Oct. 1946.

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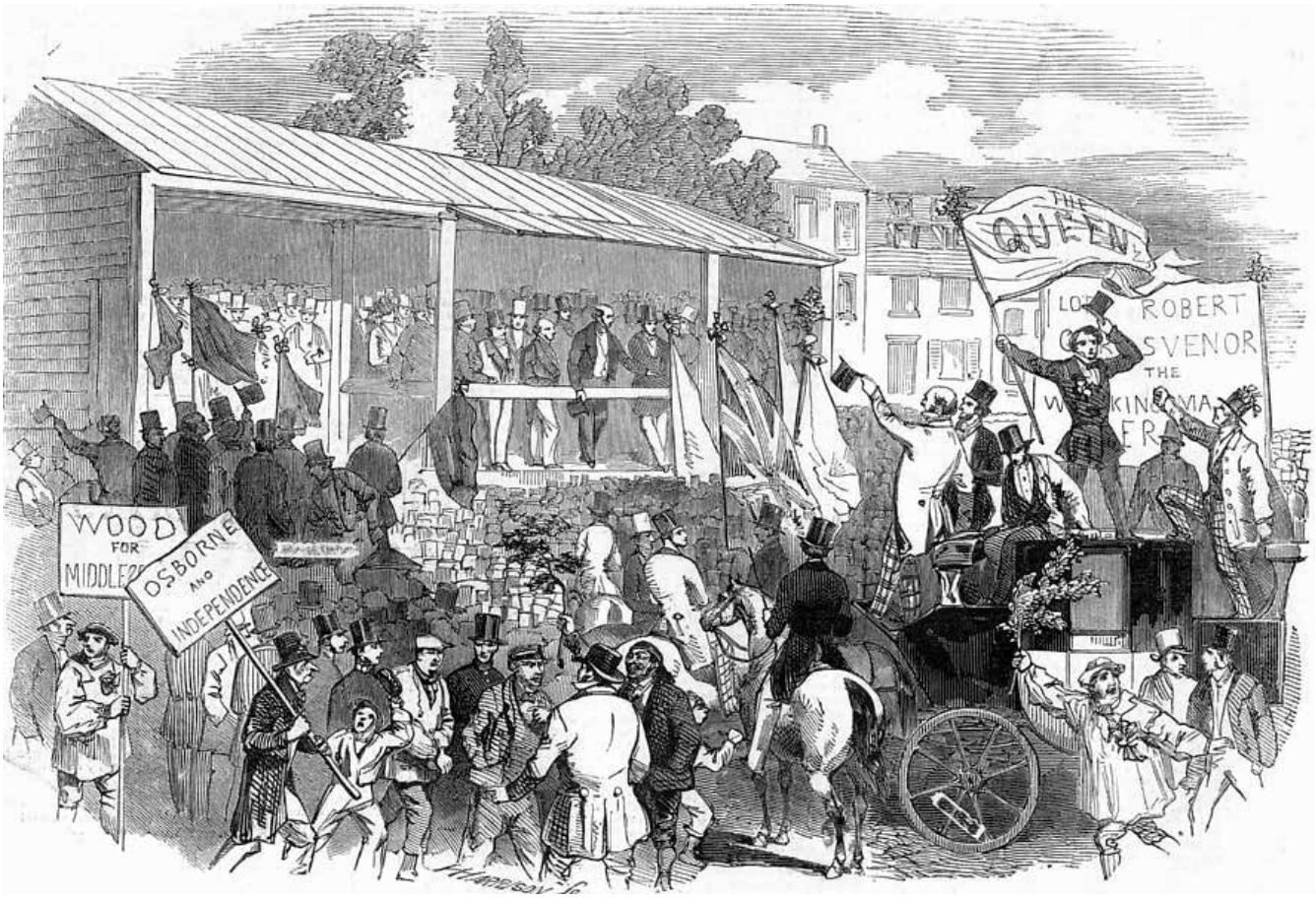

Following the Great Reform Bill's enactment in 1832, Radicals and Whigs had little time to rejoice. With the first election of a 'reformed' parliament scheduled for December, there was a tremendous need to register all existing and new enfranchised electors according to the new criteria set forth by the bill. In addition to abolishing rotten and pocket boroughs and redistributing parliamentary seats, the Reform Act had created a new, standardised system to replace the disparate collection of freehold, household, and potwalloper[1] qualifications for voting. **Nancy LoPatin-Lummis** analyses the activities of the Liberal electoral agents in this new era.

ECTORAL AGENT
EFORM-ACT ERA

While the historic forty-shilling freeholders in the counties did not lose their electoral rights, the old practice of being eligible to vote as a county elector, even if the property lay within a borough boundary, unless the elector otherwise qualified for the borough franchise, was to come under scrutiny with the new electoral system.

The new registration standards and their impact on the old 'open voting system' – according to custom and dependent upon residence – were to become among the chief causes of litigation arising from the registration of newly enfranchised electors following the 1832 Reform Act. The requirement for proof of borough residence, in order to determine whether or not individuals were casting ballots incorrectly in boroughs (which had the much higher £10 franchise rate), rather than in counties, created the opportunity to contest elections and their results on the part of candidates and electors alike. Likewise, many freehold boroughs – those whose freemen had ancient rights to vote that were not to be taken away – required proof of pre-1832 electoral status in order to be 'grandfathered' into the new system. This, too, raised the possibility of contesting the outcome of elections. Failure to comply with the new requirements of the Reform Act could easily mean that long-standing electors would lose their vote, but continue to cast it at elections, unaware, or in defiance, of the new requirements.

Election hustings at Brentford, Middlesex, 1840 (*Illustrated London News*).

Registration of existing and newly enfranchised borough and county electors was therefore serious business if the election results were to be valid. Registration was to be central in securing the return of candidates from any particular party, and all party leaders and their election managers knew that meeting the new criteria and following procedures would be the main means of contesting election results on the grounds of legality and credibility. Indeed, scholars such as Philip Salmon, Miles Taylor and John Phillips have shown just how important electoral registration and voting procedure was in the development of nineteenth-century party politics.[2]

One of the most significant political roles that emerged from the reformation of registration procedures was that of the electoral agent. The traditional role of the agent – of acting on behalf of and doing the local campaign work for a parliamentary candidate – changed significantly with the new rules of 1832.[3] The agent's role broadened to include registration of electors and the funding of those efforts, contesting the results of an election if grounds could be found on which to challenge an undesirable outcome, and securing the number of voters for any particular party based upon rate-paying and residency maintenance. Agents worked with lawyers and emerging national political organisations to secure electoral victories in the sometimes dirty business of cleaning up the corrupt politics of the pre-Reform Bill era. In trying to standardise the rights of the approximately 360,000 electors that existed in England prior to 1832 with those who qualified to vote under the newly expanded franchise, electoral agents also created the sometimes even dirtier business of partisan politics and electioneering in the post-Reform Act era.

This paper examines the work of Joseph Parkes and James Coppock, electoral agents for Whig and Radical candidates in the 1830s and 1840s.[4] Appearing as solicitors both defending and objecting to electoral registrations and votes in dozens of contested elections between 1835 and 1841, both men helped deliver the electors, parliamentary numbers and parliamentary votes that shaped the formation of the nineteenth-century Liberal Party. Their careers demonstrate the expanding importance of the electoral agent in parliamentary politics and the development of national political parties in the Victorian age. This article examines these electoral agents' post-1832 work in three ways: first, the electoral agent's increasingly critical function in the registration process; second, their role as legal agent in contested elections – as election solicitor on behalf of both petitioners and seated members of parliament; and third, somewhat by extension, the role of election agent as catalyst for political public relations and character attacks on political opponents. This placed the electoral agent in the role of creating some very anti-democratic tones to the new electoral registration criteria and procedures during a critical transition period in British political democratisation.

To make sense of it all, it is first necessary to understand exactly what the Great Reform Act did to change the electoral registration criteria and process. The new requirements for county and borough registration were exacting: voters needed to make certain that their names appeared on the list of ratepayers (or, more often, individuals or parties who had an interest in voter registration made certain) or, if possessors of freeman voting status prior to reform, they had to make sure that their name appeared on the borough's list of freemen. Proof of poor relief payments would also be required by the newly established deadline of 20 July of each year, so that electoral lists would be complete in early August.[5] All new electors were to pay a shilling registration fee.[6]

The means by which electoral registration would play a critical role in controlling parliament was immediately apparently to those who had already established careers in electoral management. Joseph Parkes (1796–1863) was a Birmingham solicitor and committed Radical with an already established law practice in contested political elections. Parkes contested his first elections in 1826, filing suit in Camelford, Cornwall and the Corporation of Warwick, his birthplace. Demonstrating corruption and bribery, his victory in setting aside the election of Warwick's mayor on corruption charges, earned him a reputation.[7] This success, as well as his political links to London's Benthamite Radicals, brought him to the attention of Whig leaders. He was a pragmatic reformer in Birmingham at the time when Thomas Attwood was organising the Birmingham Political Union in 1830 and he launched a new extra-parliamentary reform campaign that gained popular support and a following throughout the Reform Bill debates. During the most heated days of the agitation for the bill's passage, in May 1832, Parkes played a critical role in liaising between the Whig government and the BPU to maintain peace and cooperation between parliament and the political unions so as to ease fears of revolution and secure the continued support of the king in pressuring the House of Lords to support the bill. His articles in *The Times* and the *Morning Chronicle*, as well as private correspondence between Lord Melbourne[8] and himself, demonstrated how determined he was to aid the government's efforts to reform parliament by easing tensions between Grey and the BPU's leadership, which was talking about preparing an armed insurrection, while simultaneously fomenting public support for a bill which did not go nearly as far as the many joining political unions had hoped. He appeased all and thus, made himself a dependable ally and aid to the Whigs. They rewarded him for his work in securing the bill and reigning in the BPU by putting him in the role of primary Whig electoral agent for the general election of December 1832, the first election under the new criteria of the Reform Act.

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Parkes well understood that the new requirements for electoral registration adopted in 1832 would produce many opportunities to get reformers elected – and potentially as many opportunities for voters to be disenfranchised, not by the law, but by the contesting of election results based on accusations of non-compliance with the new law. Both Parkes and his Tory counterparts were ready to use the new laws to their own partisan advantage. To this end, he convinced fellow liberal-minded Whigs, Lord Durham and Edward Ellice, Sr, to help him establish and fund the Reform Association in 1834. The association's leaders would hire agents to register new electors according to the law. It would also retain solicitors to contest registrations from Tory electors if, after research, there proved to any violation of new procedures, including discrepancies of residency requirements, delinquent rate-paying or missed registration deadlines. The association would also, through its membership funds, pay for legal representation for Whig and Radical registrants who faced similar court objections by Tory opponents.

The Reform Association office opened in Cleveland Row in 1834. Hired to manage the association, 'fixed at the top of the House' with a £300 pound a year salary, was a Radical solicitor, James Coppock (1798–1857). A partner in the firm Blunt, Coppock, Barnes & Ellis, he soon joined Parkes and others in the fairly limited field of election law.[9] His chief responsibility for the Reform Association was, 'to see that the Reformers not only register but defend their own registration and watch the enemy.'[10] As most estimates of the numbers voting in the elections after the bill indicate that approximately 650,000 votes were cast, the race to registration was critical for party control.[11] Finding grounds to throw out newly registered electors would be important in calculating electoral advantages and parliamentary wins. Little would be overlooked as a legal opportunity to throw out votes and contest elections. By late summer of 1835, Coppock had moved on to an examination of arrears in rate-paying both to defend Whig registrations and contest those among Tory supporters. One of the requirements of the new registrations process was that all rates be paid by 20 July. If there was a balance on these taxes still due by then, the elector would not be included in the lists that were drawn up the first week of August and which were at the polls by the next election as the official record of legal electors. He detailed progress to Parkes, who reported it to Lord Brougham, Radical leader and member of the Whig government. 'If we once allow arrears we shall fall behind your expectations, in electoral registration advantage.[12] Coppock was diligent in his duties, as were his deputies. While there is mention of additional staff, particularly in reference to going out to electoral boroughs for registration and canvassing, in the correspondence between the men, there is no specific evidence indicating how many men were employed by the Reform Association, or even how many the membership dues could likely have supported. Parkes himself overlooked the accounting and found that 'all outstanding arrears be paid and pro rata payments made.'[13] Registration numbers vary from study to study, but Salmon has calculated that electoral registrations between 1832 and 1835 increased by between 10–20 per cent.[14]

In addition to criteria for electoral registration, the Reform Act also created a number of new, standardised mechanisms for challenging registrations. Election procedure could be deemed violated for failing to change the address of an elector from one rental to the next, or if there was a failure to pay the

entirety of rates owed, by the prescribed date. Furthermore, the new law required that all claims would be found in favour of the accuser, and therefore disqualify electors, whether or not the grounds were legitimate, if the registrant did not appear in person to defend his registration.[15] The government established revision courts and each defending registrant would now be required to prove his qualifications before a revising barrister in a court session held in September–October. The objector could either appear in person or have an agent appear on his behalf, and was not required to prove disqualification. This meant, in practice, that the law intended to disqualify voters rather than risk greater inclusion among potential electors. There was also the financial burden of retaining agents and solicitors to go to court to defend one's qualification to vote against an objection, whether merited or frivolous.

As a result, the contested election became a growing phenomenon over the 'decade of reform' – and at the centre of the emerging legal battlefield of electoral registration and revising courts was James Coppock. As he testified before the parliamentary Select Committee on Controverted Elections on 7 May 1838, his own career in election work involved his role as an electoral agent and a solicitor contesting elections before the court on the grounds of opponents violating the new (post-1832) registration requirements. He worked with Joseph Parkes on contesting election results immediately after the December 1832 general election.[16] Indeed, between 1832 and 1837, Coppock was an agent, either by himself or working alongside Parkes, for more than twenty-one challenges to election results. In some cases where he was the petitioner's agent, he sought to present evidence not just that those registered were not entitled to the vote, but that votes had been bought either through bribery or illegal treating.

The first of these cases took place in Stamford where the Whig candidate, Captain Gregory, was seeking, based upon incorrect registration procedure, to throw out votes so as to overturn his electoral loss to the Tory candidates Lt Col. Chaplin and George Finch. Coppock had been brought into the case on behalf of Parkes. Parkes had served the previous Stamford MP, Charles Tennyson D'Enycourt as an agent since 1830. Gregory had worked for Tennyson D'Enycourt and been handpicked to succeed him at Stamford when the latter moved on to a seat in Lambeth.[17] While Gregory attempted to prove a number of registrations invalid, thereby nullifying several votes, the court deemed there to be no viable proof. The court dismissed oral testimony on the basis that revenge and personal animus might have tainted the testimony. Gregory lost his court complaint.

The most notorious contested election of 1833, however, took place in Warwick. Parkes successfully exposed the malfeasance of the Earl of Warwick in the election of his brother, Sir Charles Greville and another Tory candidate, Edward Bolton King in the December 1832 general election. Parkes petitioned on behalf of William Collins, Whig candidate, exposing bribery, treating, illegal payment of rates and lack of residency as reasons to throw out the election results in favour of Collins.[18] The evidence was compelling. Several men testified to outright bribes, exchange of property for votes and threats that were made on behalf of Warwick by his steward and others, threatening tenants and Corporation of Warwick members if they did not vote as he desired. The court case received attention in the *Morning Chronicle* and *The Times*, no doubt arranged by Parkes himself. *The Times* notice would draw the attention of a large Tory readership to the corruption openly practised among Tory corporations, undermining opposition to the mounting body of evidence in support of a municipal reform measure, being drafted by Parkes, to dismantle corruption and abuse of electoral authority; while the *Morning Chronicle's* Whig and Radical-leaning readers were given more ammunition in favour of municipal reform.

A parliamentary committee agreed, 'the earl of Warwick did unconstitutionally apply … by his agent and steward … £3000 and upwards towards the election expenditure, and promotion of the political interest of the candidate …'.[19] The election was nullified and two Whigs were returned in an 1833 by-election. Parkes not only secured a new election for his Warwickshire petitioner clients, however, but also shaped the Warwick Borough Bill. Modelled, in part, after the East Retford Bill, this measure expanded the borough's boundaries. Warwick was to be extended to include the £10 householders of Leamington Spa, a point specifically referred to in the parliamentary debate against it.[20]

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Coppock himself would describe that particular case, and many others, in his sworn testimony before the Select Committee hearings in 1837. Warwick was an example of how access to money corrupted both the election and the access to justice. Contesting elections were expensive, he argued. It 'generally employ[ed] two counsels, frequently three [for the defence], … and have retained four on the side of the petitioners …'.[21] Electoral agents rarely had the luxury of such cash reserves to hire the legal team necessary to contest an election, even with just cause. What he did not report, but was indeed happening, was that the Reform Club was also raising money from members to cover the legal costs of contested elections as well as the costs of registering electors.[22]

A scandal that required even the legal opinion of Chancellor Lord Brougham to resolve, the Warwick case did two things. First, it persuaded the Whigs to secure the appointment of Joseph Parkes as the secretary for the new Parliamentary Commission on Municipal Reform. Secondly, it prompted them to organise their efforts to contest elections even more carefully. To that end, Coppock moved into position of the lead solicitor for the newly created Reform Club, which replaced the old Reform Association. Parkes relied on the political influence and economic contributions of the recently returned Edward Ellice and E. J. Stanley, and the Reform Club, built in Pall Mall, was formed.[23] An early club registry reported one thousand regular members and 250 MPs.[24] The Whig aristocrat Lord Durham, a former member of the government's Committee of Four who drafted the 1832 Reform Bill, was the most vocal supporter of radical parliamentary reform, and claimed much of the credit for the success of the club. '… [Y]ou will remember

this time last year,' he wrote to Parkes, 'how I pressed the vital necessity of it, and of a Registration Committee. How well the latter worked is proved by the Municipal Elections, and I am confident that out of the club will arise, at least if it is well managed, such organisation and concentration as will set all Tory measures at defiance.'[25] The new club became the social and negotiating site for Whigs and Radicals. The dues were used, in part, to pay the salaries of Coppock and others, as well as registration, election and court costs for contesting elections. With Parkes working on new reform legislation, Coppock took the lead role in contesting numerous electoral cases – the second critical outcome of the Warwick case.

After the general election of 1835, Coppock assisted Parkes in petitioning on behalf of Frederick Villiers against sitting member Stephen Rumbold Lushington in Canterbury. Deputies for Villiers contended that sheriff deputies had interfered with access to the polls for legally registered electors.[26] While the case was originally delayed in order to accumulate evidence, it was eventually resolved that any electors turned away from the polls had legally been rejected as having received parochial relief or recently changing their residencies, and Lushington won with a nineteen to nine vote.[27] Coppock's own publication on electors' rights clearly stipulated that occupiers of £10 residencies needed to reside in their borough or within seven miles of it for 'six months previous to 31st July in each year' and that all electors 'rated to the poor for twelve months previous to the 31 July in each year.'[28]

In the Bedford borough election, Coppock and Parkes represented a petition from the electors on behalf of Whig candidates Samuel Crawley and W. H. Whitbread, who had come in second and third in the election, with the Tory candidate, Captain Frederick Pohill, defeating them both, 490 votes to 408 and 383, respectively. The petition alleged that many of the voters were neither freemen nor residents of Bedford. The revising barristers, finding evidence to corroborate this, and in the absence of many of those accused of malfeasance, disqualified these voters. While this negated many of the votes cast, it did not seem to change the outcome, with Pohill and Crawley returned. It does, however, indicate how much was at stake, with the total number of registered electors in Bedford being 857 and the votes counted listed at 834.[29] Challenging registrations and qualifications through the legal system could negate enough votes to change the outcome of a closely fought election. As a result, the solicitors withdrew cases, failing to provide the numbers to change the outcome, though not before Parkes and Coppock raised significant doubts in court before the reforming barristers and prompted further scrutiny of the local registration agents and the complicity of the candidates involved.[30]

In the 1837 and 1839 general elections, Coppock spent more time defending sitting members against petitioners than in representing petitioners or defeated candidates. This represented a change in how the contested election was being used. Having made significant headway in ending some of the abuses at the local level through the payment of rates on behalf of potential voters and qualifying non-residents to vote (thanks to Parkes's work on the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act), agents like Coppock found that defending clients against accusations of bribery 'having been conducted by local subscriptions, or by the large contributions of three or four active leading individuals of the local parties, was common.'[31] This was true whether the accusers won or lost the election.

> If the defeated candidate present a petition against the return of his successful opponent, and simply pray that the Election may be adjudged to be a void Election on the ground of Bribery and Corruption, but do not ask for the seat, he many unseat his opponent, and render him incapable of being again returned; but as he himself does not pray for the seat, it has in some instances been determined that a case of retaliation cannot be entered into as respects the Petitioner by the sitting Member. Thus the Petitioner, though equally guilty, may again propose himself and be returned in consequence of the very Bribery practiced at the preceding Election, and into which no inquiry was permitted.[32]

The new club became the social and negotiating site for Whigs and Radicals. The dues were used, in part, to pay the salaries of Coppock and others, as well as registration, election and court costs for contesting elections.

As a result, contesting elections became more partisan, heated, and frequent. In 1837, Parkes participated in contesting the election in Petersfield (disqualifying an elector who did not meet residency requirements) which resulted in a victory for his client, the petitioner. Here, Cornthwaite, the petitioner, contested the vote of Richard Legg who had been declared eligible to vote by virtue of 'a barn, stable, outhouses and twenty acres of land', although sworn testimony by a witness, Thomas Tigg, argued that he was not a resident of that or any land. The testimony negated the revising barrister's determination and the contested vote was enough to allow the Whig candidate, John Hector, to be returned to parliament.[33] He also defended Joseph Brotherton, the sitting member for Salford, against an elector who mistakenly was recorded in the poll books.[34] A supporter of Tory candidate William Garnett claimed that unqualified electors had voted and that Brotherton had engaged in bribery and treating.[35] Brotherton counter-claimed that several voters for Garnett were wrongly on the register. As the vote was 890 to 888, any success in throwing out votes would be critical. The court determined that charges against Brotherton were unfounded and the election results confirmed.

It was not, however, always good news for Parkes. He lost a petition brought in Woodstock on behalf of Whig candidate, Lord Charles S. Churchill, objecting to the residency of a number of electors and the insufficient value of a number of properties belonging to electors who had polled for the Tory candidate, Henry Peyton. The latter had been elected with 126 votes to Churchill's 117 – a total of 233 votes out of 330 registered electors.[36] Peyton was confirmed, however, only to vacate the seat in January 1838 for the Tory Marquess of Blandord.[37]

Coppock served as agent for a petitioner against sitting MP John Minet Fector in Maidstone and assisted Parkes with a victory in Walsall, reversing the election on the basis of failed residency requirements and a lack of witnesses to defend votes for the Tory candidate.

He also assisted Parkes with a contest, albeit a losing one, in Devizes, alleging that bribes were paid – in the form of payment of rates – on behalf of the sitting member, Captain James Whitley Deans Dundas.[38] In Evesham, where a petition against George Pushout Bowles and P. Borthwick alleged bribery and treating – specifically that Borthwick gave a voter named Ebenezer Pearce, a silver snuffbox worth £7. 5s. 6d., and paid the rent arrears for one Joseph Clement, amounting to £36. 6s. – bribery charges were dismissed against Borthwick, but maintained against Bowles. Hill, the Tory candidate, was returned with Borthwick.[39]

Coppock also did some work for Sir John Hobhouse concerning the election of Liberal parliamentary candidates in the next election. Clearly, this was through the Reform Club and concerned Coppock's knowledge of the questionable political influences of the bishopric on county residents throughout Lincoln.[40] In most of these cases, minimal court evidence was presented and there is little to indicate how the decisions by the registration courts were reached, though they were apparently accepted by all parties involved.

While individually, these contests might appear insignificant, in that the litigation was not always effective in changing the outcomes of the elections or forcing local electoral registrants and revising barristers to take greater care in following the letter of the law and so securing clean elections, they did take their toll. As both sides experienced the expense of defending corrupt practices and pursuing allegations that were sometimes accurate and sometimes fraudulent, the numbers of contested elections increased by 20–30 per cent (depending upon location) in the 1830s, with a spike at the time of and immediately following the passage of the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act. Large and small boroughs alike, whether with high electoral turnout or low, saw challenges to the returned candidates, spurred by principle, law, or political necessity. It was the role of the electoral agent, however good or bad the case, to pursue challenges in order to secure greater numbers in the House of Commons.

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There is little evidence as to how Coppock went about interviewing witnesses, collecting evidence and filing legal papers. What is clear, though, is that the costs of carrying out such tasks were paid for from the Reform Club treasury – the coffers filled by club subscriptions, patron donations or supporters' 'fundraising' efforts. Coppock wrote to Lord Broughton in September 1837, concerning the sums necessary for registration expenses in Ipswich and urging an infusion of money before accounts ran dry.[41] He reminded him that all Whig and Radical leaders needed to donate funds to handle the costs not just of registrations but also of legal proceedings when elections were contested. The Reform Club was the social and political tool for raising support, both financial and electoral, for the Whigs and Liberals. While its role would gradually shift to that of a social and dining club exclusively, it did so only as the mechanics of national party organisation took shape.[42] During the 1830s, the political necessities of registering electors, paying for candidates to stand and then the costs of litigation, made the financial donations of liberal-minded politicians a critical tool in achieving electoral majorities at the national and municipal levels.

Money was certainly a consideration in one of the most complex and interesting cases in which Coppock acted. This took place during the 1839 general election and resulted in his testimony before the Parliamentary Select Committee on Bribery and Corruption on 6 July 1842. During the general election of 1839, Captain James Hanway Plumridge was returned as MP for Penryn and Falmouth. A petition was brought against his election. In this case, a single elector charged Plumridge and Captain Vivian, the other Whig candidate, with bribery and a lack of qualification. Coppock had not been involved in the election and was only retained after the petition was presented. Rather than face the expense of defending his seat before the court, Plumridge offered to relinquish the seat to another Whig/Radical candidate. In the testimony Plumridge gave to the Select Committee, Coppock rejected the offer, saying 'that is out of the question [as] yours in a good seat …'.[43] But Coppock also could not defend the seat without money and Plumridge declared he would not pay a thing. With such financial constraints, Coppock negotiated a deal with local political leaders and electors that if they defended Vivian against any charges, or convinced the petitioner to drop them, he would have Plumridge resign from the seat in Penryn in favour of a safer seat in another borough that would be easier to defend against any future contests. The Reform Club would handle costs to pursue the new seat, to be determined during the next general election and when an accounting of safe open seats took place. When Coppock informed Plumridge of the arrangement approved by national leaders in the Reform Club, the candidate was both surprised and unhappy. He felt that his political opportunities were lost and he would be 'left out in the lurch.'[44]

Coppock argued that his investigation revealed another story. He testified before the Committee that Plumridge only stood for Penryn at the request of voters and that, upon his agreement to stand, the candidate had told all present in the committee room that he 'would not pay a single sixpence' to do so.[45] Coppock determined that he had been challenged because the petitioners believed that he would not defend his seat because of the costs involved. Coppock estimated that £4000 had already been spent by Liberals on the election, a good many financial promises made for votes, but none by Plumridge himself.[46]

Coppock and Compton Reade (who, though not a parliamentary agent, represented John White Dixon, the petitioner, in the legal negotiations) ultimately achieved a resolution. The petition would be withdrawn against Plumridge if he agreed to retire on 1 July 1842 and not stand again or oppose anyone brought in to stand for the seat – presumably Reade's real client, Mr Gwyn. (Gwyn had sought the seat from the beginning; he had hired Reade and paid the costs involved for John White Dixon to file his petition against Plumridge in the first place.) Then, Plumridge would be proposed for appointment as Crown Steward and Bailiff of the Chiltern Hundreds, a government post that would save face for the Whigs and be, comparatively speaking, a less expensive resolution to the problem. This was agreed upon

and Plumridge was duly elected for Penryn without the expense of the court proceedings.

However, when the resignation was due to happen, Plumridge evidently decided he must not go through with it, though there is no explanation as to why not. Plumridge told Coppock in no uncertain terms that whatever deal had been struck was, it was non-binding, because of its corrupt nature and 'slapdash way of getting rid of a Member of Parliament'.[47] Reade testified to the committee that, while he had negotiated a deal, he believed that he had proved his case of bribery, though he refused to state before the committee with what evidence he had done so. While treating undoubtedly took place, no personal actions by Plumridge or his agents constituted a bribe offered. Plumridge kept his seat and Coppock's reputation was called into question, as was the work of the Reform Club. The new age of the election solicitor was investigated more thoroughly than ever before.

The upshot of this incident and the Select Parliamentary Commission's inquiry was a change in activity for both Coppock and Parkes. Alhough neither gave up the work entirely, the frequency of their court appearances declined. Coppock continued on as secretary for the Reform Club and still handled legal work, but increasingly in civil law, rather than electoral law. In 1840, he gave testimony to guide parliament in drafting the bill for the Trial of Controvert Elections. His concerns about 'frivolous affidavits and recognizances,' along with counter-affidavits without review, were clearly presented. He testified that, for corrupt practices to be halted, 'MPs would find accusations against sitting Members more credible … if petitions withstood examination and were not thrown out as frivolous and vexatious.'[48] However, he strongly objected to petitioners bearing the financial burden of contesting elections, however egregious the violation of the law. The bill's proposal that petitioners be required to deposit £1,000 in the Bank of England to secure the costs of hiring solicitors and paying the court costs for contesting an election was wholly rejected by him on the grounds that 'you would take away from the poor man the possibility of petitioning.'[49] Long after, however, Coppock still dabbled in the business of electoral agency, and John Bright discussed with Parkes, as late as 1857, Coppock's defence of a Rochdale MP's contested election.[50]

The electoral agent was turning into more than a campaign manager and public relations agent. They were turning into litigators, sensing where courts could be utilised to overturn an unsuccessful electoral outcome.

Parkes and Coppock's career in the increasingly partisan world of contested electoral practices and party politics following the Reform Act of 1832 is a telling piece of evidence as the age of local politics gave way to national organisation. New electoral registration requirements made things uniform, but also provided the means of a different kind of partisan 'influence'. Placing the burden of defence on the candidate or elector accused, perhaps quite falsely, of non-compliance with the new rules, certainly did not further the advancement of political democracy in British parliamentary politics, New criteria for electoral qualification and registration opened the door for votes and election outcomes being contested on the basis of both corruption and an ignorance of the rules. Non-compliance, whether malicious or not, could, however, be significant in the successful return or a candidate. The successful return of Whig and Liberal electors meant having watchful eyes and full coffers to take matters to court, whether as the plaintiff or the defendant. The electoral agent was turning into more than a campaign manager and public relations agent. They were turning into litigators, sensing where courts could be utilised to overturn an unsuccessful electoral outcome, publically embarrass a candidate, reveal corruption and bribery amongst a witting electorate, and move, when necessary, weaker candidates into safer seats or appointments, looking to secure future elections with other Whigs and Liberals. While the Reform Act of 1832 sought to clean up politics from abuse and corruption, the early electoral outcomes presented new and different challenges to the reform of parliamentary politics. But if anyone tried to reconcile the political, ideological and partisan with truth in electioneering at the birth of the Liberal Party, it was those new election agents/solicitors, epitomised by Joseph Parkes and James Coppock.

Dr Nancy LoPatin-Lummis is Professor of Modern British History and chair of the History Department at University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. She is the author of Political Unions, Popular Politics and the Great Reform Act of 1832 *and articles on parliamentary and popular political history in* Journal of British Studies, Parliamentary History, Journal of Victorian Culture *and other journals. She is co-general editor of the* Lives of Victorian Political Figures *series from Pickering & Chatto and the editor of* Public Life and Public Lives: Essays in Modern British Political and Religious History in Honor of Richard W. Davis.

1 Potwalloper was the term used to describe those with the vote as the head of a household with a large pot or cauldron. The 1832 Reform Act redefined this archaic notion of household elector.

2 Philip Salmon, *Electoral Reform at Work: Local Politics and National Parties, 1832–1841* (Boydell, 2002); Philip Salmon, 'Local Politics and Partisanship: The electoral impact of Municipal Reform, 1835' *Parliamentary History*, xix, 2000; John Phillips, *The Great Reform Bill in the Boroughs: English Electoral Behaviour, 1818–1841* (Clarendon Press, 1992); John Phillips, 'The Many Faces of Reform: The Reform Bill and the Electorate', *Parliamentary History*, i, 1982; John Phillips and Charles Wetherell, 'The Great Reform Act of 1832 and the Political Modernization of England', *American Historical Review*, c, 1995; Miles Taylor, 'Interest, Parties and the State: The Urban Electorate in England, c. 1820–72', in Lawrence and Taylor (ed.), *Party, State and Society: Electoral Behaviour in Britain since 1820* (Scolar Press, 1997).

3 For the role of the electoral agent, see E. A. Smith, 'The Election Agent in English Politics, 1734–1832', *English Historical Review*, lxxxiv, 1969; D. L. Rydz, *The Parliamentary Agents: A History* (Royal Historical Society, 1979); Nancy LoPatin-Lummis, '"With All My Oldest and Native Friends". Joseph Parkes, Warwickshire Solicitor and Electoral Agent in Age of Reform', in Nancy LoPatin-Lummis (ed.), *Public Life and Public Lives: Politics and Religion in Modern British History* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2008); Nancy LoPatin-Lummis, 'Joseph Parkes, Electioneering and Corruption in Post-Reform Bill Elections', *Proceedings: The Consortium on Revolutionary Europe 1750–1850,*

Selected Papers, 2006, ed. Frederick C. Schneid and Denise Davidson (High Point University Press, 2007).

4 Coppock has received almost no historical attention. There is the *Dictionary of National Biography* written by Albert Nicholson, revised by H. C. G. Matthew in 2004 (http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6279), but little more than a mention in other historical works. The one work published by the man himself was a manual of electors' rights, *The Electors Manual of Plain Direction by Which Every Man May Know His Own Rights and Reservations* (Finsbury Reform Club, 1835).

5 2 Will. IV c. 45, 738, clause 56; see Salmon, *Electoral Reform at Work*, pp. 20–25.

6 2 Will. IV c. 45, 729–738.

7 See Joseph Parkes, *The Governing Charter of the Borough of Warwick, 5 William and Mary, 18 March 1694, with a Letter to the Burgesses on the Past and Present State of the Corporation* (Birmingham, 1827).

8 The Parkes and Melbourne manuscripts reveal a few significant letters in May 1832 between the men, discussing ways in which the BPU's actions could be softened. See Parkes MSS, University College London and Melbourne MSS, British Library.

9 Minutes of Evidence, 9 March 1840, in *Reports from Select Committees on Controverted Elections and on Election Proceedings and Expenses: With Minutes of Evidence and Appendices, 1834–44* (Irish University Press Series of British Parliamentary Papers, Government, Elections, 2; Irish Academic Press, 1970), p. 558.

10 Parkes MSS, Parkes to Durham, 21 July 1835. For more details on the creation of the Reform Club, see the Parkes MSS throughout second half of 1835; Tennyson MSS, TED H/31/14, Parkes to Tennyson, 20 June 1835; Parkes MSS, University College Library, Parkes to Stanley, 14 October 1835; Durham MSS, Lambton Castle, Memorandum by Molesworth on the Formation of the Reform Club, 7 February 1836.

11 Philips and Wetherall, 'The Great Reform Act and the Modernization of England', pp. 413–14.

12 Brougham MSS, 20,959, Parkes to Brougham, 28 September 1833.

13 Parkes MSS, Parkes to W. Hutt, M.P. (copy enclosed to Lord Stanley), 19 August 1838.

14 Salmon, *Electoral Reform Act Work*, p. 22. This revises estimates previously offered by Michael Brock, *The Great Reform Act* (HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, 1973), p. 312 and Frank O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties, The Unreformed of Hanoverian England, 1734–1832* (Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 179.

15 2 Will. IV c. 45, 729–738.

16 Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee on Election Petitions Recognizances, *Reports from Select Committees on Controverted Elections*, p. 541.

17 Henry James Perry and Jerome William Knapp, *Cases of Converted Elections in the Eleventh Parliament of the United Kingdom; Being the First since the Passing of Acts for the Amendment of the Representation of the People* (J. & W. T. Clarke, 1833).

18 For a detailed assessment of this particular case in Warwick and its impact on both electoral practice and the beginnings of Municipal Corporation Reform, in which Parkes played a part as Secretary to the Select Parliamentary Municipal Corporation Reform Commission, see my article '"With All My Oldest and Native Friends". Joseph Parkes, Warwickshire Solicitor and Electoral Agent in Age of Reform,' in Nancy LoPatin-Lummis (ed.), *Public Life and Public Lives: Politics and Religion in Modern British History,* p. 96–108.

19 *Annual Register*, (1833), ch. VIII, pp. 211–12.

20 *Parliamentary Papers* (1833), IV, pp. 633–4; XI, p. 197; *The Times*, 6 August, 1834, p. 3.

21 *Reports from Select Committees on Controverted Elections*, p. 469.

22 This was certainly the case in Warwick. Parkes directly asked Edward Ellice, who in turn raised the funds with Lord Durham, for a £1,000 to cover court costs. Lambton MSS, Parkes to Ellice, 15 April 1834.

23 Ibid., Parkes to Durham, 9 March 1836.

24 Ibid., Parkes to Durham, 2 February 1836; Parkes to Durham, 1 March 1836.

25 Ibid., Durham to Parkes, 20 March 1836.

26 Jerome William Knapp and Edward Ombler, *Cases of Converted Elections in the Twelfth Parliament of the United Kingdom; Being the Second since the Passing of Acts for the Amendment of the Representation of the People* (London: 1837).

27 Henry Stooks Smith, *Register of Parliamentary Contested Elections* (2nd edn., Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1842), p. 29.

28 Coppock, *The Electors Manual*, p. 12.

29 Stooks Smith, *Register of Parliamentary Contested Elections*, p. 7

30 *Reports from Select Committees on Controverted Elections*, p. 468.

31 Coppock, *The Electors Manual*, pp. 12–13.

32 Ibid.

33 *Reports from Select Committees on Controverted Elections*, p. 725.

34 Thomas Falconer and Edward Fitzherbert, *Cases of Controverted Elections, Determined in Committees of the House of Commons in the Second Parliament of the Reign of Queen Victoria* (Saunders and Benning, 1839).

35 Willliam Wardell Bean, *Parliamentary Representation of Six Northern Counties of England from 1603 to 1886* (C. H. Bamwell, 1890), p. 435.

36 William Retlaw Williams, *Parliamentary History of the County of Oxford including the City and University* (Brecknock, 1899), p. 225.

37 Falconer and Fitzherbert, *Cases of Controverted Elections*.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Hobhouse MSS British Library Add MSS, 36,471, f. 379, Coppock to Hobhouse, 14 March 1838.

41 Broughton MSS, British Library Add MSS 36,472, f. 81, Coppock to Broughton, 21 September 1837.

42 For more on this, see my article, 'The Reform Club and the creation of the Liberal Party' in a forthcoming special edition of the journal *Parliamentary History*.

43 *Reports from Select Committees on Controverted Elections*, p. 727.

44 Ibid., p. 728.

45 Ibid., p. 723.

46 There is nothing to suggest how Coppock arrived at this figure in his testimony before the select committee, but his fundraising efforts within the Reform Club, as well as Parkes's nervousness about the state of funding and correspondence with Ellice and others, render the hefty amount plausible.

47 *Reports from Select Committees on Controverted Elections*, p. 728.

48 Minutes of Evidence take before the Select Committee on Election Petitions Recognizances, *Reports from Select Committees on Controverted Elections*, p. 541.

49 Ibid.

50 Parkes MSS, Folder 8, Bright to Parkes, 26 June 1857.

Liberal National Leader: Charles Kerr, Lord Teviot

Continued from page 19

19 Conservative Party Archive, CCO 3/1/63, Col. P. J. Blair to Sir Arthur Young 15 Jun. 1949. For more details of the evolution of the Woolton–Teviot agreement, see D. Dutton, *Liberals in Schism: A History of the National Liberal Party* (I.B.Tauris, 2008), pp. 157–66.

20 Bodleian Library, Oxford, Simon MSS 98, fos. 6–7, Teviot to Simon, 27 Jul. 1949.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid., fos. 3–5, Simon to Teviot, 26 Jul. 1949.

23 The party formally changed its name to National Liberal in 1948.

24 *The Times*, 19 Nov. 1949.

25 National Library of Wales, Davies MSS, J/3/58, Teviot to Davies, 4 Oct. 1951.

26 Woolton MSS 21, fo. 116, Teviot to Woolton, 19 Sep. 1950.

27 Teviot and J. Maclay to *The Times*, 7 Jun. 1955.

28 House of Lords Debates, vol. 238, col. 63.

29 Ibid., vol. 225, cols. 473–4.

30 Ibid., col. 475.

31 Ibid., vol. 227, col. 530.

32 Ibid., col. 529.

33 Ibid., col. 528.

34 *The Times*, 26 Oct. 1944.

35 House of Lords Debates, vol. 216, cols. 601–2.

THE KING OF
PAT COLLINS, LIBERA

Graham Lippiatt tells the story of Pat Collins, King of Showland, entertainment entrepreneur – and Liberal MP for Walsall from 1922 to 1924. As this uncommon, flamboyant and colourful man stated in a summary of his life's work and Liberal political philosophy, 'I am a showman first and a politician second. I am a worker and fighter rather than an orator. There is only one object in my life and that is to see people have fair play.'

SHOWLAND

AL MP FOR WALSALL

Today's members of parliament tend to be drawn from a smaller and smaller constituency of full-time politicians: people who have studied and worked in politics.[1] The main routes into the House of Commons seem to be through party or parliamentary jobs or local government party politics. The former Cabinet Secretary, Lord Turnbull, has recently characterised the route this new breed takes into government as: 'Leave university, lick envelopes at Central Office for a year; then get into a think-tank; appointed as a special adviser; get into Parliament and by the time you are 38, you have got into the Cabinet without touching the sides of real life …'.[2] Professional as the contemporary crop of MPs may be, what is increasingly missing from the House of Commons, as the forum of the nation, is the richness, the breadth and the diversity of the world as experienced outside Westminster (other than the almost obligatory qualifications in the law). It was not always so, as the story of Pat Collins, the uncommon, flamboyant and colourful man, who was Liberal MP for Walsall from 1922 to 1924, demonstrates.

Patrick Collins is best known not for his politics at all but as a fairground showman, outdoor amusement caterer, and theatre and cinema proprietor. Being a Liberal MP and local government politician was probably the most boring aspect of his remarkable life, although Collins was proud of his achievement in being the first showman to be elected as a member of parliament.[3] His name is still remembered today through the company 'Pat Collins Funfairs', which operates from Collins' old stamping ground in the Black Country. At one point he was running four separate fairs a week, as well as owning cinemas and skating rinks.[4] On his death he was described in *World's Fair* magazine as the Grand Old Man of Showland.[5]

Collins was born in 1859 on a fairground in Chester,[6] the son of John Collins, a Roman Catholic agricultural labourer of Irish descent[7] who also worked as a travelling peddler.[8] There is a conflict over his exact date of birth. One usually reliable source shows Collins' date of birth as 5 April 1859[9] but both the biography of Collins in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and a locally produced biography for the Walsall Local History Centre give his date of birth as 12 May 1859.[10]

The young Collins attended St Werburgh Catholic School in Chester but left at the age of ten to go travelling with his family.[11] He then embarked on a highly varied working life. He worked on the travelling shows, including a spell as a Boxing Booth fighter.[12] At one time or another he was a farmer, an engineering works proprietor and, from these beginnings, he became involved in the early development of steam roundabouts and outdoor amusements in general. He later diversified, playing a role in introducing and popularising the cinema industry in Britain. He first put on moving picture shows around the year 1900 and ended up operating fourteen cinema or assorted variety establishments, including circuses.[13] Pat Collins Ltd was created in 1899, when Collins established a round of fairs in the Black Country based on traditional 'Wakes' or local holidays or from August to October.[14] Although he ran his fairs, bioscopes and cinemas across the country, his main base was in the West Midlands and the Black Country. He moved to Walsall in 1882 and located his business there. He held Wakes fairs in his home base of Bloxwich, which lies just to the north of Walsall, every August. The world moves on however and, according to the Walsall Local History Centre website, the location for the fairs is now the home of the ASDA supermarket car park.[15]

Pat Collins (1859–1943) in 1923

Collins knew how to move with world in the provision of entertainment. Traditional attractions such as wild animals, mummers and freak shows gave way over the years to new thrills such as chairoplanes, dodgem cars, waltzers – a constant updating to ever speedier and more adventuresome rides. Collins later diversified into cinema and built a picture house to grace his adopted home village of Bloxwich. This theatre, the Grosvenor, was designed by Hickton and Farmer of Walsall, in a classical style, and was constructed by J. & F. Wootton. It cost £12,000 and was opened on 11 December 1922.[16]

Collins grew to love Walsall and its people and he embarked on a civic and charitable life to the benefit of the town. Collins was a particular benefactor of the local hospitals and clinics. He made it his practice to donate the full takings from one night at Bloxwich Wakes in August to the Walsall General Hospital. [17]

In 1880 Collins, at the age of twenty-one, married seventeen-year-old Flora Ross from Wrexham.[18]They had one son, Patrick Ross Collins (1886–1966), known as Young Pat, who carried on his father's business[19] and who followed in his father's political footsteps too. Young Pat was elected a member of Wallasey Council, New Brighton Ward in 1921.[20] Flora died in 1933, and in 1934 Collins married his second wife, Clara Mullett, who worked for his company as his secretary and who was herself the daughter of an amusements caterer.[21]

Collins' interest in active politics probably stems from his involvement in the campaign against the introduction of a bill in 1888 to restrict the movement of travelling people, including fairground workers. The bill would have provided for the registration of all moveable dwellings, the compulsory school attendance of all gypsy and van dwellers' children and regulations about the number of people allowed in a particular living space. The local council could authorise an officer of the law to enter a van with a warrant, to inspect the dwelling for sanitation, health and moral irregularities.[22] The proposers of the bill regarded travellers, many of whom were Irish, as the dregs of society and an immoral influence. Their campaign was influenced by racial and class considerations as much as concerns for social welfare and hygiene. One prominent campaigner, George Smith of Coalville in Leicestershire, compared van and gypsy children to the children of Africa, complaining that their camps 'would disgrace the Soudanese'.[23] The measures and the language of their proponents produced widespread anger throughout the travelling fraternity. Meetings were held among the travellers; a fighting fund was set up; MPs were lobbied and showmen, including Pat Collins who was elected to the national committee against the bill, were politicised. The Moveable Dwellings Bill did not become law and the travelling community had won a notable victory. Collins had become engaged in public campaigning and in the organisations created to represent showpeople and take up the issues which concerned them.[24] He continued to be active in the Van Dwellers' Protection Association (VDPA), and later in the Birmingham District Committee of the VDPA's successor organisation, the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain and Ireland,[25] having been one of the guild's founding members.[26] He rose to become vice-president of the guild at national level after 1900[27] and then served as its president for an astonishing nineteen years.[28]

Through these activities, Collins acquired political and administrative skills. In the promotion of his business, he learned the value of advertising and publicity as well as developing his flair for razzamatazz. Using a combination of these arts, Collins began to deal regularly with local authorities over licences, and the location of fairs and sites for show people and their equipment. He learned to handle local residents who objected to noisy fairground rides and who had worries about the character of the travellers.[29] In this way Collins was preparing for his career in public and political life, as a future local councillor and member of parliament.

In pursuing this career, Collins had to overcome the prejudices of the age. While there was, of course, nothing to stop working-class Roman Catholics of Irish descent from being active in public life or in the Liberal Party in the early twentieth century, it was quite unusual for Catholics to get elected as Liberal MPs. The strong connection

of the party with the Protestant dissenting tradition is well documented.[30] In common with many of their countrymen, many Liberals were anti-Catholic, a tradition which historians have identified as a building block of British national identity lasting well into the nineteenth century and beyond.[31] After all, the rallying cry against the 1902 Education Act, led by the Liberal Party and their traditional nonconformist supporters was to oppose 'Rome on the Rates'[32] and Sir Clifford Cory (Liberal MP for St Ives, 1906–22 and 1923–24), a contemporary of Collins in parliament, was a leading light in the organisation the Welsh Protestant League which had a reputation for being rabidly anti-Catholic.[33] Of Liberal MPs entering parliament between 1910 and 1914, 47 per cent were estimated to be nonconformist, 36 per cent were Anglican, 8.5 per cent were Church of Scotland and only 8.5 per cent were recorded as being of another or of unknown religion.[34] In his religion, then, Collins was certainly not typical of the usual stamp of Liberal MP and neither was it common for men of labouring origins to make it to the top. The average Liberal MP in the early twentieth century was middle class, a lawyer or businessman, a nonconformist with university or public school education – although this model was less prevalent after 1910.[35] In one respect, however, Collins did conform to the pattern for Liberal success. He had a background of strong local service to his community through engagement in local politics, and this was a route into selection as a parliamentary candidate for many Liberals who had served on county or town councils, school boards or boards of guardians.

Collins first became a member of Walsall Council in April 1918 when he was co-opted to fill a vacancy in the Birchills Ward created by the election of William Halford to become an alderman. Although Collins was a Liberal by conviction, he later described himself as someone whose Liberalism was 'born in him' and whose Liberal principles were 'marrow to his bones',[36] he does not seem to have had political ambitions but he was invited to join the council because of his role as a public benefactor and his financial generosity to the Walsall Liberals having provided funds to acquire a building as a headquarters for the local party.[37] Collins was himself created an alderman in 1930 and, during his long career on the council, he served on many of its committees including: Baths, Parks and Cemeteries; Electricity Supply; Gas; Health; Free Library and Art Gallery; Old Age Pensions; Property; Public Assistance; Public Works; Trade Development; Maternity and Child Welfare; Mental Welfare; Transport and the Watch Committee. In 1938, at the age of eighty, he was elected mayor of Walsall. Soon after becoming mayor, Collins showed he had not lost his sense of humour. He wrote in response to a well-wisher: 'Fancy me at the age of 80 taking on myself the onerous duties of Mayor of a large County Borough. I have been approached many times during the last ten years but succumbed to persistent entreaties in a weak moment. I will let you have a photo in full regalia in a few days time, when you WILL notice how young I look'.[38] When he became mayor no one could remember the last time a Roman Catholic had held the post. In an echo of that old prejudice, however, the vicar of Bloxwich regretted publicly that for the first time in twenty years that the mayor of Walsall had not attended Bloxwich Parish Church.[39] In 1939 Collins received a final tribute from his adopted home town when he was made a freeman of the Borough.[40]

Such local service was not, however, seen as an inevitable stepping stone towards a parliamentary career as far as Collins was concerned. On the contrary, although he was elected Liberal MP for Walsall in 1922, Collins seems to have had no parliamentary ambitions in the run-up to the election and few prospects of success given that the party in Walsall was poorly organised and appeared to be in decline. In the 1918 general election, the Liberal candidate in Walsall, W. H. Brown, had come bottom of the poll in a three-cornered contest which had been won by Sir Richard Cooper, the Unionist MP for the town since January 1910. Cooper stood as a Coalition National Party candidate[41] having been a joint founder of the National Party, a pro-Imperialist, right-wing splinter from the Conservatives,[42] with Henry Page Croft in 1917.[43] In common with many Liberal associations in 1918, the Walsall Liberals were divided over supporting the coalition or standing their own candidate – split between a regard for Lloyd George as the man had who won the war, on the one hand, and the independence of their party, on the other.[44] However by 1919, Cooper had indicated his desire to stand down at the next election and the Unionists adopted his wife, Lady Alice Cooper, in his place.[45]

When the 1922 general election was called, following the decision of the Conservative Party to end their participation in the coalition government at a Carlton Club meeting on 14 October 1922, Walsall Liberals had no candidate in place, could not find one and were seriously thinking of not contesting the election at all. They were hoping the Midland Liberal Federation or the party's chief whip in London

Wolverhampton funfair featuring Collins rides, from a postcard of the time.

Left, from top: Pat Collins in 1934, on the steps of his living van.
The Grosvenor Picture House, Bloxwich, in the 1930s.
Pat Colins with his wife and dog in the 1930s.

might come up with a name.[46] At the last minute, Collins agreed to stand. He had the local government credentials, had lived locally for forty years, and his name was well known through his shows and entertainments. Nevertheless he was a surprise choice both nationally and locally – perhaps even to Pat himself, although as a successful businessman he certainly had the substance to maintain himself if elected.[47] On the debit side, it was thought his lack of education might tell against him in a national contest and he was said to be a poor public speaker.[48]

However, when the 1922 general election came, it was Collins who was elected MP for Walsall in a three-cornered contest. In a close fight he beat the Conservative candidate, Lady Cooper, the wife of the former MP[49] by the narrow margin of 325 votes, with R. Dennison for Labour in third place.[50] This was a real achievement for the Liberal Party, leaping from third place to victory in one election. It is clear that Pat Collins' profile, personality and his reputation as a local philanthropist had a lot to do with his success.[51] The election campaign did expose Collins' limitations as a public speaker but his supporters in the audience, some were probably placed there as claques, usually came to his rescue. If he dried up someone would invariably shout 'Good old Pat' or some other declaration of moral support, giving him the chance to recover and carry on with his address.[52]

Another factor that Collins could capitalise upon in 1922 was the social work he had done in the Roman Catholic community, particularly in Bloxwich, his home area. Father McDonnell, the local priest, was a Liberal activist and he and Pat worked together to rally the Catholic vote, taking advantage of the presence of a large number of Irish immigrants who had been attracted to the town by work in heavy industry.[53]

Whereas the Liberal Party in Walsall had been poorly organised and funded since 1918, the adoption of Pat Collins as parliamentary candidate produced a surge in membership, activism and income. The Showman's Guild offered to organise a procession through the town to aid electioneering, but Collins' agent had to turn the offer down for fear of exceeding the election expenses restrictions.[54]

Collins published an election address that was reproduced in the local newspaper. This manifesto emphasised the traditional Liberal causes of freedom, reform and progress. He welcomed the passing of the coalition government, which had 'died a natural death', and the reversion to ordinary party politics, claiming that only the Liberal Party could now provide strong and stable government. On foreign policy Collins favoured a revision of the Paris peace treaties, putting reparations and war debts on a reasonable and businesslike footing. He advocated universal disarmament through an effective and powerful League of Nations and supported the League as the new diplomacy – the old methods being antiquated and so discredited they must be buried forever.[55] In a later address he declared his support for 'Free Trade, Economy, Drink Reform and No to Nationalisation'.[56] Collins also stressed his local connections as a local man to represent Walsall in parliament, making much of his experience on the borough council.[57]

Collins' Tory opponent, Lady Cooper, had some problems in her own campaign. She may have suffered electorally because she was a woman. Only three women had been elected to parliament since women were permitted by law to stand as candidates in 1918: Lady Astor,[58] Countess Markiewicz[59] and Margaret Wintringham.[60] At the 1922 general election, there were thirty-three women candidates: five Tories, ten Labour, sixteen Liberals and two Independents. Of these all were defeated with the exception of the two former members.[61] There was still widespread opposition to women's involvement in national politics. Sir Henry Craik, member of parliament for the Combined Scottish Universities, may have typified the attitude of many men, and not just Tories, when he wrote to *The Times* saying that, in his view, not enough time had passed since the introduction of women's suffrage to justify the 'new experiment' of electing women to parliament and that 'our attitude towards women used to be that of homage and … that fits in badly with political contentions'.[62] Given the narrowness of Collins' majority over Lady Cooper, just 325 votes, her gender may have cost her the election. However, in pure electioneering terms, Lady Cooper faced a particular difficulty. She found much in the depressed social and economic conditions of the town which she deplored and wished to see improved. She sympathised with Collins in his exposure of

Result of the 1922 general election in Walsall			
Pat Collins	Liberal	14,674	38.6%
Lady Cooper	Conservative	14,349	37.8%
R. Dennison	Labour	8,946	23.6%
Majority		*325*	*0.8%*
Result of the 1923 general election in Walsall			
Pat Collins	Liberal	16,304	43.5%
S. K. Lewis	Conservative	14,141	37.8%
A. C. Osburn	Labour	7,007	18.7%
Majority		*2,163*	*5.7%*
Result of the 1924 general election in Walsall			
W. Preston	Conservative	15,168	37.9%
Pat Collins	Liberal	12,734	31.8%
G. L. R. Small	Labour	11,474	28.7%
Dr J. J. Lynch	Independent	622	1.6%
Majority		*2,434*	*6.1%*
Result of the by-election in Walsall, 27 February 1925			
W. Preston	Conservative	14,793	38.2%
Rt Hon. T. J. Macnamara	Liberal	12,300	31.8%
G. L. R. Small	Labour	11,610	30.0%
Majority		*2,493*	*6.4%*

the poor housing conditions of the working people of the town. She nevertheless felt constrained to electioneer around these issues because her husband had been the local MP for years and had been a supporter of the outgoing government which had failed to deal with these social problems effectively. Fighting too hard on these popular issues would simply invite criticism of Sir Richard and the Unionist Party. Lady Cooper did, however, try a little tactical voting, reminding electors that at the last election the Liberals had been bottom of the poll, behind the Labour Party, with only 17 per cent of the votes cast.[63] She politely asked the electorate to consider how likely it was that they could win this time.[64] The rationalism of this appeal was swept away by the tide of sentiment in favour of Collins, however. This is illustrated by an oft-repeated anecdote about an old man went into vote and was asked by the canvassers whom he wanted to vote for. 'For Lady Cooper?' 'No'. 'For Dennison?' 'No'. 'For Collins?' 'No'. 'Then who do you want to vote for?' 'Ah dunna want to vote for any of them; ah want to vote for Pat'.[65]

Collins made his maiden speech in the House of Commons on 29 November 1922 during the third reading of the Irish Constitution Bill. 'As an Irishman, this is the happiest day of my life. The House has given us what we have been looking for 700 years.' He said he believed the people of England would never regret granting this measure of justice to Ireland.[66] During his time in parliament, Collins could not be described as a great House of Commons man – perhaps his old inability as an orator inhibited him – but he raised a number of important local matters concerning Walsall in questions, for example the inadequate size of the Walsall Post Office and the complaint of sixty women voters at Elmore Green that they had been denied the right to cast their vote. He also used his position as MP to secure an order for tubes for battleships for a Walsall firm thus providing employment for a large number of men in the town for some months.[67]

The next general election came quickly but Collins held his seat in 1923 in another three-cornered fight. Against new Conservative and Labour candidates he increased his majority to 2,163 votes.[68]

An old man went into vote and was asked by the canvassers whom he wanted to vote for. 'For Lady Cooper?' 'No'. 'For Dennison?' 'No'. 'For Collins?' 'No'. 'Then who do you want to vote for?' 'Ah dunna want to vote for any of them; ah want to vote for Pat'.

One of Collins' key constituencies was the Irish, Catholic vote, which helped him in 1922 and 1923.[69] But by 1924 the Liberal Party nationally was facing a tougher time as it, and the electorate, struggled to come to terms with its position as the third party in a two-party system. Collins had a new Conservative opponent, Charles William Preston. He also faced a stronger challenge than previously from Labour, now represented by Mr G. L. R. Small, who was beginning to woo some of the working-class Irish, Catholic vote away from Collins. There was also the added complicating factor of an Independent candidate, Dr J. J. Lynch. Among those who came to Walsall to campaign for Pat was David Lloyd George,[70] but Collins was unable to hold on and Preston, who was described as a man of 'no political experience of any kind, although he did play cricket for Walsall'[71] gained the seat for the Tories with a majority of 2,434 votes.[72]

In an unexpected twist, however, Preston was disqualified from parliament on the grounds that he had held government contracts with the Post Office (albeit in trivial amounts) at the time of his election. Collins was the obvious candidate for the resulting by-election but he demurred on grounds of ill health.[73] There is some question about how ill Collins really was. It is known, for instance, that he continued to travel widely on business, adding new destinations to his fairground circuits in 1923–24. He also travelled to London for the Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924 and was well enough to attend a garden party and meet the king and queen.[74] He also continued to attend large numbers of Walsall Council meetings throughout the 1920s.[75] It is recorded that Collins admitted finding the restraints of party politics at the national level irksome and time-consuming and that he was getting tired and frustrated by national politics.[76] For the by-election Walsall Liberals adopted the former Liberal MP and Minister of Labour, Thomas James Macnamara, who had just lost his seat at Camberwell North West. Macnamara was unable to win the seat back, the by-election voting figures differing little from the general election poll, with Labour appearing to pick up most of the votes from the Independent candidate.[77] Macnamara stuck with Walsall for the 1929 general election but also without success.

Collins did not stand for parliament again, although his name was suggested as a potential candidate for the general election of 1931,[78] but another local councillor, Joseph Leckie, was chosen. Leckie had been chairman of Walsall Liberals since 1912. He was described as a man '… of the old school, valiantly holding on to Liberal ideals'[79] and he said of himself that he was 'as strong as ever on Free Trade.'[80] In the general election of 1929, Walsall had gone Labour for the first time. In the situation created by the financial crisis of 1931 the Labour MP, John James McShane, did not follow Ramsay MacDonald into the National Government and negotiations between the Liberals and Unionists in Walsall led to Leckie being adopted as the National candidate over the claims of the Conservative prospective candidate Mr W. Talbot, a local industrialist. Leckie held the seat in 1935 standing as a Liberal National but with the full support of the local Liberal Association.[81] This included the support of Collins who remained president of Walsall Liberals right though until the Second World War.[82] He also continued to sponsor the party financially. He was one of three members of the association who joined together to pay off a long-standing debt that the association owed to the Midland Bank.[83]

On 17 August 1938, Collins presided at a Special General Meeting of the Walsall Liberal Association which was held to consider what to do following the death of Joseph Leckie. He proposed a resolution of condolence and voted for the motion to find a replacement candidate who would fight the by-election in support of the National Government.[84] The by-election took place on 16 November 1938 and was won for the Liberal Nationals by Sir George Schuster, a barrister from a wealthy family with banking and cotton interests who had already had successful careers in business, colonial government and economics.[85] Schuster was not a Walsall man and was suggested to the local association by the Liberal National leadership. Following Pat Collins' resolution Walsall Liberals had set up a selection sub-committee but they could not find a suitable local candidate. They hoped that

another prominent local councillor, long-time Chairman of the Liberal Association and Collins' successor as mayor of Walsall, Cliff Tibbits, would agree to stand but he turned the opportunity down.[86] The Walsall Conservatives were piqued that the Liberals had exercised their right to find a successor to Leckie, rather than cede the nomination on the basis of what some said was a tacit understanding that when Leckie ceased to be the town's MP it would be the Unionists' turn to put forward a National candidate.[87] In the end, however, they were told by Central Office that they regarded Walsall as a Liberal seat and reluctantly agreed to support Schuster in the by-election, which he won in a straight fight against Labour by a majority of 7,158 votes, having taken 57 per cent of the poll.[88]

It was said that Collins was offered a knighthood by Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain for his services to the entertainment industry but turned it down on the basis that he had been born plain Pat Collins and that's how he would die.[89] Collins died on 8 December 1943 aged eighty-four years at his home, Lime Tree House, High Street, Bloxwich and he is buried Bloxwich cemetery. It cannot be argued that Collins was a politician of real national significance. He sat in parliament for just two years, making little impact there but representing his constituency competently enough. Neither can it be said that Liberal success in Walsall at the 1922 and 1923 general elections was a pointer to electoral successes elsewhere. Like many Liberal MPs, Collins was swept from parliament at the 1924 general election. The later victories of Leckie and Schuster owed little to Collins' success and were explained by the combination of anti-Labour forces in Walsall and across the country and the electorate's desire to support the National Government at a time of economic crisis. The interesting thing about Collins was his rise to become a Liberal MP in the first place. Being the child of an agricultural labourer and travelling peddler, of Irish descent and a Roman Catholic, with little formal education, was hardly a traditional career path into parliament with the Liberal Party. Collins clearly made use of his experience as a showman and administrator with Van Dwellers' Protection Association to gain a foothold in local politics in Walsall and to use his celebrity to help him into parliament. But he did not really use this real-world experience in the House of Commons, if only because he was there for too short a time. As Collins himself pointed out in a summary of his life's work and Liberal political philosophy, 'I am a showman first and a politician second. I am a worker and fighter rather than an orator. There is only one object in my life and that is to see people have fair play.'[90]

'I am a showman first and a politician second. I am a worker and fighter rather than an orator. There is only one object in my life and that is to see people have fair play.'

Graham Lippiatt is a contributing editor to the Journal of Liberal History *and Secretary of the Liberal Democrat History Group.*

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LIBERAL HISTORY QUIZ 2011

This year's Liberal history quiz was a feature of the History Group's exhibition stand at the Liberal Democrat conference in Birmingham in September. The winner was Stuart Bray, with an impressive 19 marks out of 20. Below we reprint the questions – the answers will be in the next issue.

1. Which prominent Liberal politician was forced to disguise himself as a policeman to escape the mob at a meeting at Birmingham Town Hall in 1901?

2. Who was the first person elected to the House of Commons as a member of the SDP, and for which seat?

3. Who was the leader of the Liberal Party from 1935 to 1945?

4. When the Liberal Party split over Ireland in 1886, what was the name of the party founded by Joseph Chamberlain and Lord Hartington which formed an alliance with the Conservatives in opposition to Irish Home Rule?

5. For which constituency did Lady Violet Bonham Carter stand, unsuccessfully, as Liberal candidate at the 1951 general election, unopposed by the Tories and with Winston Churchill speaking on her behalf?

6. What connects an SDP think tank with the rise of capitalism and the Reformation?

7. Who was the Whig – later Liberal – politician who was Prime Minister in 1846–52 and again in 1865–66?

8. Who won the Ryedale by-election for the Liberal-SDP Alliance in 1986?

9. What is the full title and sub-title of the 2004 book edited by David Laws and Paul Marshall aimed at charting a new direction for the Liberal Democrats?

10. In 1950, who told an arresting police officer, 'I am a Liberal and I am against this sort of thing', and why?

11. For which general election of the Grimond era was the Liberal Party manifesto titled *People Count*?

12. Who stood as Liberal Democrat candidate for Mayor of London at the first mayoral election?

13. Whose autobiography, *Memoirs of a Minor Public Figure*, was published in 2011?

14. Monty Python's parrot featured in Liberal history on two occasions, in 1988 and 1990. Why?

15. Who connects Queen Victoria with an unloved stubborn pack animal which had provided 'much valuable service'?

16. What connects Gladstone with Rosebery's final request?

17. In the 2010 election, who was the moderator, for ITV, of the first televised party leaders' debate in Manchester, on 15 April?

18. What do Matthew Taylor (1987), Sarah Teather (2003) and Jo Swinson (2005) have in common?

19. What was the name of the organisation formed in 1960 to act as a focal point for creative policy work by younger Liberals, which took its name from a survey integrating and explaining its radical programme published by the NLYL and ULS in 1959?

20. She was born in 1882 and died in 1981. Her father was a Liberal MP. She was one of the leading lights in the international women's suffrage movement, a Liberal candidate eight times and was appointed a Dame in 1967. Who was she?

REPORTS

Forgotten heroes for a governing party

Evening meeting, 20 June 2011 with Dr Matt Cole, Lord Navnit Dholakia, Baroness Floella Benjamin and Dr Mark Pack; chair: Baroness Claire Tyler.
Report by **David Cloke**

The Group's July meeting, chaired by Liberal Democrat peer Claire Tyler, mused on the theme of forgotten heroes for a governing party. Baroness Tyler opened the meeting by noting that there were many forgotten, some deservedly so, but that others were sources of inspiration and useful quotations. She hoped that the speakers would rescue their heroes from the twilight of history and demonstrate how they could influence Liberal Democrats today and in government. Dr Matt Cole, Lord Navnit Dholakia, Baroness Floella Benjamin and Dr Mark Pack between them proposed an inspiring and formidable list of heroes, drawn from close personal and working relationships, admiration across political boundaries, detailed biographical study and a broad historical perspective.

Dr Cole launched proceedings with the case for Richard Wainwright MP. He felt that he had perhaps lost the element of surprise regarding his choice having just written a biography of the man. He had chosen him, both as a hero but also as a worthy subject of biography because he was a significant figure of a particular type in the history of the Liberal Party. He was just below the top rank, lacked national and media exposure and was frequently omitted from histories of the party. He had no aspirations to be leader, and his dislike of London, the Westminster set pieces and the media effectively precluded him from that role. Nonetheless he, and others like him, helped the party to survive in its traditional form and took it forward to the Liberal Democrats and to becoming a party of government, something, Cole stressed, Wainwright had wanted to achieve.

Wainwright himself was not keen on hero worship, as a Nonconformist he was not keen on icons. Following a trip to Paris in 1938 he had written a report on the Radical Party in which he had written positively of its lack of ties to the past noting that 'there is no Gladstone, no Cobden, no Asquith. In responding to questions later, Cole said that he felt that Wainwright would have been embarrassed to have been chosen as a hero.

Nonetheless, Wainwright was himself a historian and understood that there was something to be learnt from the past. He had written a history of his constituency and the Liberal candidates and MPs. In answering questions later, Cole stressed the importance of Wainwright's local organisation and local campaigning and his development of the local Young Liberals and Women Liberal Association. He liked being a constituency MP.

In Cole's view Wainwright had three qualities that were rare in combination: pragmatism, loyalty to the party, and holding fast to his principles. He demonstrated these qualities in a number of ways over the years.

Wainwright had joined the Party in 1936 when it was split three ways and he first fought for it as a candidate in 1950 when it was at its lowest ebb, losing over 300 deposits. This inspired his pragmatic approach. He understood the need to enter into deals and work with other parties in order to support the party. One of his mentors was the Liberal MP, Donald Wade; he was MP for Huddersfield West in the 1950s as a result of a deal with local Conservatives. It was only by such pacts that Liberals had representation in urban Britain. Nonetheless, once he believed that the party could survive without such deals Wainwright urged them to be broken, as they were with the Bolton East by election in 1960.

Dr Matt Cole, Lord Navnit Dholakia, Baroness Floella Benjamin and Dr Mark Pack between them proposed an inspiring and formidable list of heroes, drawn from close personal and working relationships, admiration across political boundaries, detailed biographical study and a broad historical perspective.

Later in the 1970s Wainwright took part in the Lib–Lab Pact, despite being vulnerable to it, relying as he did on Tory votes in his fight against Labour in his constituency. In part he supported the pact because his parliamentary colleagues had. But, pragmatically, Wainwright sought to use the pact to advance policies he believed in: worker representation, through the Post Office Bill; electoral reform; a land bank and a minimum wage. Whilst none of these policies were implemented he brought them out of obscurity.

Despite this, Wainwright fell out of love with the Pact fairly quickly, realising that Labour were not going to deliver, notably on electoral reform. When he chaired the Party Assembly debate on the pact following the rejection of electoral reform for the European elections he skilfully reflected the anger of the grassroots without breaking ranks with his colleagues. He poured scorn on Labour's rejection of PR arguing that it put out of court any renewal of the pact. Nonetheless, he accepted that it needed to continue to the end of the agreement.

Dr Cole noted that once Wainwright had committed himself to something he stuck to it. Cole argued that there was not a problem with changing one's mind, but changing one's mind on things that had been promised did damage, which he felt was a lesson to be learnt.

Wainwright's loyalty to the party had been demonstrated in his dealings with the Social Democrats, which had not been easy for him, and in his relationships with party leaders. He defended them even when he was unhappy. Only when he thought things had become impossible did he move, triggering Thorpe's resignation in 1976 and encouraging Steel's after the 1987 general election. His actions had been based on evidence and in the interests of the party, not out of any personal dislike. His loyalty was also demonstrated in his personal generosity to the party and to associated causes including, as a contributor from the floor noted, the Joseph Rowntree Trust.

Wainwright was also loyal to his principles, even when they

were not part of the mainstream view amongst Liberals. He was an anti-militarist and did not fight in the Second World War, and a social reformer concerned with women's rights, sexuality and the role of youth. He acted as a bridge between the leadership and these groups within the party.

Cole argued that Wainwright recognised that the fight against the tyrannies of conformity and poverty would never cease, that it was unfinished business, and that he also realised the importance of deciding how to take on that fight. These remained as true today as they had in Wainwright's time.

Navnit Dholakia started his talk by recalling that he had known Richard Wainwright and declaring that what Dr Cole had said was true in every sense. He then proceeded to work towards his hero in the manner, as he put it, of a Liberal Democrat raffle, starting with the fourth placed person first.

His first thought was Aung San Suu Kyi, whose Reith lectures he had recently attended via tapes smuggled out of Burma. She had highlighted that, for him, freedom, justice, rights and liberties were key.

He then reflected on his mother's influence, which was in some ways an indirect one. He had been born in a small bush town in Tanzania. Whilst at primary school he realised that his mother could not read or write. Reading the Bhagavad-Gita to her had informed him from an early age.

His next potential hero was Julius Nyerere, who had attended the same school, and who Dholakia had met when he had come to the UK to study. Dholakia reported that when he had asked Nyerere why he was in England, he had told him that he was there to negotiate independence. Dholakia thought that this was a remarkable aspiration given the time it had taken for India to achieve her independence.

These reflections had led Dholakia to cast his mind back to his experiences in Britain in the 1950s and 60s and the sheer hatred demonstrated to people from Commonwealth countries. For Dholakia this had magnified following his election to Brighton Council. For the first six months he had to have police escorts to attend council meetings and for a time he had wondered to himself why he stayed in the country and sought to contribute to the political system. The person who had helped him at this time was his next potential hero, Jo Grimond. He had heard him at a meeting of the Assembly and had later spoken to him. Dholakia recalled being mesmerised by Grimond, his original thinking, his concern for the rest of the world and his focus on poverty and community. Grimond had also assured him that the party that would continue to support him.

Wainwright, and others like him, helped the party to survive in its traditional form and took it forward to the Liberal Democrats and to becoming a party of government.

Despite that, Dholakia's hero was not Jo Grimond or even a member of the Liberal Party. He was a man described by the Marquess of Salisbury as 'too clever by half', Ian Macleod. What inspired Dholakia was Macleod's implementation of what he believed in, particularly in the area of colonial policy. He often visited the countries concerned, promoted independence and had encouraged Macmillan to make his 'wind of change' speech. No Liberal could have said the things that Macleod did on a Conservative platform on this and on other issues, such as the abolition of the death penalty and homosexual law reform. He also worked with Liberal MPs and with opponents such as Callaghan and Bevan. He had also been close friends with Enoch Powell but broke with him completely after the rivers of blood speech.

Dholakia recalled that when he first entered the House of Lords he had sat with the former Conservative Home Secretary Lord Carr. Dholakia had been angry with Labour's continual playing of the numbers game on immigration and Carr reported that it had been Macleod's influence that had ensured that Britain honoured its commitments to the Ugandan Asians expelled by Idi Amin. He also noted that the decision by Cabinet had taken all of five minutes. Dholakia wondered if Cameron would make such a promise and stick to it.

In summing up, Dholakia argued that it did not take away his love and affection for the Liberal Party that he had joined fifty-five years previously to have chosen Macleod: there are others who influence you. He believed that the country had lost the greatest liberal in the Conservative Party when Macleod died.

Taking her turn, Floella Benjamin, spoke passionately and obviously with much love and affection about her friend Antonella Lothian, the Marchioness of Lothian. She urged the meeting not to be put off by her title. Antonella herself was aware of the problem and liked to be called Tony. For Benjamin, Tony Lothian was an extraordinary woman, full of vision, compassion and wisdom. She had known her for thirty years as a friend and mentor: a rock-like supporter who had motivated her and thousands of other women. She saw the human being in all and their talent and potential. The way she lived her life had been summed up for Benjamin by a remark she had made whilst on a fact-finding mission to Moscow: 'Never be afraid to speak out and do what is morally right.'

Tony Lothian had a charismatic, striking appearance, and when Benjamin had known her, dyed black hair and a black patch over one eye, which she had lost as a result of cancer. She always wore either black and white or red and white. She had been born in Rome in 1922, the daughter of a British army doctor and an Italian woman and often described herself as a doctor's daughter. Her strong political (though not often partisan) views first emerged when she visited family in Germany shortly before the war. She spoke out against the treatment of Jews, and was hastily sent back to England before she got herself into serious trouble. There she met Peter Lothian, the future twelfth Marquess of Lothian, and married him at the age of twenty-one. They had six children and a happy marriage lasting sixty years. Benjamin stressed the importance of Peter Lothian's steadying role in supporting his wife and noted that behind every powerful woman was a strong supportive man, including, she charmingly noted, her own husband.

Tony Lothian was a committed Roman Catholic who went to mass every morning at 8.30. Whilst she described herself as a Christian feminist, Benjamin noted that, on a couple of occasions, her views on abortion had led to some conflict with other women. Lothian always stressed the importance, however, of broad coalitions. She demonstrated this in her own life by working closely with Coretta Scott King, the soviet cosmonaut Valentina

Tereshkova, and the American communist who became women's editor of the Morning Star, Mikki Doyle. Her family, meanwhile, was a Conservative one, notably her eldest son, Michael Ancram and her husband an equerry to Prince Charles. This meant that, according to Benjamin, Lothian's personal political views were something of a mystery, though she believed that, despite occasional outbursts, such as declaring that she did not really believe in capitalism, Lothian was a 'floating voter'.

The focus of Lothian's work was the promotion of women. She had jointly established the Women of the Year lunches in 1955 to celebrate women's achievements. At that time, Benjamin noted, there were no female peers in the House of Lords. Women were definitely second-class citizens at this time and the idea was ridiculed with some claiming that there would only be a handful of eligible attendees. In fact 500 attended the first lunch. Over the next fifty years, women from every possible background were celebrated at the annual event. Lothian didn't seek to trade places with men but to ensure that women had their say in how the world was run. A practical way in which she did this was to write and publish a biography of Tereshkova because she felt that it was important to see the world through her eyes.

Lothian had many running battles which she faced with a smile and with charm. In the words of one member of her family, she 'used the devil's ways to do God's work'. She hated racism, declaring that all were descended from the first man on earth, a black man from Africa. As a catholic, she campaigned against abortion. She also campaigned for a healthy eating lifestyle long before it was fashionable, and established the Health Festival. In short, she was not afraid to go against the tide, even when she was attacked. But, Benjamin argued, Lothian also knew how to get the best out of other people and make them aspire beyond their dreams.

In summary, Benjamin declared that Lothian made a difference to humankind and could have contributed much to the Liberal Democrats. Her legacy lived on, even among those who did not know she had affected them, and that those who did loved her still.

Grey was a reformer rather than a radical but, as such, a Liberal who could be remembered for his deeds and achievements as well as his words.

In some ways Mark Pack had a more traditional choice for a hero, except that there could be some debate about whether he was 'forgotten'. He had brought his party back to power after twenty-three years in opposition, oversaw major political reform, led a successful coalition with Conservatives, and his views on issues such as race and religion had aged well. The person concerned was Charles Grey – Earl Grey – who was now at least as famous for the tea that bore his name as anything else. Pack argued that Grey should be beloved of party leaders with his pragmatic creed that 'practical good is infinitely preferable to speculative perfection'.

Grey had become a parliamentarian at a youthful age, became embroiled in the trial of Warren Hastings, which pout him at the centre of political life. He was a youthful, but short-lived, Foreign Secretary, and was only a little older than David Owen when he took up office. Pack argued that the comparison was instructive because Grey's natural inclination was to be a uniter and with that ability he was able to return to office as prime minister, something Owen failed to achieve.

Grey's opportunity arose when the Conservative government crumbled and split over political reform. As the government had not been swept away by a general election, Grey had to put together a coalition from the existing parliament. He skilfully knitted together a government made up of Tories and Radicals and all shades in between. Pack compared his achievement to having a Cabinet with both John Redwood and Tony Greaves in it.

Pack gave as an example of Grey's political skills, his handling of Henry Brougham. Brougham was a passionate, charismatic, annoying, inconsistent populist firebrand. He was at the height of his popularity in 1830 when he won election to the House of Commons as a Yorkshire MP. Grey managed to put Brougham into a position where he could not refuse a peerage, thus stripping away his populist base, and appointed his as his Lord Chancellor, where he was a notable legal reformer. Pack highlighted that a rare aspect of such manoeuvrings was that individual concerned proved to be successful in the post to which they had been appointed.

Grey's most significant achievement was the Great Reform Act, which Pack stated he would not dwell on as the issue had been covered in an earlier meeting and reported on in the Journal. Nonetheless, it demonstrated Grey's tenacity, guile and persuasive skills. His first attempt at getting it through was initially successful in the House of Commons, being passed with a majority of one on the biggest ever turn-out of MPs, but was scuppered by an amendment in committee. The second attempt passed the Commons only to be defeated in the Lords. On the third attempt he managed to bluff the Lords into thinking that the king was willing to create the number of peers necessary to have the bill passed. He thus pre-empted the tactics of the People's Budget by more than eighty years.

Pack also noted that Grey also had characteristics that might not serve him so well as a modern politician. He was something a lad about town, and had an affair and an illegitimate child with Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, a tale which featured in a recent film. Nonetheless, in his own age it did not undermine his ability to achieve results. Indeed, Pack argued that Georgiana's Whig connections may have helped him have a successful political career.

The other defining and inspiring moments of Grey's career were, according to Pack, his defence of liberty against the security scares following the Peterloo massacre; his moving of the motion proposing the abolition of the slave trade and his abolition of slavery as prime minister and his arguments for religious tolerance and Catholic emancipation. Pack also noted his introduction of democracy into local government. Pack also seemed to feel that the nature of his departure from political life was inspiring. Having been defeated in parliament, rather than fight on, he decided to slip away whilst still at the height of his powers.

For Pack, Grey was a reformer rather than a radical but, as such, a Liberal who could be remembered for his deeds and achievements as well as his words: a worthy man to remember.

At the end of the meeting, the panel was asked who amongst current and recent Liberal Democrats most reflected the characteristics of their chosen hero. Pack chose Roy Jenkins because of his ability to achieve radical change. Dholakia agreed about Roy Jenkins, who was the first Home Secretary to introduce race relations legislation, but also stressed the importance of figures like Nancy Seear and Frank Byers. Floella Benjamin had earlier noted that, in Navnit Dholakia, the meeting had a Liberal hero amongst them. She had shared his experience of hatred earlier in her life, but on reflecting on her peerage, she had felt that she reached that position with the help of people like Navnit Dholakia. In answering the question directly, she chose Shirley Williams whom she regarded as sharp, attentive to detail and not afraid to stand up against the tide. She was also willing to give help and advice. Finally, Matt Cole chose Vince Cable, another Yorkshireman, who was almost universally respected at the time of writing the Wainwright biography. That esteem had been tarnished a little by the effect of holding office, but Wainwright himself never had to weather the modern media storm.

David Cloke is Treasurer of the Liberal Democrat History Group.

Peace, Reform and Liberation

Conference fringe meeting, 19 September 2011, with Julian Glover, Paddy Ashdown and Shirley Williams; chair: Duncan Brack.

Report by **Mark Pack**

It would be a brave person who walked up to Paddy Ashdown or Shirley Williams and told them to their face that they are history, or even old, but they are two of the most charismatic, interesting and thoughtful members of the living history class – people who have been around in politics long enough to be able to talk at first hand about not only the origins of the Liberal Democrats but prior events too. So to have both on the bill at the Liberal Democrat History Group's Autumn 2011 conference fringe meeting not surprisingly resulted in a spacious room being packed, leaving people standing at the sides, the back and in the doorways. However, the star of the show in many ways was the less well-known third speaker, then of *The Guardian* and now of Downing Street, Julian Glover.

All three were introduced to the meeting by the Group's chair, and one of the lead authors of the book being launched, *Peace, Reform and Liberation*, Duncan Brack. He reassured the audience that the meeting was maintaining historical party traditions, for Paddy Ashdown was going to have to leave early … and Shirley Williams was late! He also quoted Paddy Ashdown's words on the importance of political history to a party, taken from his autobiography, *A Fortunate Life*, in which Ashdown recounted some of the problems of the 1989 SDP–Liberal merger. He wrote that, 'Being a relative outsider compared to the older MPs I had, in my rush to create the new party, failed to understand that a political party is about more than plans, priorities, policies and a chromium-plated organisation. It also has a heart and a history and a soul.'

The same applies to a newspaper, too, and in kicking off with the first main speech Julian Glover took a look at one part of his newspaper's history and soul – its on/off, love/hate relationship with the Liberal Party and its successors. Glover cited *The Guardian*'s May 2010 editorial urging people to vote Liberal Democrat. But, as Glover added, 'As soon as we did it, we changed our minds.' That prevarication is nothing new and, he implied, not necessarily much of a problem for the party given that polling showed that Labour support amongst Guardian readers went up after that 2010 editorial.

'Being a relative outsider compared to the older MPs I had, in my rush to create the new party, failed to understand that a political party is about more than plans, priorities, policies and a chromium-plated organisation. It also has a heart and a history and a soul.'

The paper's political advice has varied much over the years. Julian Glover even located a 1950s *Guardian* editorial which urged people to vote out Clement Atlee and vote in the Conservative Party. But much of the time the paper had been a Labour-supporting outlet which urged best wishes on the Liberals and their successors, often advising the party to be just a little different in a benevolent / condescending (delete to taste) way.

Much of the editorialising about Britain's third party has been, as Glover highlighted, variants on a common theme: to bemoan that the third party is not fully backing whatever cause is of most concern to the paper at the time. The other theme, he added, is to write off the third party as doomed. On occasion, *The Guardian* has combined both themes in one leader, including in a 1987 leader that said, 'These are dire days for the Alliance. They have some of the most thoughtful and radical politicians around.' Glover added, 'As a paper we certainly seem to enjoy nothing more than praising the Liberal Party and the Liberal Democrats while going on to explain why we can't actually support it.' The party's 1992 general election manifesto received praise from the paper: 'it far outdistances its competitors with a fizz of ideas and an absence of fudge', but even that was not enough for the paper to call for Paddy to become prime minister. 'So there you have it, 150 years from *The Guardian* and the *Manchester Guardian* calling on the Liberal Party and the Liberal Democrats to be brave, radical; praising the party's policies and then writing it off as irrelevant', concluded Julian Glover.

He was followed by Paddy Ashdown, who in typical fashion strode towards the audience before starting to quiz everyone in the room, testing people's knowledge with quotes from history. After an easy duo with 'Go back to your constituencies and prepare for government' and 'I intend to march my troops towards the sound of gunfire', with the audience easily and correctly guessing (or in many cases, remembering) David Steel and Jo Grimond, Ashdown posed a tougher one with, 'Ideas are not responsible for the people who believe in them'. The answer? Paddy himself (on being particularly exasperated by Alex Carlisle). Probably.

Left to right: Julian Glover, Shirley Williams, Duncan Brack, Paddy Ashdown (photo: Matt Cole)

He admitted he may have borrowed it from someone else and forgotten. (A search through Hansard finds him first using the phrase in Parliament 1986, in a different context and even then not sure if he had penned it himself).[1]

He went on to entertain and enlighten the audience with a sequence of many other quotes from past Liberals, including from Lord Acton: 'A state which is incompetent to satisfy different races, condemns itself. A state which labours to neutralise, to absorb, to expel them destroys its own vitality. A state which does not include them is destitute of the chief basis of self-government.' Acton got several mentions, with Ashdown also picking out what he described as one of his favourite quotes: 'It is easier to find people fit to govern themselves than it is to find people fit to govern'. The quote should be emblazoned across the party's political manuals, he said, making the implicit point that many of the lessons past liberal drew from their contemporary experience are still highly relevant today.

As he said, 'our history is our present' – just after quoting Gladstone on Afghanistan. Different centuries, different wars but the same humane, liberal creed: 'That philosophy of liberalism that combines a solution to the questions of liberty and freedom – and sometimes, as John Stuart Mill said, they oppose each other, the freedom to and the freedom from – you have to determine where that balance lies for your time, for your nation and for your generation. It does not lie always in the same place. You have to determine that. That is why liberalism is a living creed.' He finished saying, 'The thing that we have in our party title – liberal – goes back thousands of years. You should be proud of that. It should give us strength, and it should make us campaign even harder … Henry Gibson once said, 'You do not go out to battle for freedom and truth wearing your best trousers.' Sometimes I think our party wears its best trousers too much. This is our heritage and it is also our message today – and we should be proud of it'.

It would take a speaker of rare skill to match Ashdown's speech, but Shirley Williams is one of the select band who could – and did, even though she opened joking that she wished she had after all agreed to speak before rather than after him. She contrasted Ashdown's drawing of lessons from the more distant past with her own talk – looking at the lessons from more recent political history, in particular the way the limited teaching of history in the US helps shapes its leaders' worldview – if you only teach American history, you end up with people who do not think much beyond the boundaries of America. This had 'devastating consequences', Shirley Williams argued, when the lessons of the Vietnam War and the state the country was left in were not applied to Iraq.

She then turned to the way the Liberal Party declined so sharply in the early twentieth century, becoming reduced to near irrelevance. 'What kept it going were the deep roots it had put down in some parts of the country – the Pennines, parts of the West Country and of course the Celtic Welsh and Scottish Liberals,' Shirley Williams explained. Her own roots, of course, are in the social democracy rather than liberalism – a distinction she described as being based on being less distrustful of the powers of the state, but also a distinction that has faded as the merged Liberal Democrats have evolved.

Returning to America and the uses of history, Williams said that lessons from the 1930s are still very relevant. One of her conclusions from them is the need to consider a job creation program, aimed particularly at young people, funded by a dedicated temporary tax. More optimistically, she thinks politicians have learnt from the 1930s that they should not 'simply take the dictation of the market without any question as to whether it is right or whether it isn't.' Then only the American President FDR amongst western leaders bucked that consensus of treating the recession as an act of inevitability, introducing instead a liberal and democratic government to fight that which other people viewed as inevitable.

The USA is also responsible for her views on coalition. Williams revealed that initially she would have preferred a minority Conservative government, with a confidence and supply arrangement rather than a formal coalition. However, she has since changed her mind, drawing on what she has seen in the USA and the dangers it shows of 'total political polarisation' stopping the government from taking necessary action in an economic crisis. As a result, she now thinks forming a coalition 'was necessary and it was right … One had to make the political system work, even if it was painful and difficult to do so.'

Finally, looking back a century to Britain's own history, Shirley Wiliams said there were three failures of the Liberal Party in 1911: on gender, inequality and Ireland. 'It was appalling that Asquith consistently refused to consider suffrage for women,' she said, before stressing that in her view the party had made far too little progress in improving the diversity amongst its MPs – and has a diversity problem illustrated by the near all-white audience for the fringe meeting. The success of 'zipping' in introducing gender balance amongst the party's MEP's points the way, she said, towards the need for action in other areas.

The second failure was shown by the so-called workers' rebellion, fuelled by a dramatic drop in real wages. As with gender, this source of 1911 failure is a challenge for the modern party too, with real wages once again dropping. But on this issue Williams said the party was getting right, with its emphasis on a fairer tax system, keeping the 50 per cent tax rate and increasing the basic rate income tax allowance to £10,000. When she was first elected in 1964, the ratio between the pay of the country's leading chief executives and the average wage of people who worked in manufacturing was about 8:1 she said; now it has risen to over 80:1. 'That's not just inequality: it is appalling obscenity.'

On Ireland, Williams reminded the audience that Ireland was long a passion of William Gladstone. The tragedy of his inability to secure home rule for Ireland was a heavy burden on Britain and Ireland's subsequent histories. But, much less well known is that when in office Gladstone offered the Zulus a military alliance against the Boers. When he fell as prime minister the proposal fell apart, with huge costs to South Africa, too. On this point, Williams did not explicitly say what the lessons for modern Liberal Democrats are, the implication was left hanging in the air that it meant – at least some of the time – being willing to militarily support the oppressed. What she did say in conclusion was that history matters, for 'we must learn the lessons, even the painful ones, and not make the same mistakes again'.

In answers to questions from the audience, Ashdown agreed that Gladstone's love of thrift and voluntarism is still very relevant – environmentalism is a form of thrift and community politics is based on voluntarism. But community politics is greater than voluntarism, for community politics must also be about shifting power.

Williams agreed, saying the country was increasingly realising how unreal the New Labour economic boom had been, based on unsustainable debt producing a mirage which both the public and the government believed in. For her thrift has a moral and psychological purpose, making us more happy, she thinks, given the costs of the anxiety that comes from seeking ever-more riches rather than enjoying what you have.

On voluntarism, Williams again agreed with Ashdown, pointing to the amazing care that hospices provide, thanks to a system based on voluntarism. Repeating her high profile opposition to some aspects of the government's health reforms, she nonetheless saw a key role for such voluntarism.

The question and answer session was rather taken over by contemporary political questions, including very strong comments about the importance of the party improving the diversity of its parliamentary party in the Commons from both Williams and Ashdown. The latter admitted to changing his mind on the topic and is now willing to support more radical temporary measures if necessary than he was when leader of the party.

Ashdown also retold a story of a meeting between Henry Kissinger and Mao Zedong. Seeking to kindle a shared interest in history to smooth the business, Kissinger asked Mao what he thought would have happened if it had been Khrushchev and not John F. Kennedy who had been assassinated. Mao pondered before saying that he doubted that nice, rich Greek ship owner would have married Mrs Khrushchev.

Closing the meeting, Duncan Brack reminded people of the comment made by the distinguished historian and Liberal Democrat peer, the late Conrad Russell, that the party via its predecessors was probably the oldest political party in the world. This 350 years of history is captured in the new history of the party – to remember, to celebrate and to learn.

Dr Mark Pack worked at Liberal Democrat party HQ in 2000–07 and has contributed as an author or editor to eighteen books spanning history, politics and technology. He is Co-Editor of the most widely read Liberal Democrat blog, Lib Dem Voice (www. LibDemVoice.org).

1 http://bit.ly/ashdown1986

LETTERS

Liberal Prime Ministers

There was a reference in Kevin Theakston's article on 'The afterlives of former Liberal Prime Ministers' (*Journal of Liberal History* 71, summer 2011) to Lord John Russell and his Scottish second wife being given Pembroke House in Richmond Park, by Queen Victoria, for their lifetime use. According to Amanda Foreman in her excellent *A World on Fire* (Allen Lane/Penguin Books, London, 2010/2011), Lord John, when Foreign Secretary in 1859–65, also had the use of Abergeldie Castle (two miles from Balmoral Castle on Deeside) which Prince Albert had leased for forty years from 1840. Apparently, it was at Abergeldie that Lord John had useful informal talks, during the US Civil War, with Charles Francis Adams (son and grandson of US Presidents), the Minister at the US Legation in London.

Incidentally, Amanda Foreman also advises that the Marquis of Hartington (Liberal Leader in the Commons 1875–80 and later Liberal Unionist Leader in the Lords) spent Christmas Day 1862 in the Confederate States of America, making eggnog for cavalry offices in General Robert E. Lee's army.

Further, not only was the 5th (Scottish) Earl of Rosebery – who sat in the Lords as 2nd (UK) Lord Rosebery, not as a Scottish representative peer – created a Knight of the Thistle on resigning as Prime Minister in 1895, he was also created 1st (UK) Earl of Midlothian, etc., in the 1911 Coronation Honours. After the former Prime Minister – who did not attend the House of Lords after 1911 – had a severe stroke in 1919, his son and heir – who was briefly Liberal National Secretary of State for Scotland in May-August 1945 – entered the House of Lords as 2nd (UK) Earl of Midlothian although his father survived until 1929. (The family is descended from

one of my wife's 16th–17th century Primrose ancestors.)

Finally, strictly speaking, Asquith did not 'lose his own seat' at the 1918 general election. The East Fife constituency, which he had represented since 1886, did not include the seven Royal Burghs within its bounds which were in the separate constituency of St Andrews Burghs, which from 1886 was only Liberal held in 1903–06 and briefly in 1910. The constituency in which Asquith was defeated in 1918 was a combination of his old constituency and the usually Tory (or Liberal Unionist) St Andrews Burghs. The enlarged constituency was Liberal in 1922–24, Tory in 1924–29, Liberal in 1929–31 and then Liberal National or Tory until being won (as North East Fife) by (Sir) Menzies Campbell in 1987.

Incidentally, Mrs Emma Tennant (Margot Asquith's mother) could not have said anything about Lloyd George as Prime Minister as she (Mrs Tennant) died in 1895. Perhaps Kevin Theakston meant Margot Asquith's stepmother.

Dr Sandy S. Waugh

Russell Johnston

Ross Finnie gives a valuable review of Russell Johnston's inspiring life (*Journal of Liberal History* 71, summer 2011). Two more features are worthy of recall.

First, Johnston was one of the very few Members of the House of Commons engaged in the scrutiny of European Union affairs from a pro-European stance. His role became of key importance in the debates over the ratification of the Treaty of Maastricht. His interventions in the protracted wrangling were often bold and incisive, providing useful cover for Tory government ministers assailed by the Eurosceptics on their own benches, while goading Labour for its lack of scruple and consistency on matters European. The crucial Commons vote on Maastricht took place on 4 November 1992 when the ratification was allowed to proceed by 319 votes to 316. Johnston was the leading member of a very small team which encouraged Paddy Ashdown to persevere in giving Liberal Democrat support for the Major government's efforts to sustain the new Treaty. Had that vote been lost at Westminster the Treaty would have fallen and subsequent European history would have been very different.

Second, Johnston was the principal British figure at the birth (1977) and in the later development of the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party (ELDR). As Finnie observes, Johnston was frustrated in his efforts to be elected MEP, but he served well the Liberal cause in Europe over decades, and was Vice-President of ELDR until giving way (against his will) to Ashdown.

Russell Johnston has an honoured place in the pantheon of European Liberals.

Andrew Duff MEP

Cheltenham

Martin Horwood's fascinating story of Cheltenham elections (*Journal of Liberal History* 71, summer 2011) illustrates how lucky he is to have such a constituency. There are very few constituencies which have remained essentially unchanged in size or character since 1832; and there are not many more which correspond so clearly to one distinct entity, such as a town or island. Generally, population movements and boundary change disrupt such links of continuity and community; the new mathematically strict boundary drawing rules will make for more such disruption in future.

This coherence of constituency and community facilitates genuinely local election behaviour; such constituencies are more likely to produce deviant local swings at general elections, or good votes for independents. Cheltenham illustrates both.

That is the context in which to enquire further into the controversial bit of Cheltenham's electoral history which Horwood skirts around. He refers to the selection of John Taylor, the black Conservative candidate who lost the seat in 1992, and to media comment on the link between Taylor's race and the outcome, but sees it as an injustice to Nigel Jones' own 'profoundly anti-racist politics'. But was that why Taylor lost the seat? Horwood does not say.

There is clear evidence that the Conservatives did worse than they should have done in 1992. This is discussed in detail in the appendix to the Nuffield study on that general election.[1] Essentially we found that the drop in the Tory vote was significantly higher than the local pattern of voting movements, and that this was linked to a below-average rise in turnout. Some Conservative voters must have stayed at home in a racially prejudiced protest. It is impossible to say exactly how many, but we suggested about 2 per cent of the electorate. If, as an exercise, you add 2 per cent of the electorate to the 1992 Conservative vote, Nigel Jones would have won the seat by just 72 votes instead of 1,668. Too close to call on that basis.

However, one should refer back to the findings in the October 1974 appendix.[2] That was when Charles Irving was first elected as Conservative MP, replacing a non-local incumbent. The evidence of his personal vote (for a Conservative non-incumbent) was one of the clearest at that or any other election I have studied. I suggested then 'his local reputation was worth a personal vote of around 1,500.'

Irving's subsequent majorities made both the complacent Conservatives and the metropolitan media assume that Cheltenham was a safer Conservative seat than it really was. Their expectation that Taylor could easily inherit that majority, and their simple conclusion that race was the reason he failed to, reflected their lack of understanding of local voting behaviour in Cheltenham. I had already concluded that the Liberal Democrats had a good chance of gaining Cheltenham when Irving retired, unless the Conservatives found a strong local candidate.

Michael Steed

1 John Curtice and Michael Steed, 'The Results Analysed', in David Butler and Dennis Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1992* (Macmillan, 1992), pp. 338–39.

2 Michael Steed, 'The Results Analysed', in David Butler and Dennis Kavanagh, *The British General Election of October 1974* (Macmillan, 1975), pp. 343–45.

Liberal Unionists

Ian Cawood's interesting analysis of the relationship between Liberal Unionists and Conservatives (*Journal of Liberal History* 72, autumn 2011) makes for good reading. It ends, perfectly reasonably, with the merger of 1912. There was, though, an afterlife of sorts in the person of Neville Chamberlain. Accepting the Conservative Party leadership on 1 June 1937, Chamberlain said that he 'was not born a little Conservative. I was brought up as a Liberal and afterwards as a Liberal Unionist. The fact that I am here, accepted by you Conservatives as your leader, is to my mind a demonstration of the catholicity of the Conservative Party.' (Source: Andrew Crozier, *Dictionary of National Biography*.)

Chamberlain certainly appears to distinguish himself from the party he was about to lead, but whether there was a political difference is another question.

Paul Hunt

The Triple Lock

Mark Pack's article on the triple lock (*Journal of Liberal History* 72, autumn 2011) referred to me a couple of times, so a few comments seem appropriate.

In the run-up to the 2010 general election, I advised both Danny Alexander and Ros Scott of my *provisional* view that the triple lock was not constitutionally binding. I say *'provisional'* because, as I explained when I gave the same view to the Federal Executive (as Mark notes), I was then Chair of the Federal Appeals

Panel, and I was not prepared to give a definitive view in case I subsequently had to consider the question formally.

That actually arose on an application by a party member, and I invited Gordon Lishman to make a submission as to the validity of the triple lock. This was carefully considered by a panel consisting of myself and the respective Chairs of the English and Welsh State Party Appeals Panels.

We delivered our ruling in August 2010 to the Federal President, Chief Executive and Operations Director, leaving it to them to determine how it should be published (sorry to disabuse *Liberator* of yet another conspiracy theory!). In the interests of open government, I am happy to supply a copy to anyone interested (requests to journal@liberalhistory.org.uk).

Please note that we were careful not to say that the triple lock was a nullity, as clearly it represented the general view of conference. And we emphasised the importance of consultation. But we did conclude that it was not constitutionally valid in two key respects – binding the Commons party, and binding the conference – without having been proposed and passed as a constitutional amendment by a two-thirds majority.

Philip Goldenberg

Coalitions

Anent your special issue on coalitions (*Journal of Liberal History* 72, autumn 2011), I would offer a few comments on Angus Hawkins' contribution (which would have been better subtitled as 'Whigs, Peelites and Radicals' rather than as 'Whigs, Peelites and Liberals') and Ian Cawood's contribution on 'The Liberal Unionist – Conservative Alliance' from 1886.

Firstly, Viscount Palmerston's first administration (1855–58) was, certainly initially, just as much a Whig-Peelite-Radical coalition as that of the Earl of Aberdeen in 1852–55. The Cabinet formed on 2 February 1855 included nine Whigs and five Peelites. Three of the Peelites – William Gladstone, Sir James Graham and Sydney Herbert – resigned within a fortnight, in opposition to Viscount Palmerston's intention to initiate an investigation into the conduct of the Crimean War for which they, with the Earl of Aberdeen, had been primarily responsible. However, two other Peelites remained in the Cabinet: Charles Canning (1st Viscount Canning) until December 1855, when he resigned in anticipation of his appointment as Governor-General of India, and the 8th Duke of Argyll who continued in the Cabinet throughout its three years' existence. The three departing Peelites on 21 February 1852 were replaced numerically by two Whigs (Lord John Russell and Robert Vernon Smith) and one Radical (Sir William Molesworth).

Secondly, it should be appreciated that George Goschen 'was unable to take on the role of leader of the [Liberal] rebellion' against Gladstone's Irish Home Rule policy in early 1886 not only 'because of his distance from the Liberals since 1874', etc. (Ian Cawood) but also because he had opposed the extension of the borough/burgh franchise to the counties in 1877 and because, at the 1885 general election he had been elected (with Conservative support) as Independent Liberal MP for Edinburgh West in opposition to a Radical Liberal. As the Liberal Unionist candidate at the 1886 general election he lost Edinburgh West to a (Gladstonian) Liberal by 2,253 to 3,694 votes.

Thirdly, not all the 'radical Unionists managed to carry their constituency associations with them' (Ian Cawood). John Boyd Kinnear, elected for East Fife as a Radical Liberal at the 1885 general election, was, as a Liberal Unionist, repudiated by the local Liberals and was defeated by H. H. Asquith by 374 votes at the 1886 general election.

Ian Cawood might also have mentioned that from the failure of the 'Round Table' conference on Liberal reunion in early 1887, to opposition to the Conservatives' imposition of semi-permanent coercive policies in Ireland later in 1887, to opposition to Imperial Preference/Tariff Reform from May 1903 and to support for Irish Land Reform from 1904, and also including direct 'conversions' to Irish Home Rule, there were, at least, twenty-five Liberal Unionist MPs, candidates or peers who rejoined the Liberal Party – from Sir George Otto Trevelyan in 1887 to Cameron Corbett (father-in-law of Jo Grimond's sister) in 1910. Thus with also the Marquis of Hartington (8th Duke of Devonshire from 1891), Liberal Unionist Leader in the Commons (1886–91) and in the Lords (1891–1904) defecting to the cross benches in 1907, and the number of Liberal Unionist MPs falling from 77 in 1886 to 36 in 1910, the union of the Liberal Unionists and the Conservatives as Unionists in 1912 was perhaps inevitable.

Dr Sandy S. Waugh

ORPINGTON JUBILEE

It is not just the Queen's Jubilee in 2012; it is also a jubilee year for Liberals. On 14 March 2012 it will be fifty years ago since Eric Lubbock – 'a modest unassuming local resident', according to a special issue of *New Outlook* – won a sensational victory in the Orpington by-election. (The result was declared on the 15th which explains why some accounts date the by-election to that day.)

'My God', said a bewildered-looking Jo Grimond when the poll was declared, 'it's an incredible result'. Four days earlier Mr Grimond, in the days before the *Focus* bar chart, had been explaining to commentators why the Liberals could *not* win.

The Orpington Circle, based at the National Liberal Club, will be celebrating this very special occasion in style at a dinner on **Wednesday 14 March 2012**. The Guest of Honour is, of course, the 'unassuming local resident', and we are hoping to attract as many Orpington veterans as possible.

Liberal Democrat President Tim Farron MP is not old enough to have helped at Orpington, but he is a most entertaining speaker and we look forward to hearing from him at the dinner. One person who did help was William Wallace, academic and Government Whip in the Lords, and we shall also hear from him and, hopefully, from some others too.

The price of the three-course meal, with wine and a drinks reception beforehand, will be roughly £50. We expect this to be a 'sell-out' event, and special booking forms will be available in January. Please register your interest with Louisa Pooley (email: **Louisa@nlc.org.uk**) at the National Liberal Club and you will be sent a form as soon as booking opens.

We would also like to mount a small Orpington Exhibition for the occasion in conjunction with the Liberal Democrat History Group. Please contact Paul Hunt (email: **paul.m.hunt@btinternet.com**) if you have any early 1960s Liberal memorabilia which you are prepared to loan.

The Orpington Circle was founded in 2008 and has raised over £20,000 for the exclusive use of Liberal Democrat candidates in Westminster by-elections.

REVIEWS

Comprehensive Liberal history

Robert Ingham and Duncan Brack (eds.), *Peace, Reform and Liberation: A History of Liberal Politics in Britain 1679–2011* (Biteback Publishing, 2011)
Reviewed by **Malcolm Baines**

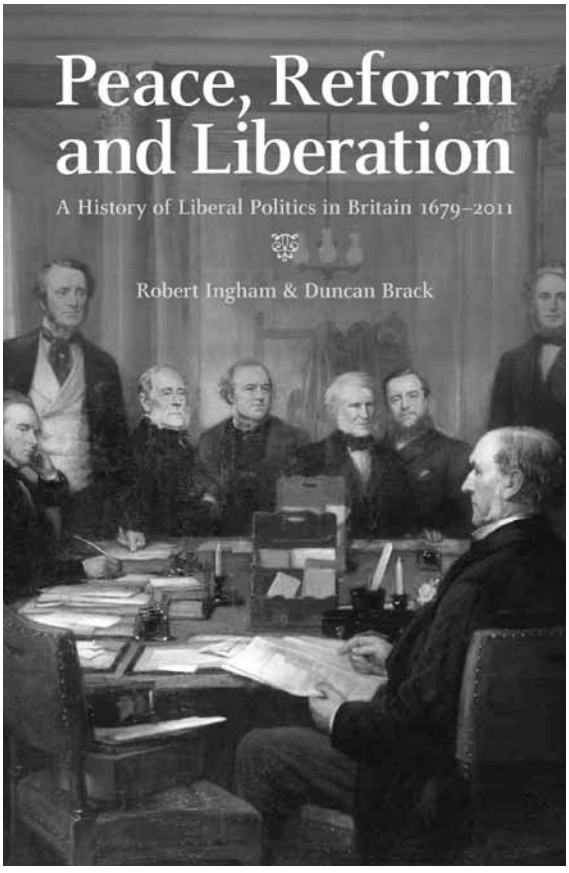
Peace, Reform and Liberation is the latest publication under the aegis of the Liberal Democrat History Group. Unlike previous books, which contained biographies of Liberal and Liberal Democrat politicians and thinkers, extracts from speeches, quotations or thought, and were marketed as handy reference works, this is an altogether more ambitious attempt at a comprehensive history of the party from the Exclusion Crisis of 1679–81, which crystallised opposition to the succession of Catholic James to the English throne, to the decision of the party to join a coalition with the Conservatives in 2011.

This book is unusual in that it is a collection of essays by different authors covering the history of the Whigs, the Liberal Party and the Liberal Democrats over that 330-year period. Unlike other histories of the Liberal Party, *Peace, Reform and Liberation* offers a complete chronology as well as the official stamp of an introduction by Nick Clegg. Consequently, although the momentum of the narrative of the party's history sometimes falters it is nevertheless a superb reference book for the party's history throughout the period. One very effective feature of the whole book is a series of insets looking at individual Liberals, places or events in greater detail, which very handily are separately indexed. These give the book additional weight as a reference volume as do the superb appendices dealing with party organisation, electoral performance and party leaders, as well as providing a timeline of party history.

If the book has a weakness it is that the earlier chapters seem a little bit rushed, covering as they do 150 years to 1832 followed by another twenty-nine to 1859, the year of the famous meeting in Willis's Rooms which traditionally marks the formation of the Liberal Party as a coalition of Whig, Radicals and Peelites. Also missing is some more background on nineteenth-century politics – it seems puzzling, for example, that the Liberals obtained substantially more votes than their Conservative rivals in many of the elections in the 1830s and 1840s, but often had only a small majority or even a deficit of seats. Presumably the reason is that more Tories were unopposed or that the Liberals represented larger constituencies, but the electoral context is not fully explained. However the Introduction by Michael Freeden giving an overview of the Liberal Party and Liberal politics throughout the whole period is a real tour de force and is almost worth buying the book for on its own.

From 1859 onwards, the action moves forwards with considerable pace through the Gladstonian period to the splits and disagreements of the 1880s and 1890s and on to the New Liberal years before the First World War. Chapters are written by a mixture of History Group stalwarts like Tony Little and Robert Ingham and respected historians such as Eugenio Biagini, Martin Pugh and David Dutton. These provide well-written summaries of the party's history in the twentieth century, including charting the disintegration of the party in the 1920s and 1930s, the disappointment of the immediate post-war years and the revival under the leaderships of Grimond, Thorpe and Steel. There are especially strong chapters on the party under the leadership of Samuel and Sinclair in the 1930s, including the split with the Liberal Nationals, and the editors have rightly chosen to look at this in detail rather than glossing over these years as is often the case. Also particularly good are the sections covering the Alliance and Liberal Democrats. I was a reasonably active member in the 1980s and found that chapter rang true to my own experiences at the time – whilst likewise the penultimate section, dealing with the Liberal Democrats since the merger of the Liberal Party and the SDP in 1988 and written by Duncan Brack from his inside perspective, gives a real insight into the story of the party in recent years.

However, whilst the book gives an excellent account of the party from the perspective of its head office and Westminster leadership, it could have benefitted from more examination of Liberal activity in wider civil society, including local government since 1979, looking at for example the role of ALDC in the growth in council representation and the attempts by Liberals in places like Liverpool, Kingston and Tower Hamlets to implement their values at local level. Also interesting would have been more on the social character of the party's areas of traditional electoral strength – the background to its enduring appeal in Cornwall and parts of the 'Celtic fringe' for instance. More generally over the whole period, there could have been more on Liberal relations with external



groups such as the Nonconformist churches, trade unions, manufacturing, the City and the professions. These would have given *Peace, Reform and Liberation* a wider perspective on the party and set it in a broader political and electoral context.

These minor caveats aside, though, the History Group is to be commended for producing this history of the party and Liberalism since the end of the seventeenth century. Other party histories are either rather dated like Roy Douglas's *Liberals: The History of the Liberal and Liberal Democrat Parties*, dry and academic like *A Short History of the Liberal Party: the Road Back to Power*, or primarily cover the twentieth century like David Dutton's *A History of the Liberal Party*. Ingham and Brack is not a substitute for the range of more academic studies of the party at different periods – indeed each chapter ends with a list of suggestions for further reading – but it is both an excellent introduction for the student and a great reference book for both the party member and those interested in politics more generally.

Following completion of a D.Phil. on Liberal Party survival in Britain, 1932 to 1959, at Exeter College, Oxford, Malcolm Baines now works in tax for a well-known hotel and serviced offices group.

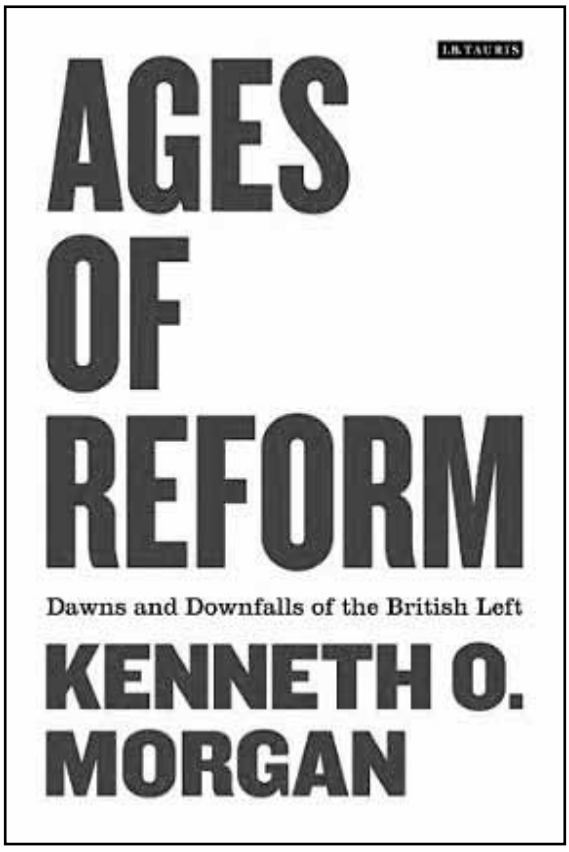
Personalities and causes of the left

K. O. Morgan, *Ages of Reform: Dawns and Downfalls of the British Left* (I.B.Tauris, 2011)
Reviewed by **Martin Pugh**

Readers of the *Journal of Liberal History* will find much to interest them in *Ages of Reform*, a collection of nineteen essays, lectures and articles written by Ken Morgan over a long period and ranging widely across left-wing politics in nineteenth and twentieth century Britain. They reflect an emphasis on the prominent personalities, including Keir Hardie, Lloyd George, Nye Bevan, Jim Callaghan and Michael Foot, four of whom have been the subject of biographies by Morgan, and also on the great issues and causes of progressive politics, as opposed to questions of party organisation and elections. Some chapters are short, though none the worse for that, notably

his splendidly incisive speech in the House of Lords attacking the decision to go to war in Iraq. The sentiments, if not the language, are reminiscent of Gladstone's condemnation of Disraeli for his irresponsible imperialist wars in the late 1870s. The speech is also a reminder that a modicum of knowledge about the dismal history of British invasions of Afghanistan on the part of today's Labour and Liberal Democrat politicians might have opened their eyes to the predictable fiasco in which Britain has been embroiled for ten years.

It is hardly possible in a review of this kind to comment on all nineteen of the chapters. Suffice it to say that this reviewer's interest was especially attracted by several of the essays in the second half of the book dealing with aspects of Labour history. For example, Morgan draws attention to a neglected theme in 'Labour and republicanism' – or perhaps one should say 'Labour and monarchism'. Historically Liberals have experienced more conflict with monarchs than Labour partly because they tend to be more interested in constitutional questions and because their governments suffered from Queen Victoria's inability to adjust to her role as a politically neutral figurehead. By contrast,



Labour prime ministers have got on rather well with their monarchs and the wider movement has shown minimal interest in republicanism. The foolish decision to exclude Blair and Brown from the royal wedding is completely out of line with past practice. From the early 1920s onwards Labour politicians were routinely invited to royal functions which they eagerly accepted.

The question is *why* has Labour been so content with a hereditary monarchy? Morgan does not delve far into this, but part of the explanation is that, in so far as Labour has been a working-class movement, it has simply reflected working-class enthusiasm for the royal family. The other is that George V set a crucial precedent in 1924 when he invited Ramsay MacDonald to form a government with a mere 191 MPs and with no conditions attached. In effect, the king conferred legitimacy on Labour at a time when Tory propaganda was denouncing it as unfit to govern.

A similar question is raised by the chapter dealing with Labour and imperialism. Morgan's focus is on a handful of leading figures during the post-1945 era. As a result, he tends to miss the extent to which the early Labour movement reflected conventional attitudes about empire. Though not very interested in India and Africa, it was enthusiastic about the colonies of white settlement which were seen to offer opportunities for emigration, markets, employment, trade union organisation and, in Australia and New Zealand, Labour Parties that won power relatively early and offered useful models for interventionist social legislation.

Instead Morgan examines the process of post-war decolonisation in which Labour, though largely out of power, proved to be influential. He makes a strong case for the role of Jim Callaghan as both supporter and critic of Conservative policy under Lennox Boyd and Ian Macleod. In effect, decolonisation was an aspect of *consensus* politics, although Morgan does not use the word. Indeed, Labour sometimes wanted to proceed more slowly to independence than the Conservatives in that it aspired to create a measure of democracy and economic stability before renouncing control. In many ways this was an extension of inter-war policy in which the parties cooperated over moves to extend participation in government to Indians, the main controversies occurring within the Conservative Party.

In 'The rise and fall of nationalisation' Morgan tackles another important but neglected theme. He traces Labour's gradual adoption of nationalisation between the wars leading to the innovations of 1945–51 and the party's marked retreat from the idea thereafter. But why did Labour lose confidence in the whole enterprise so quickly ? As Morgan points out, the timing of the launch was not perfect – a fuel crisis in 1947 undermined wartime confidence in planning and linked nationalisation with failure. But this is not sufficient explanation. It was an error, politically, not to involve the labour force more closely in the running of nationalised industries and thereby to take the opportunity to build an ethos around the idea of collective ownership. As a result, by the early 1950s there was no popular appetite for further nationalisation. Yet nationalisation was never as unpopular as later propaganda suggests, partly because state ownership had a longer history. Early Socialists like Robert Blatchford had used the Victorian Post Office as evidence of the efficiency and popularity of public enterprise. The foundation of the Forestry Commission in 1920 reflected the general belief that state intervention was necessary to remedy the failure of the private sector to invest in the national interest. Moreover, Labour's nationalisation programme proved to be too narrow, focusing on problematic, underfunded industries and backing away from profitable private monopolies in consumer goods such as sugar refining.

Morgan's survey of Labour and the special relationship with the United States offers a useful corrective to impressions of the Blair–Brown era. He reminds us that while the relationship enjoyed a brief climax during the late 1940s during the Cold War, it was otherwise complicated by friction over such issues as the post-war loan, the atomic bomb and the Korean War, but also sustained by Gaitskell's enthusiasm for America, by sympathy for New Deal policies and by the writing of J. K. Galbraith. It is

salutary to note that three Labour governments have effectively been destroyed by slavishly following American priorities: those of Attlee, Blair and Wilson. The latter bought American backing for the currency after 1964 with a view to avoiding devaluation, thereby upsetting his entire economic strategy; Wilson antagonised his domestic support by backing the war in Vietnam but irritated the Americans by resisting pressure to send troops to fight there. Morgan shows that even in the 1960s American politicians had little genuine regard for Britain despite extravagant public displays of mutual admiration.

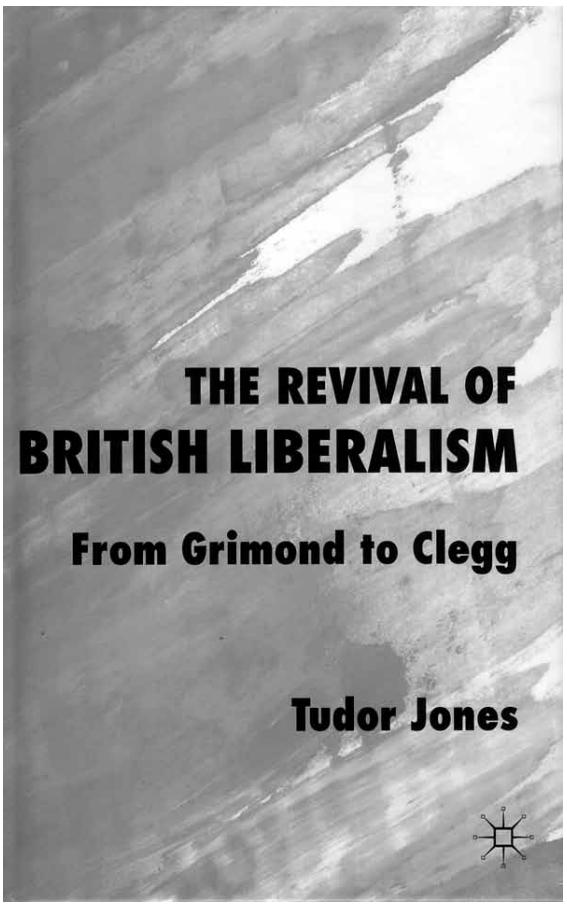
Finally, Morgan offers a persuasive revisionist view of the Wilson-Callaghan governments of 1974–79 which, indirectly, gives food for thought for Liberal Democrats. Although the party learnt some lessons from the abortive pact between David Steel and Jim Callaghan, its present leaders have hopelessly misjudged the wider implications of minority government. In May 2010 both the Lib Dem negotiators and the MPs generally seem to have assumed that they could not risk leaving the Conservatives to form a minority government because that would lead to a second general election and an inevitable government victory.

However, there is scant historical support for this view. Voters tend to resent being forced to the polls twice in a short space of time. A second election in 1910 failed to improve the Asquith government's position. In 1951 Attlee risked his small 1950 majority at a second election and lost it. After the first election of 1974 Wilson's minority government successfully managed to lead the country out of the chaos of the miners' strike, the three-day week and raging inflation, though it suffered fifty-nine parliamentary defeats in 1974–76. Encouraged by the pollsters, Wilson opted for the expected autumn election – and *failed* to win the expected working majority. Would a minority Tory government, handicapped by economic austerity and internal divisions in 2010–11, really have been in a position to risk a second election? On the contrary, the ensuing post-election interval would have allowed Lib Dems to maintain their distinctiveness and leave the Conservatives to shoulder the blame for economic failure while giving Labour the opportunity to select a new leader, distance itself from Blairism and cooperate with the Lib Dems to oust the government.

Martin Pugh was Professor of Modern British History at Newcastle University until 1999 and is now a freelance historian. His most recent book is Speak for Britain! A New History of the Labour Party *(2010) and he is currently writing a book on the crisis of British national identity, which will be published in 2012.*

Policy and ideology

Tudor Jones, *The Revival of British Liberalism – From Grimond to Clegg* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)
Reviewed by **Michael Meadowcroft**



Any Liberal wanting a single reference volume on the development of party policy from 1956 to the present, and its relevance to the political history of the Liberal and Liberal Democrat parties, will find this an admirable and reliable guide. Tudor Jones has applied his experience and academic skills to produce a companion volume to recent political histories of Liberalism. By spending four years reading the whole oeuvre of Liberal writing over fifty-five years, by interviewing a wide range of contributors to the policy debate – including, I need to declare, myself – and by utilising his particular speciality of political thought, he has brought a remarkable sense of order to what would otherwise be regarded as an inchoate jumble.

Jones uses the advent of Jo Grimond to the Liberal leadership as the starting point of his study not least because Jo enjoyed and welcomed ideas and debate. I recall, for instance, at my first Liberal Assembly in 1961, Jo attended a meeting at Edinburgh University. He sat on a table surrounded by a large attendance of maybe two hundred Young Liberals happily participating in a lively debate on current issues, without any sense of condescension or hierarchy on his part.

Grimond directly and indirectly sparked a whole raft of policy publications. By 1960 there was the beginnings of a formidable research department at headquarters headed by Harry Cowie, a very able but somewhat acerbic Scot in whom Grimond placed considerable trust. By the time of my arrival at headquarters in January 1962, there were also three research assistants, John Blake, Michael O'Hara and Ann Rodden, and between them they produced a high-quality monthly political bulletin *Current Topics* and staffed a series of *New Directions* policy booklets, plus a set of reports on key subjects by committees which included experts from beyond the party's formal membership, drawn in by Grimond's charismatic leadership.

Grimond tells in his memoirs of arriving in the Commons in 1950

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The Revival of British Liberalism From Grimond to Clegg

By Tudor Jones

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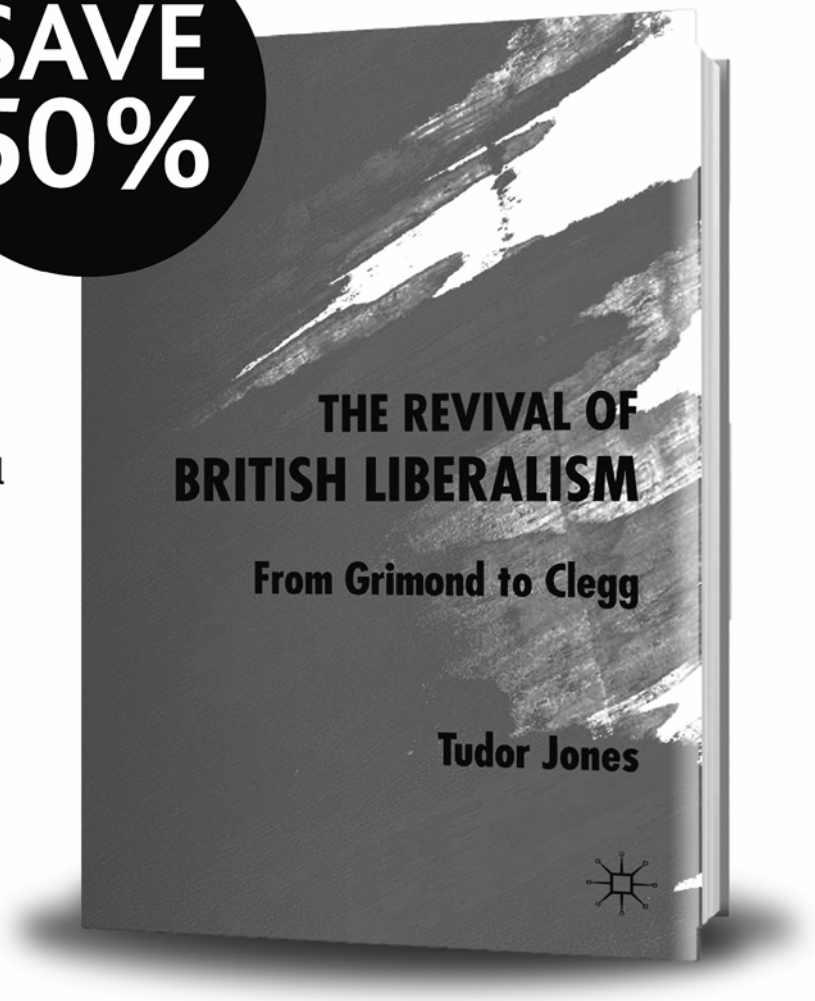
The Revival of British Liberalism: From Grimond to Clegg charts and explores the development of Liberal thought from the accession of Jo Grimond to the leadership of the Liberal Party in November 1956 through to the election of Nick Clegg as Leader of the Liberal Democrats in December 2007. The book is an ideological history of the Liberal Party and the Liberal Democrats, examining Liberal ideas as they have been embodied both in the writings of Liberal politicians and thinkers and in the policies and strategies of the Liberal Party and the Liberal Democrats. The author also draws upon his interviews with some of the leading protagonists in the debates under scrutiny.



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and being thrust immediately into the uncongenial role of Chief Whip and of the disparate free spirits that made up his small team. I suspect that one underlying reason for his promotion of party policy initiatives was to find a unifying corpus of policy to shift the political focus away from parliament in which Liberal representation was capricious and largely dependent on local personalities and historical party arrangements.

As Jones points out, Grimond had already been part of the group that produced the book *The Unservile State,* edited by George Watson in 1957, the publication of which led to a series of pamphlets on separate topics, and had himself published his first book in 1959 in time for that year's general election. Other groups in the party sought to take part in the flurry of ideas. The Young Liberals and the Union of Liberal Students joined together in 1959 for what they originally called 'Operation Manifesto' until the party bosses convinced them that this would be confused with the party's official election manifesto. Between 1960 and 1968 it produced nineteen pamphlets. Finally the monthly publication *New Outlook* was launched at the 1961 party assembly as a semi-official publication in effect to fill the long gap caused by the demise of the *Liberal Magazine* in 1950.

Jones points out: 'These varied Liberal publications underlined the importance which Grimond attached to the formulation and communication of policy and ideas as an essential part of his attempt to restore the intellectual and political credibility of his party.' Further on in the book, Jones draws attention to the somewhat unpalatable fact that the later Grimond expressed support for the economic liberalism of the Institute of Economic Affairs. Grimond Liberals of the 1950s and 1960s vintages have preferred to hang on to his consistent support for community initiatives, co-ownership and a diminution of 'bureaucratic blight.'

Jones' great skill lies in allying the key events in the party's history to its policy development. He does this with great clarity but without apparent bias so that, for instance, his assessment of party leaders and their effectiveness enables the reader to make his or her own judgements. It rightly makes those of us who have had a long involvement and, often, inside experience, take on board evidence that impinges on our prejudices! His methodology enables him, for instance, to place the community politics strategy within a broader framework of party activity and it enables him to coin the choice phrase 'Denting the Mould' for a later period. This method brings into focus the existence over the long term of a much more consistent broad body of policy than the short-term battles would have indicated at the time, provoked as they often were by internal strife – such as the problems that brought into being the Liberal Commission of 1969, chaired by Donald Wade, which produced the excellent report *Facing the Future*.

The book sets Liberal philosophy firmly into the party's political history and as such it is a valuable addition to the literature. I hope, probably in vain, that it will be widely read by the current *Focus*-obsessed generation of Liberal Democrat activists.

This approach is valuable, both to historians and to those activists who understand the key importance of rooting current thinking and strategy in the experience of the past and of linking consistency with innovation. Jones is exceptionally surefooted and brings a scrupulous honesty to his assessment of party writings. Speaking for myself, I would have welcomed a critic of this calibre. All too often efforts at exposition of Liberalism and at critiques of other political philosophies have seemed to attract only approbation from colleagues and otherwise to float into the ether untested. All of us benefit from debate and discussion and there is far too little of it today. And one does not have to agree with all Jones' conclusions to welcome his work.

Jones takes the party's election manifestos as his main points of reference, rightly regarding them as the definitive expression of the party's political stance at that moment in time. He ties in with this approach the semi-official books that have accompanied the manifesto at every election since 1945, and he traces the freer expression of policy that is possible between elections. The book is an excellent compendium of Liberal publishing over half a century.

Given his thorough coverage of the Ashdown years and the subsequent twists and turns, Jones can be forgiven the long gestation period for his book. It ends tantalisingly with the election of Nick Clegg as leader and as a consequence it lacks a review of the past four crucial years of a leader who speaks always of Liberals and Liberalism and whose book *The Liberal Moment* (Demos, 2009) is as good a short statement of social liberalism as has appeared in recent years. One looks forward to a second, updated, paperback edition taking us up to the coalition, which might also be more within the affordable range of such books.

The book sets Liberal philosophy firmly into the party's political history and as such it is a valuable addition to the literature. I hope, probably in vain, that it will be widely read by the current *Focus*-obsessed generation of Liberal Democrat activists.

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.

Secular intellectuals

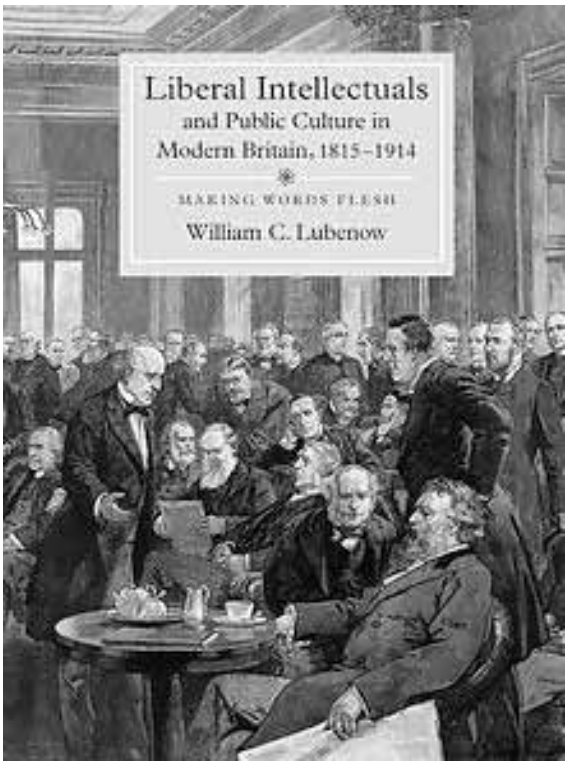
William C. Lubenow, *Liberal Intellectuals and Public Culture in Modern Britain, 1815–1914: Making Words Flesh* (Boydell Press, 2010)

Reviewed by **Iain Sharpe**

The starting point for Professor Lubenow's book is that the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828 and the granting of Catholic emancipation the following year 'wrested Britain from the patronage values of the confessional fiscal-military state' and 'opened political and social space by forging liberal values'. The author traces the intellectual life and social milieu

of the secular public intellectuals who emerged to fill this new social space. The intellectuals referred to in the title were not specialists in particular fields but rather those who pursued professional, academic or literary careers (indeed often combinations of these) having studied at Oxford or Cambridge. Their interests were wide-ranging, encompassing not only history, politics, science, mathematics and literature, but also travel, in particular Alpine mountaineering. What united them was an intellectual approach that incorporated acceptance of doubt and rejection of dogmatic religion – for example their interest in the study of statistics reflected an acceptance that knowledge could be a matter of probability rather than certainty.

The author outlines how the role of Oxford and Cambridge universities changed to put more emphasis on academic achievement and preparing students for the secular professions rather than the Anglican priesthood. At the same time, members of the old aristocracy 'brought themselves into the modern world by accepting university values and its indeterminate knowledge'. For example, Sir Charles Trevelyan, assistant secretary to the Treasury and joint author of the Northcote–Trevelyan Report on civil service reform, came from a wealthy West Country family, but pursued an administrative career. He fathered something of a literary/political dynasty. His son George Otto went on to become a Liberal Cabinet minister under Gladstone, as well as pursing a literary career, writing a well-known multi-volume history of the American war of independence. Of his sons, one, C. P. Trevelyan became first a Liberal then a Labour MP and a Cabinet minister in the 1924 and 1929–31 governments, while another, G. M Trevelyan was both a popular and an academically eminent historian, ending up as Regius Professor of History at Cambridge University.



A continuing thread throughout the book is the careers and families of the brothers Sir James Fitzjames Stephen and Sir Leslie Stephen. The former was a lawyer, judge and polemicist, who stood twice as a Liberal parliamentary candidate, but who gave up party politics due to a reluctance to pander to public opinion, and who ended up as a vociferous opponent of Gladstone over home rule. His younger brother Leslie, the founding editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, is often cited as an exemplar of nineteenth-century intellectuals' loss of faith. He took holy orders in order to gain a Cambridge fellowship, but later renounced them, claiming to have 'never believed'. He is described by Professor Lubenow as belonging to a 'metropolitan but indeterminate social world between the universities and the state'. The DNB was his 'great history of liberalism', which 'measured social worth by the standards of imagination and education' rather than social class or military achievement. Professor Lubenow also devotes considerable attention to the world of Stephen's daughter, Virginia Woolf and her fellow Bloomsbury Group members, John Maynard Keynes, Lytton Strachey and E. M. Forster, who in many ways continued the spirit of secular Liberal intellectualism into the 1920s and beyond.

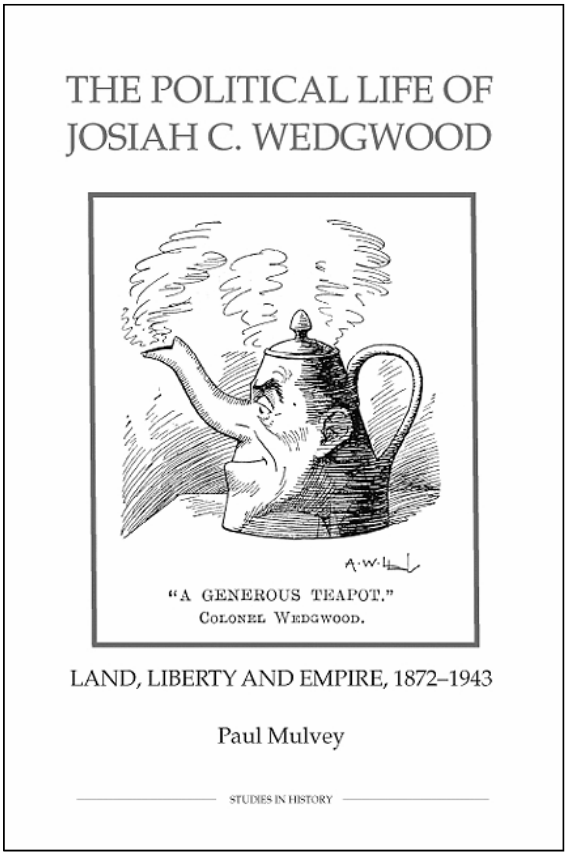
The author concludes with two chapters highlighting the problematic relationships between liberalism and, on the one hand, Roman Catholicism and on the other nationalism. He charts the attitudes of Catholic aristocrats, who in the early part of the nineteenth century often supported the Liberals because they were more sympathetic than the Tories to religious equality, but as the century wore on increasingly moved towards Conservatism. Two particular episodes prompted this: first Lord John Russell's overtly anti-Catholic Ecclesiastical Titles Act of 1851; secondly, and perhaps surprisingly, Gladstone's adoption of home rule, which they saw as pandering to 'revolutionary' Irish nationalism. Many secular Liberals too had problems with Irish home rule, although they had earlier supported other nationalisms, such as Italian reunification. Those Liberal intellectuals who became Liberal Unionists did so for various reasons, which can perhaps be best summed up as a fear of both the (Irish) Roman Catholic nature of Irish nationalism and its revolutionary character. To grant home rule, they believed, would pave the way for despotism, or at least a 'demagogic democracy'.

This book will add much to our understanding of the nineteenth-century British intellectual world, its opinions and thought processes. If I have a reservation about it, other than over the author's annoying stylistic tick of using repetition for emphasis, it is about how important the intellectuals depicted in this book actually were within Victorian Liberalism. Just as one feels that the attitudes of the Bloomsbury Group, who are also much discussed in this volume, are often given too much prominence in studies of the inter-war period, one is left feeling that the subjects of Professor Lubenow's study were certainly clever and learned, but in the end they didn't matter all that much.

The author acknowledges in the introduction to the book that Liberal ideology also owed much to 'Whig aristocracy', 'Manchester markets' and 'religious groups such as Unitarians', although the latter were hardly typical of the nonconformist churches whose members were so important to Liberalism. It is a pity that the book makes so little attempt to engage with these different crosscurrents of Liberal thought. Similarly, it is curious (and the author admits as much)

that Conservatives such as Arthur Balfour, George Curzon and the fourteenth Earl of Derby are also roped into the ranks of Liberal intellectuals because they illustrate 'processes and procedures associated with liberalism'. This does leave the problem however, that they were not actually Liberals. For all its undoubted merits, perhaps the book would have been better titled 'Secular intellectuals' rather than 'Liberal intellectuals'.

Iain Sharpe recently completed a University of London PhD thesis on 'Herbert Gladstone and Liberal Party Revival, 1899–1905'. He is a Liberal Democrat councillor in Watford.



For Gladstone and Henry George

Paul Mulvey, *The Political Life of Josiah C. Wedgwood: Land, Liberty and Empire, 1872–1943* (Royal Historical Society, 2010)
Reviewed by **Richard Toye**

When Josiah C. Wedgwood died at the age of seventy-one, the Canadian journalist J. F. Sanderson recalled an episode he had witnessed four years earlier, at the outbreak of the Second World War. After Neville Chamberlain made his formal declaration of war, the air-raid warning sounded. Wedgwood, at that time a Labour MP (he was ennobled in 1942), refused to follow the crowd into the parliamentary bomb shelter. 'He calmly announced that it was a practice raid because no bombs would fall on London for six months' (Sa*skatoon Star-Phoenix*, 30 July 1943). Other members argued with him, but he put his money where his mouth was and in due course won his bet. The story illustrates Wedgwood's capacity for independent-mindedness and (at times) sound judgement but also his foolhardy and obstreperous qualities. These help explain both his ability to maintain a longstanding, uninterrupted and quite high-profile parliamentary career (as a Liberal MP from 1906 and as a Labour one from 1918) and his failure to make it to the front rank of politics. He did at one point become a member of the Cabinet, as a Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in the short-lived Labour government of 1924, but, as Paul Mulvey notes in this excellent book, he had 'little status and little to do' in this role (p. 138) and, as was his habit, showed little collegiality. He was above all an individualist, making him difficult for historians to place; Mulvey's achievement is, without making exaggerated claims for his significance, to show why he should be taken seriously.

Wedgwood is probably best remembered for his association with three ideas: land reform, progressive reform in India, and Zionism. He remained faithful to the first of these causes after it went out of fashion, adopted the second before it came into fashion, and began advocating the third during the First World War, exactly as it came into fashion. His combination of beliefs, some of which were 'extreme and marginal' (p. 204), may have been idiosyncratic, but Mulvey places him convincingly as one of the last exponents of a once-powerful British tradition: 'He never ceased to believe that the Gladstonian radicalism of his early years, suitably developed by the ideas of Henry George, was the key to human progress and prosperity' (p. 208). Indeed, we are encouraged to believe that it may have been Wedgwood's difficult personality rather than the peculiarity of his ideas that kept him away from positions of greater prominence. Mulvey's judgements on his behaviour are robust, occasionally verging on the brutal. Thus Wedgwood's fruitful efforts between the wars to establish the History of Parliament project is recognised his 'greatest legacy' but also as 'one of his greatest failures'. Mulvey explains: 'while his great energy and enthusiasm created it, his carelessness, bellicosity and sheer lack of management talent alienated the very people that he needed to make it a success' (p. 177). The balance of this assessment, though, is perhaps not quite generous enough, given that History of Parliament Trust, freed from Wedgwood's eccentric methodology and Whiggish ideological proclivities, carries out excellent work to this day.

The book is billed as a political life, but sufficient information on Wedgwood's private affairs is included to illuminate his public career. The book is meticulously researched, enjoyable to read and, at just over two hundred pages, exactly the right length for the subject matter. It can be recommended warmly to anyone interested in the politics of the period.

Richard Toye is Professor of Modern History at the University of Exeter. His most recent books are Lloyd George and Churchill: Rivals for Greatness *(2007) and* Churchill's Empire: The World That Made Him and the World He Made *(2010).*

A Liberal Democrat History Group evening meeting

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO 'ORPINGTON MAN'?

The Orpington by-election of March 1962 was a political landmark: a stunning victory for Jo Grimond's Liberal Party, as Eric Lubbock turned a Conservative majority of 14,760 into a Liberal majority of 7,855. The term 'Orpington Man' was coined by the press to identify a new type of voter, young, white-collar, skilled, well-educated and upwardly mobile socially and economically a social group supposedly rejecting an old-fashioned and out-of-touch Tory party but not attracted to a cloth-cap, Clause IV Labour Party either.

But 'Orpington Man' never turned out to vote for the Liberal Party at the following general election. So what happened? **Dennis Kavanagh**, Emeritus Professor and Research Fellow in Politics and Communications at Liverpool University, and **Dr Mark Egan**, author of *Coming into Focus: The Transformation of the Liberal Party, 1945–64*, will explore the phenomenon of 'Orpington Man' from the by-election to the 1964 general election.

7.00pm, Monday 23 January 2012 (after 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

WINSTON CHURCHILL: TORY OR LIBERAL?

'I am an English Liberal. I hate the Tory Party, their men, their words and their methods.' These were Winston Churchill's own words in 1903. As a Liberal, Churchill held high government office and, along with Lloyd George, was regarded as one of the driving forces of Asquith's reforming administration. Was Liberalism his true political ideology? Or should we judge his position from his re-ratting in 1924 and his long association and later leadership of the Conservatives?

Churchill's party politics will come under the spotlight at the History Group fringe meeting at the Liberal Democrat spring conference. Delivering their verdicts will be **Professor Martin Pugh**, formerly of Newcastle and Liverpool John Moores Universities. and **Sir Alan Beith**, Liberal and Liberal Democrat MP for Berwick-on-Tweed since 1973.

8.00pm, Friday 9 March 2012
Sage Centre, Gateshead (for room, check conference directory)