12 Ivatt, 'Liberal Party Fortunes', p. 426 and Walter Roberts, *A Centenary Worthy of Celebration – The Fortunes of the Liberal Party in the [Isle of] Wight since 1877* (private publication, 1977, held at Newport, Isle of Wight, County Library), p. 9.
13 Sir Charles Baring, *A Baronet's Tale* (Isle of Wight County Council Cultural Services, 1983), p. 2.
14 Ibid. pp. 6–8.
15 F. W. S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1885–1919* (Macmillan, 1974), p. 301.
16 Roberts, *A Centenary Worthy of Celebration*, p. 5.
17 Brough Scott, *Galloper Jack*, (Macmillan, 2003), p. 70.
18 Ibid., p. 107.
19 Ivatt, 'Liberal Party Fortunes', p. 93.
20 Roberts, *A Centenary Worthy of Celebration*, pp. 6–7.
21 IWCP, 3 October 1908 and Ivatt, 'Liberal Party Fortunes', p. 102.
22 IWCP, 9 November 1907 – Lady Baring was, additionally, very active in promoting Women's Liberal Associations throughout the island.
23 Michael Kinnear, *The British Voter*, Batsford Academic, 1981, p. 28.
24 All electoral figures from Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results,* pp. 171, 301 and Ivatt, 'Liberal Party Fortunes', p. 114.
25 Baring, *A Baronet's Tale,* pp. 5, 6 and 7.
26 Roberts, *A Centenary Worthy of Celebration*, p. 7.
27 Baring, *A Baronet's Tale,* pp. 8, 9.
28 Ibid. pp. 4, 5, and cited in David Dutton, *A History of the Liberal Party* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 9.
29 Roberts, *A Centenary Worthy of Celebration*, p. 7.
30 IWCP, 13 January 1906.
31 Ibid. 28 July 1906.
32 Ibid. 11 April 1908.
33 See IWCP editions 26 January 1907, 21 March 1908, 11 April 1908, 30 May 1908, 27 June 1908, and 3 October 1908.
34 IWCP, 3 October 1908.
35 Roberts, *A Centenary Worthy of Celebration*, p. 7.
36 IWCP, 4 January 1908
37 Baring, *A Baronet's Tale,* p. 9.
38 IWCP, 15 December 1906.
39 Ibid. 15 September 1906.
40 Ibid. 1 December 1906.
41 Baring, *A Baronet's Tale,* p. 7.
42 Scott, *Galloper Jack*, p. 102.
43 IWCP, 15 January 1910.
44 The guest speaker at the Unionist Celebratory dinner at Freshwater Isle of Wight makes this very point. IWCP, 5 February 1910.
45 Ivatt, 'Liberal Party Fortunes', pp. 223, 224, 246.
46 Ibid. p. 246 and Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results,* p. 301.
47 IWCP, 12 November 1910.
48 Ivatt, 'Liberal Party Fortunes', p. 292–3.
49 Electoral figures from Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results,* pp. 104, 256.
50 Roberts, *A Centenary Worthy of Celebration*, p. 8 and Ivatt, 'Liberal Party Fortunes', p. 223.

REPORT

Winston Churchill: Liberal or Tory?

Conference fringe meeting, 9 March 2012, with Professor Martin Pugh and Sir Alan Beith MP; chair: Baroness Maddock

Report by **Mark Pack**

One of my history teachers at school used to joke that the secret to someone's reputation amongst historians is to die at the right point. He was thinking in particular of the comparison between Cavour and Bismarck, one dying triumphant and the other living on to an old age that soured their reputation.

Certainly Winston Churchill's reputation would have been very different had he died at a younger age. If he had died young, he would have been a Horatio Bottomley character – a talented, maverick figure of curiosity in the margins of history and only occasionally remembered. Died a bit later, and he would have been one of the great 'if only' people of Liberal Party history, up there with Charles Dilke as someone who could have become party leader and led it to glory, a favourite subject of alternative histories.

Had Churchill died shortly after reintroducing the gold standard policy, he would have been remembered on a sour note as someone whose last and greatest contribution to the country was also the worst; an unconventional politician undone at the end by following the conventional wisdom. A few more years on and his death would have been that of the tragic prophet, warning against the rise of Nazism but dying before he was proved right.

As it turned out, he not only lived on for his time as a Conservative prime minister to thoroughly overshadow his years as a successful Liberal politician, but he was also so triumphant in that role during the Second World War that his reputation survived him hanging on in active politics for too long afterwards. His unsuccessful final years in 10 Downing Street would have wrecked the memories of a lesser man; for Churchill however they are but a small epilogue to his years of greatness.

All this illustrates how any attempt to classify Winston Churchill is prone to problems, given his varied career and wide range of views, many of which still resonate today. Great nationalist friend of Euro-sceptics or pro-European Union man? Supporter of electoral reform or defender of first past the post? Many mantles are claimed for him, which is what made the choice of subject for the latest Liberal Democrat History Group meeting all the more intriguing: Winston Churchill – Liberal or Tory?

Churchill himself once said, 'I am an English Liberal. I hate the Tory Party, their men, their words and their methods.' Strong words, but rather undermined by his two periods of political service in the

Conservative Party, before and after his time as a Liberal. Liberal Democrat peer Diana Maddock reminded the audience of this quote when introducing the meeting. She then handed over to the long-standing MP (and her husband) Alan Beith.

Beith highlighted how Churchill was most consistently a maverick. During his time as a Liberal, he was a Liberal with some Conservative views and many views of his own; during his time as a Conservative, he was a Conservative with some Liberal views and many views of his own. The real answer, therefore, to Churchill's political personality therefore lies in looking at those maverick views which he held consistently through his life, Beith argued.

He went on to say that Churchill would have found himself more at home in David Cameron's ideology-light and more inclusive version of the Conservative Party than in the Thatcher version. In his own lifetime, it was often clearer what the Conservative Party was against rather than what it was for – anti-trade unions, anti-socialism and anti-free trade.

'English liberalism has been through many wanderings and much tribulation in the last twenty years and it is today confronted by a powerful federation of vested interests. Yet it is a weapon and an instrument which in the hands of Mr Gladstone would easily smash to pieces these pantomime politics and this cheapjack imperialism with which we are inflicted and insulted today,' said Churchill at one point. 'Thank God we have the Liberal Party'.

Churchill was a Liberal, and as he was such as strong believer in individual freedom, appropriately so given how individualistic he was himself. Moreover, Churchill had a strong strain of social liberalism – freedom was not real unless you had an education, your health and the opportunity to support yourself. In this he differed from the Tory democracy of his father and Churchill was zealous in seeking to help the poor and disadvantaged during his time in office as Liberal. This continued through his later Conservative period, including seeing Beveridge's proposals as being right even if he was slow to embrace them, letting the political initiative on them pass to Labour.

Consistent too was the nature of his social activism and its not taking a socialist form – concern for society, but based on individual support rather than socialist collectivism. 'Socialism seeks to pull down wealth. Liberalism seeks to raise up poverty,' said Churchill – a view easily adaptable to a Conservative outlook too, as was his belief that enterprise needed rescuing from vested interests and privilege: 'Liberalism attacks monopoly'.

Despite the enforced wartime collaboration with Joseph Stalin, anti-Bolshevism was another strong and consistent theme of Churchill's. This was a view comfortably at home in the Conservative Party but also, as Beith pointed out, was derived in Churchill's case from liberal principles.

So too on free trade, support for permitting the immigration of those fleeing oppression abroad, belief in a capital levy on property and support for home rule in Ireland (along with devolution on the mainland). On all these Churchill had views that were liberal, even if also held whilst being a Conservative.

Alan Beith did not, however, go so far as to claim Churchill's support for a united Europe as evidence of a liberal internationalism. Churchill's views on foreign affairs were too rooted in nostalgia for empire and a desire for unity amongst English-speaking peoples to count as liberal.

As Beith expanded on in answer to a question, for all Churchill's flowery language of European cooperation at times, he was very keen on links with the US and never really bought into anything that would reduce British sovereignty. (Although Beith did not mention it, even Churchill's offer of an indivisible union with France fits this pattern. It was made during the depths of the Second World War and was a desperate attempt to stave off French surrender in the war. It was an attempt to save Britain and its sovereignty by keeping an opponent of Germany in the war.)

Even conceding that, it is a long list of Liberal Party principles that Churchill subscribed too. Beith added of course that there are issues on the other side of the balance sheet – non-liberal ideas that Churchill subscribed to. His 'crazily stubborn romantic imperialism over India' came top of that list, especially considering his opposition to democracy for Indian people or the right of self-determination for them. Beith then went on to talk about Churchill's lack of restraint when it came to using force, both at home and in war, such as in the Siege of Sydney Street and the tragedy of the Dardanelles. He was an enthusiast for physical force rather than a reluctant user of it. (Although not explored further in the meeting, this was Beith's weakest point, as the willingness of others such as Paddy Ashdown to support the use of force for liberal international aims makes this not a particularly non-liberal attitude.)

Churchill himself once said, 'I am an English Liberal. I hate the Tory Party, their men, their words and their methods.'

The shortness of this second list led Beith to conclude that at heart Churchill was a Liberal, helped perhaps by the life-long Liberal allegiance of his beloved Clementine. Beith also pointed out that even after becoming Conservative prime minister, Churchill retained affection for the Liberal Party. After 1945, for example, he offered the Liberal Party deals rather than trying to wipe it out, remaining a personal friend of many key figures and indeed staying close friends with Lloyd George all his life. 'Churchill could never quite get Liberalism out of his system ... When his [ministerial achievements] were good, they were Liberal', concluded Beith.

Following on from him, Martin Pugh agreed with much of what Beith had said, arguing that Liberals had been far too hesitant to claim the mantle of Churchill. Pugh highlighted how uncertain many Conservatives are about him, reminding the audience that Churchill's 1951–5 government, his only peacetime one, was all about upholding the post-war consensus. It is a government skipped when Conservatives look to their past, and helps explain why they do not talk about 'Churchillian Conservatism'. Its legacy is not one they are comfortable with.

Pugh mentioned the importance of ambition to Churchill. In both of the instances that he chose to switch parties, it was a good time to leave that party behind. However, there was some consistency, such as in his views on free trade. He may have used them as a justification

for leaving the Conservatives for the Liberals at an opportune time, but he stuck to his free trade views subsequently.

Martin Pugh also talked of Churchill's instrumental role in Edwardian state-financed social reform, at least once Churchill discovered an enthusiasm for it. 'He is full of the poor, who he has just discovered,' was how Charles Masterman put it at the time.

He also discovered Germany, urging Britain to learn from its social policies, including expansive state industries. As Pugh pointed out, this enthusiasm for Bismarckianism is not something usually linked to Liberalism, but instead it is more obviously linked to some strands of Conservatism, which saw the state as a positive engine for improving the life of people. 'He was not in any way embarrassed about using the power of the state', said Pugh, but it was using the state for Liberal or Conservative ends and most certainly not to pave the way for socialism.

Turning to Churchill as Home Secretary, Pugh talked of his dislike of jail sentences for petty offences. In particular, he took up the case of a boy of twelve who was jailed for seven years for taking a piece of fish. Churchill got the sentence dismissed. When nominally charged with implementing the Aliens Act of 1905, Churchill largely declined, failing to enforce the provisions that were designed to keep Jews out. Instead, he criticised the police when he felt they were harassing refugees and was outspoken in upholding the place of Britain as the home for economic and political refugees, seeing it as something from which the country greatly benefited as well as being the correct humanitarian course. As a result, Pugh rated Churchill as second only to Roy Jenkins when judging twentieth-century Home Secretaries by their liberal nature.

Although Pugh estimated that Churchill would have been as happy to serve under Asquith as under Lloyd George, it was Asquith who demoted Churchill and later Lloyd George who invited him back into government, making Churchill a de facto supporter of the latter rather than the former. This had the significance of making Churchill a coupon Liberal, willing to serve in coalition with the Conservatives and attracted by the idea of 'fusion' bringing together elements of Liberals, Conservatives and Labour. In the absence of fusion taking place, and irritated by Asquith's willingness to see the first Labour government take office, Churchill drifted further away from the Liberals.

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When he joined the Conservatives, he initially took the label 'Constitutionalist' showing, Pugh said, how it was a very individualist move and not one motivated by a simple attraction to Conservatism. Moreover, as Pugh went on to say in the question and answer session at the end, Churchill had a love of new ideas, looking for fresh solutions to problems – which made him always look for a change of course in response to events and saw him taken by one enthusiasm after another. The speed with which he shifted around in these searches often annoyed more conventional, less flexible politicians. It did though provide a certain logic to his wanderings around the political spectrum.

'Every one of us is an individualist for some things. Every one of us is a collectivist for others,' Pugh quoted Churchill saying. He was not a simple right-winger. Indeed, Pugh added, this made Churchill's move more attractive to Conservative leader Baldwin as it meant Churchill's recruitment fitted with Baldwin's desire to move to the political centre ground.

Churchill's return to the Conservatives was somewhat restrained. In 1940 a free vote of Conservative MPs would almost certainly have seen Halifax, not him, become prime minister and when he did become premier, he did not immediately become leader of the party. Even when he did, he neglected the Conservative Party machine during the war years, and, as Beith also said, after 1945 Churchill showed a generosity towards the Liberal Party, offering a small share of power to Clement Davies.

Churchill did not leave behind a coherent body of thought or a body of followers which, as Pugh concluded, leaves the space for Liberal Democrats to make the most of Churchill's liberalism.

You can watch the fringe meeting at http://bit.ly/ChurchillFringe

Mark Pack is a member of the History Group's committee.

REVIEWS

Lloyd George, diplomacy and international affairs

Michael Graham Fry, *And Fortune Fled: David Lloyd George, the First Democratic Statesman, 1916–1922* (Peter Lang, 2011)
Reviewed by **Dr J. Graham Jones**

The author of this truly massive tome, positively crammed with information and references, is Professor Emeritus of International Relations at the University of Southern California. He is also a doctoral graduate of the University of London. This groundbreaking study, which has taken the author more than thirty years to complete, is a sequel to his previous, well-received work *Lloyd George and Foreign Policy: the Education of a Statesman, 1890–1916* (McGill, 1977), widely regarded as a seminal work which traced Lloyd George's attitudes towards foreign policy from his first election to