

Gaunt's paper on Peel's inheritance shows that Gladstone was not the automatic inheritor of Peel's mantle that is implied in the title of the first volume of Richard Shannon's two-part biography. Gladstone was a great advocate of austerity – the 'retrenchment' in the Liberal slogan 'peace, retrenchment and reform' (another topic of great current relevance). But that did not make him the unthinking proponent of small government; under Gladstone, government began the gradual accretion of responsibilities such as education and entrepreneurial local government. Two essays here use the complexity of his ideas about retrenchment to explore his relationship with Ireland before he became Liberal leader, and the ambiguities of his attitudes to slavery in the context of a debate on the use of the navy in the suppression of the African slave trade.

Gladstone's participation in theological controversy, the fervour which he generated among the working class and his skirting of personal controversy in his charitable work, would probably damn him in today's tabloid press. But in his own time no one was better at the management of his image. This book contains essays on his nuanced relations with organised labour, how cartoonists saw him and on the survival of campaign paraphernalia idolising him, from the 1884 electoral reform agitation which assisted in the longer-term Liberal narrative of coherent progressive politics and built on the enthusiasm of popular support. Where is the equivalent support and material for reform of the House of Lords?

Two of the essays in the Personal section would not have been possible without the *Gladstone Diaries*, and demonstrate just how useful their preservation has been. Peter Sewter has written on Gladstone's tree-felling, making clear just how vigorous the GOM was, and how this was a positive conservationist activity rather than destructive. Jenny West's exploration of Gladstone's health adds considerably to Roy Jenkins' focus on the stress-related and psychosomatic illnesses of a long career, but she also draws attention to the difficulties of diagnosis at this distance in time and with Victorian medical knowledge only just moving from the comfort of custom

These fourteen essays prove that there is much still to be discovered about Gladstone and much that is pertinent to current debates.

into the practically scientific. The remaining paper in the Personal sections tracks two of Gladstone's friendships to their close, illustrating the price paid by politicians for their public career.

In the final essay, Eugenio Biagini reflects on a 1992 *Economist* front cover describing Gladstone as 'a prophet of the left'. Biagini reviews the ways in which Gladstone has continued to exert an influence beyond the grave. For example, in the last few years, Gladstone's legacy has been appropriated by Thatcherites who over-simplify the Victorian Liberal view of the roles of government and private enterprise. Tony Blair cited Gladstone in

his enticements to Paddy Ashdown over 'the Project', and to justify overseas intervention. This poses the question as to why, despite Ashdown's best efforts, the party that descends from Gladstone makes the least effort to safeguard his legacy of humanitarian Liberalism.

It is hard to do justice to such a disparate collection in a limited space, but these fourteen essays prove that there is much still to be discovered about Gladstone and much that is pertinent to current debates, particularly those concerned with international affairs.

Tony Little is Chair of the Liberal Democrat History Group

Lifelong campaigner

Bill Cash, *John Bright: Statesman, Orator, Agitator*

(I. B. Tauris, 2011)

Reviewed by **Anthony Howe**

WHEN POLITICIANS TURN to political biography (Powell on Chamberlain, Hurd on Peel, Jenkins on Gladstone) they often tell us more about themselves than they shed new light on their subjects. Bill Cash on John Bright is no exception, for we soon learn that Bright was his great-grandfather's cousin, both belonging to that generation of Quaker businessmen who contributed so much to the wealth and public spirit of provincial Victorian England.

Although Cash in fact tells us little about Bright the businessman (Rochdale cottonmaster and carpet manufacturer) he stands out as one of those successful entrepreneurial Quaker radicals whose sense of justice to his own order pushed him into the 1840s campaign against the Corn Laws (for which in this account read the Common Agricultural Policy) and to a lifelong crusade devoted to upholding 'justice and freedom', a message in which Cash finds a fitting template for the twenty-first-century politician. Several elements in Bright's subsequent crusades earn Cash's approval – not only his lucid 'case for global trade' but his opposition to any form of proportional

representation, balanced by his powerful advocacy of democracy, not least at the time of the Second Reform Act, which proved ironically counter-productive, allowing instead Disraeli to promote the Tories as the party of democracy. Bright's opposition to home rule for Ireland, which separated him politically if not personally from his long-standing friendship with Gladstone, is interpreted as a defence of British parliamentary sovereignty, comparable to that of some recent Conservatives with regard to the European Union.

More convincingly Cash, the stalwart backbencher suffering at the stifling hands of party managers, is keen to recognise Bright, never happy in his short periods in office, as a keen defender of the independent MP, willing to assert the rights of the Commons against over-mighty Cabinet government. Cash also highlights Bright's ambiguous approach to empire, especially India, willing on the one hand to foster its development while recognising the legitimacy of its demands for autonomy (but not yet); he also interestingly compares the enthusiasm for imperial federation of Bright's fellow MP for Birmingham, Joseph Chamberlain,

REVIEWS

with Bright's imperial scepticism, akin of course to that of Eurosceptics in the face of 'Federal Europe'.

Against the imperial turn, Cash hails Bright as foreseeing a quasi-Anglo-Atlantic free trade area, while he was one of the foremost defenders of the (protectionist) American Union at the time of the Civil War, although his own supposed republican values diminished his political influence and were belied by his later strong rapport with Queen Victoria. Cash finds much to admire in Bright's American legacy and anticipation of the 'civil rights' movement, although oddly, unlike a number of his Liberal contemporaries, Bright never visited the United States.

Finally in this primarily thematic rather than chronological treatment, Cash rightly devotes much attention to foreign policy, for Bright earned his greatest fame as an opponent of the Crimean War, was a largely consistent critic of Palmerstonian and Disraelian adventurism abroad, and was agonisingly to resign office over British military action in Egypt in 1882. Here his views derived not so much from his Quaker religious beliefs but his identification

with the pacific and non-interventionist foreign policy of his great political friend from the anti-Corn Law campaign, Richard Cobden. Both Cobden and Bright are little remembered today, although they were for a century or more yoked together as the leading pillars of early Victorian Liberalism.

Cash's book, timed for the bicentenary of Bright's birth in 1811, will hopefully revive Bright's memory, although it will do little to advance historical scholarship, for it relies heavily on the work of others, is not abreast of the recent literature, and is marred by errors

of fact and questionable judgements. Indeed at times it fails to do its hero as much justice as it might – for example, it was not the Irish Question but Bright's exploitation of the Orsini incident which led to Palmerston's fall from office in 1858. But one is left to wonder whether historians who turn to political life do so any more successfully than politicians who turn to history.

Anthony Howe is Professor of Modern History at the University of East Anglia. Among his books is Free Trade and Liberal England, 1846–1946 (Oxford, 1998).

Cartoons galore

Alan Mumford: *Drawn at the Hustings: General elections 1722–1935 in caricature and cartoon* (Burke's Peerage and Gentry, 2011)

Reviewed by **Dr Roy Douglas**

CARTOONS HAVE long been used to fill otherwise blank pages in books, or to provide light relief, and many history teachers have found that they make past events and personalities more vivid to their students. But there is today a growing recognition by historians that cartoons are an important historical source in their own right, for they cast important light on ideas and public assumptions in the past.

Alan Mumford, the author of this book, has already made a substantial contribution to this development by his cartoon histories of the Labour and Conservative parties which were published by the Political Cartoon Society. His new venture highlights events and personalities associated with general elections over a period of rather more than 200 years. Inevitably, the exploits of Liberals feature largely in the story. The origin of the word 'hustings', used in the title, is dutifully explained.

Some of the cartoon material is familiar. This includes Hogarth's satirical painting of an eighteenth-century election entertainment; Gillray's representation of Pitt as 'a toadstool upon a dunghill'; Tenniel's characterisation of Gladstone at

the height of his powers as 'Pegasus unharnessed' and Spy's caricature of Asquith. Yet a great deal of the material in this book will be unfamiliar to most readers, who will find much to inform as well as much to entertain.

Readers will be interested in a drawing by C. J. Grant, which was produced in 1831, at the height of the 'Reform' debate. It includes what is perhaps the earliest use of the word 'Liberal' as a political designation in a cartoon. Strikingly, the opinions of a 'Liberal' are contrasted not only with those of a 'Tory' but also with those of both a 'Whig' and a 'Radical'.

The drawings range from the lightly satirical to the grim. Just one of the many subjects treated will illustrate that point. W. K. Haselden, in the *Daily Mirror* of 1909, features a suffragette who protests that she has smashed windows, smacked a police inspector's face and knocked his cap off; furthermore, that she has tried to pull a policeman off his horse and has used the whip. 'And yet,' she complains, 'they won't give me the vote!' By contrast, Will Dyson in the *Daily Herald* of 1914 takes a darker view of the suffragette question. He reflects on the fate of

