Gladstone and Ireland

Mary E. Daly and K. Theodore Hoppen (eds.) Gladstone: Ireland and Beyond (Four Courts Press, 2011)
Reviewed by Iain Sharpe

The Grand Old Man's longevity has given Gladstonian scholars a treat over the past few years – the commemorations of the centenary of his death in 1998 being quickly followed by the 2009 celebrations of the bicentenary of his birth. Both were marked by conferences, seminars and other events, leading to a plethora of publications. This volume is a collection of papers delivered at a symposium at St Deiniol’s Library, Hawarden (Britain's only prime ministerial library) in September 2009.

Some might wonder, given how much has already been written about Gladstone's engagement with Ireland, what more there is to say. The evidence of this volume gives the resounding answer that there are plenty of new avenues to be explored, from how Gladstone was portrayed in Irish newspapers (including unionist ones) to the interaction of political and family relationships, to how Gladstone's legacy influenced subsequent generations who had to deal with the complexities of Irish–British relationships. Contributors range from established names in Gladstonian and Irish studies to those who have only recently completed their doctoral research. The quality of contributions is consistently high, although one might quibble that the theme of 'Gladstone, Ireland and beyond' is so broad that this is clearly a collection of papers, not a work with a clear unifying framework.

It is the older hands who offer the most insightful perspectives. Theodore Hoppen’s chapter on 'Gladstone, Salisbury and the end of Irish assimilativism' highlights the similarities in approach to Ireland offered by the Liberal and Conservative parties, just at the moment when home rule appeared to polarise them. Hoppen argues that both Gladstone and Salisbury fundamentally departed from a previous British consensus that aimed at integrating Ireland into the United Kingdom, making it more like England, or perhaps Scotland. While Gladstone’s conversion to Irish home rule was portrayed by opponents as a dangerously radical departure, in fact the Unionists’ policy of 'killing home rule by kindness' equally involved recognising that Ireland was different from the rest of the United Kingdom. It focused on land purchase – effectively using large amounts of public money to buy out Irish landlords, transferring property to the tenants, in a way that was if anything more out of keeping with nineteenth-century rules of political economy than was home rule. Hoppen advances here an important, and in my view justified, argument, concluding that late-Victorian party conflict over Ireland was, in the words of Jorge Luis Borges regarding a different conflict, like 'some very angry bald men fighting over a comb'.
On a similar theme is Professor Alvin Jackson’s chapter comparing Gladstone’s attitudes towards Ireland and Scotland. Gladstonian Liberal support for Irish home rule was discussed at the time in the context of ‘home rule all round’ for the nations of the United Kingdom. Historians have tended to focus on the extent to which Gladstone’s Irish policy offered a model that might have then been followed in Scotland. Jackson turns this round to show how Gladstone (and others) wanted Ireland to come to the same degree of acceptance of the Union that Scotland had reached. This extended to Gladstone, during his first administration, seriously considering whether Ireland should have a royal residence, as Scotland had at Balmoral. More substantially, Jackson argues, Gladstone valued the way in which Scotland had developed a distinct patriotic identity within the Union, and the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland was an attempt to match the Scottish religious settlement.

### RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

If you can help any of the individuals listed below with sources, contacts, or any other information — or if you know anyone who can — please pass on details to them. Details of other research projects in progress should be sent to the Editor (see page 3) for inclusion here.

**Letters of Richard Cobden (1804–65)**
Knowledge of the whereabouts of any letters written by Cobden in private hands, autograph collections, and obscure locations in the UK and abroad for a complete edition of his letters. (For further details of the Cobden Letters Project, please see www.uea.ac.uk/letters/Cobdenproject). Dr Anthony Howe, School of History, University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ; a.chowe@uea.ac.uk.

**Dadabhai Naoroji**
Dadabhai Naoroji (1825–1917) was an Indian nationalist and Liberal member for Central Finsbury, 1892–95 – the first Asian to be elected to the House of Commons. This research for a PhD at Harvard aims to produce both a biography of Naoroji and a volume of his selected correspondence, to be published by OUP India in 2013. The current phase concentrates on Naoroji’s links with a range of British progressive organisations and individuals, particularly in his later career. Suggestions for archival sources very welcome. Dinyar Patel; dinyar.patel@gmail.com or 02775 753 724.

**The political career of Edward Strutt, 1st Baron Belper**
Strutt was Whig/Liberal MP for Derby (1830–49), later Arundel and Nottingham; in 1856 he was created Lord Belper and built Kingston Hall (1842–46) in the village of Kingston-on-Soar, Notts. He was a friend of Jeremy Bentham and a supporter of free trade and reform, and held government office as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Commissioner of Railways. Any information, location of papers or references welcome. Brian Smith; brian63@inbox.com.

**The emergence of the ‘public service ethos’**
Aims to analyse how self-interest and patronage was challenged by the advent of impartial inspectors, public servants and local authorities in provincial Britain in the mid 19th century. Much work has been done on the emergence of a ‘liberal culture’ in the central civil service in Whitehall, but much work needs to be done on the motives, behaviour and mentalities of the newly reformed guardians of the poor, sanitary inspectors, factory and mines inspectors, education authorities, prison warders and the police. Ian Cowwood, Newman University College, Birmingham; i.cowwood@newman.ac.uk.

**The life of Professor Reginald W Revans, 1907–2003**
Any information anyone has on Revans’ Liberal Party involvement would be most welcome. We are particularly keen to know when he joined the party and any involvement he may have had in campaigning issues. We know he was very interested in pacifism. Any information, oral history submissions, location of papers or references most welcome. Dr Yury Boshyk, yury@gel.net.com; or Dr Cheryl Brook, cherlbrook@port.ac.uk.

**Recruitment of Liberals into the Conservative Party, 1906–1935**
Aims to suggest reasons for defections of individuals and develop an understanding of changes in electoral alignment. Sources include personal papers and newspapers; suggestions about how to get hold of the papers of more obscure Liberal defectors welcome. Cllr Nick Cott, 1a Henry Street, Gosforth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE3 1DQ; N.M.Cott@ncl.ac.uk.

**Four nations history of the Irish Home Rule crisis**
A four nations history of the Irish Home Rule crisis, attempting to rebalance the existing Anglo-centric focus. Considering Scottish and Welsh reactions and the development of parallel Home Rule movements, along with how the crisis impacted on political parties across the UK. Sources include newspapers, private papers, Hansard. Naomi Lloyd-Jones; naomi.n.lloyd-jones@kcl.ac.uk.

**Beyond Westminster: Grassroots Liberalism 1910–1929**
A study of the Liberal Party at its grassroots during the period in which it went from being the party of government to the third party of politics. This research will use a wide range of sources, including surviving Liberal Party constituency minute books and local press to contextualise the national decline of the party with the reality of the situation on the ground. The thesis will focus on three geographic regions (Home Counties, Midlands and the North West) in order to explore the situation the Liberals found themselves in nationally. Research for University of Leicester. Supervisor: Dr Stuart Ball. Gavin Freeman; gbj6@le.ac.uk.

**The Liberal Party’s political communication, 1945–2002**
Research on the Liberal party and Lib Dems’ political communication. Any information welcome (including testimonies) about electoral campaigns and strategies. Cynthia Boyer, CUFR Champollion, Place de Verdun, 81 000 Albi, France; +33 5 63 48 19 77; cynthia.boyer@univ-jfc.fr.

**The Liberal Party in Wales, 1966–1988**
Aims to follow the development of the party from the general election of 1966 to the time of the merger with the SDP. PhD research at Cardiff University. Nick Alderton; nickalito@hotmail.com.

**Policy position and leadership strategy within the Liberal Democrats**
This thesis will be a study of the political positioning and leadership strategy of the Liberal Democrats. Consideration of the role of equidistance; development of policy from the point of merger; the influence and leadership strategies of each leader from Ashdown to Clegg; and electoral strategy from 1988 to 2015 will form the basis of the work. Any material relating to leadership election campaigns, election campaigns, internal party groups (for example the Social Liberal Forum) or policy documents from 1987 and merger talks onwards would be greatly welcomed. Personal insights and recollections also sought. Samuel Barratt; pt10seb@leeds.ac.uk.
Jo Grimond, leader of the Liberal Party from 1956 to 1967, holds a particularly affectionate place in the collective memory of the Liberal Democrats. His charisma, charm, good looks, political courage, intellect and inherent liberalism inspired many to join the Liberal Party in the late 1950s and 1960s and gained him a national reputation as someone who could give politics a good name – which has endured to the present day.

One hundred years after his birth in 1913, this meeting will examine in more detail the legacy of Jo Grimond, not simply for the modern Liberal Democrats but, more widely, for British politics and political ideas.

Speakers: Dr Peter Sloman (New College, Oxford) on Grimond’s ideas, with a focus on his thinking around the role of the state and free market; Harry Cowie (former Liberal Party Director of Research and speechwriter to Grimond) on the development of policy under Grimond’s leadership; Michael Meadowcroft (Liberal MP for Leeds West 1983–87) on Grimond’s leadership of the Liberal Party, 1956–67, and its legacy. Chair: William Wallace, Lord Wallace of Saltaire (press assistant to Jo Grimond during the 1966 general election).

7.00pm, Monday 10 June (following the History Group AGM at 6.30pm)
Lady Violet Room, National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, SW1A 2HE