

LIBERAL HISTORY NEWS

SUMMER 2013

Lloyd George commemorations

As readers of the winter issue of the *Journal* (no. 77), the special issue on the life and career of David Lloyd George, will know, 17 January 2013 was the 150th anniversary of the birth of Lloyd George, in a terraced house in Chorlton-on-Medlock in Manchester. His father's failing health, and death the following year, took the family back to Wales and Lloyd George grew up speaking Welsh as his first language, tutored and encouraged by his Uncle Lloyd in the Caernarfonshire village of Llanystumdwy. **Graham Lippiatt** reports on the series of events held in January to commemorate the 150th anniversary.

Thursday 17 January saw a ceremony at Lloyd George's statue in Parliament Square in London, organised by Liberal Democrat peer Roger Roberts (Lord Roberts of Llandudno). The service was led by the Chaplain of the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Reverend Rose Hudson-Wilkin. There followed a laying of daffodil wreaths at the statue by Lloyd George's grandson, Viscount Tenby, and two of the younger members of the George family. A wreath was also laid by Jane Bonham Carter (Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury) the great-granddaughter of H.H. Asquith, as a token of reconciliation between the families against the background of the split in the Liberal Party precipitated by Lloyd George's becoming Prime Minister in 1916. The Gwalia Male Voice Choir sang *Mae Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau*, the Welsh national anthem. The commemoration then moved into Parliament with a service at the Undercroft Chapel in Westminster Hall and afterwards to the Jubilee Room to hear speeches from representatives of the four main political parties in Wales.

Later that evening a dinner was held at the National Liberal Club, sponsored jointly by the Club and the Lloyd George Society. The

guest speakers were Lord Kenneth Morgan, the foremost academic authority on Lloyd George, and Lord Dafydd Wigley, the Plaid Cymru peer, who used to sit for Lloyd George's old seat of Caernarfon Boroughs. Guests also heard the first performance of a specially composed piece of music, 'Why Should We Not Sing?', commissioned by Martin Thomas (Lord Thomas of Gresford), the President of the Lloyd George Society. The piece, written by Nicholas O'Neill, Composer-in-Residence to the Parliament Choir, intertwines readings from texts by and about Lloyd George with music designed to illustrate the various phases of his life and career. It was performed on the night by musicians from the South Bank Sinfonia, with Elinor Bennett (Lady Wigley), harp and Paul Medicott, baritone. The texts were read by Martin Thomas.

Meanwhile in Wales, the Lloyd George Museum in Llanystumdwy held an exhibition and graveside commemoration on 17 January to honour the Welsh Wizard, followed by tea in Llanystumdwy Hall. This event offered a unique opportunity to see some of the current Earl Lloyd-George of Dwyfor's collection of heirlooms and mementos from Lloyd George's political life. On the next day there was a chance to hear something about Lloyd George's social and political legacy, with a lecture on 'Keeping the wolves of hunger from the door: Lloyd George's National Insurance Act 1911' by Dr Steven Thompson from the University of Aberystwyth.

Also in Wales, the Lloyd George Society organised an exhibition of drawings, photographs, cartoons, information boards and other materials celebrating Lloyd George and various aspects of Welsh and British political life. Held at the National Assembly's Pierhead Building in Cardiff Bay, the exhibition was

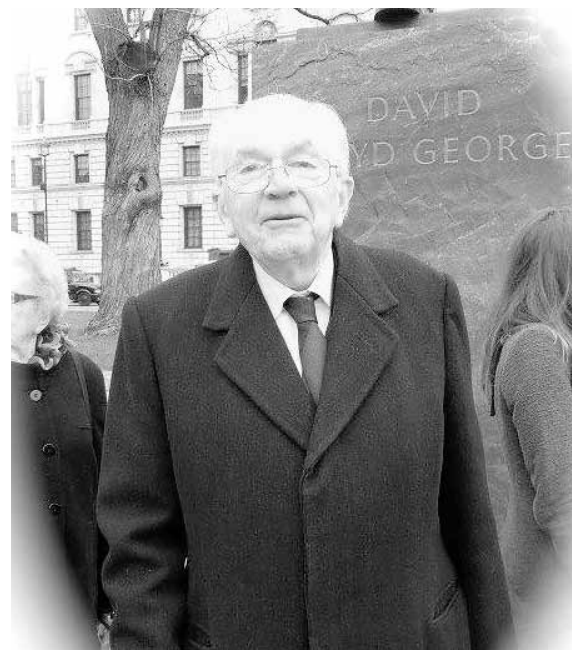
sponsored by Liberal Democrat Assembly Member Cllr William Powell and organised by Professor Russell Deacon, Chairman of the Lloyd George Society, with original materials created by the Welsh political artist Dan Petersen. We understand that the exhibition was the best attended event of this kind ever held at the Pierhead.

Aspects of Lloyd George's life and legacy were also remembered at the Lloyd George Society weekend school in Llandrindod Wells in February, with talks about the Museum from its curator Nest Thomas, the life of Jennifer Longford by Dr J Graham Jones (Head of the Welsh Political Archive at the National Library in Aberystwyth) and after-dinner remarks by Baroness Jenny Randerson, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Wales Office.

As Lord Morgan remarked, 'the old boy would think we'd done him proud'.

More information about the Lloyd George Society can be found at its website, www.lloydgeorgesociety.org.uk

Lord Tenby by the Lloyd George statue in Parliament Square





Plaque to Lord John Russell

On the final day of the Liberal Democrat 2012 autumn conference, Lews MP and Lib Dem minister Norman Baker unveiled a blue plaque to the Whig/Liberal Prime Minister Lord John Russell at 14 Sussex Square in Brighton. **Tony Little** represented the Liberal Democrat History Group.

The plaque was erected at the initiative of local residents and commemorates the period in 1838–39 during which Russell stayed in Brighton. Speaking on behalf of the Sussex Square residents, David Jackson said: ‘Lord John Russell was an eminent politician of his day and worked tirelessly for his political beliefs. The blue plaque will be a reminder of his time in Brighton and contribute to the history and heritage of our lovely building.’

At the time, Russell was Home Secretary in Lord Melbourne’s Whig government. He had been responsible for the introduction of the 1832 Great Reform Act and, in 1846, would become Prime Minister. During the family’s stay at Brighton, on 19 October 1839, Russell’s wife Lady Adelaide gave birth to their second child, Victoria; but unfortunately Lady Adelaide caught a fever a few days later and died on 3 November. In his grief, Russell almost gave up politics but was persuaded to change his mind. In 1841 he re-married.

Gladstone statue unveiled in Seaforth

Four-times Liberal Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone was born in Rodney Street, Liverpool, on 29 December 1809, the fourth son of the merchant Sir John Gladstone

and his wife Anne Robertson. In 1813, the family moved to Seaforth, just to the north of Liverpool and now located in the Metropolitan Borough of Sefton.

Local historian Brenda Murray, who received a British Empire Medal for services to heritage and history in the 2013 New Year’s Honours list, mounted a campaign to raise funds for the statue, and raised £15,000, plus £10,000 from the Heritage Lottery fund.

The bust of Gladstone was unveiled on 23 February at Our Lady Star Of The Sea church in Seaforth. It looks out on to the former site of St Thomas’s Church, built by Gladstone’s father John and demolished in 1980.

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As the *Liverpool Echo* reported at the time, Birkenhead MP Frank Field, who unveiled the statue, described the event as ‘one of the most staggering days’ of his political career.

He said: ‘There was such an excitement and buzz there and it was all because of the huge drive and vision of Brenda Murray. I was amazed by how many people turned up – it was packed. There were huge numbers of supporters. I am still absolutely buzzing from the event. It was extraordinary and could not have been a more exciting day.’

Mrs Murray told the *Echo* that she hoped the statue would mark Seaforth out as a tourist attraction.

She said: ‘I think a lot of people will come from outside the area to see this, especially because we have the Gormley sculptures just half a mile away which are extremely popular.’

‘This is not the end of our campaign. We want everybody to love Seaforth and appreciate the fact it produced such a successful Prime Minister.’

The 6ft monument was created by sculptor Tom Murphy, with the pedestal and engraving done by John Smith, of Crosby Memorials.

Mr Murphy said: ‘My job is to provide the best portrait I can and what I wanted was for everyone to see his great intelligence. What is exciting as a sculptor is that you are the last link to that dead person – the bit before the full stop providing a sort of life after death.’

