

like a conspiracy, and actually became one in the run-up to 1798. The rising was a disaster for Ulster liberals, because it renewed the sectarian polarisation which was so antithetical to whatever they stood for, and because it resulted – like the French revolution – in a bloody civil war.

From 1801 the Union provided a new chance to recast Irish politics into a different mould, with many hoping that Westminster would foster the wider sympathies and allegiances, but a twenty-nine-year delay in introducing Catholic emancipation poisoned the relationship between the communities and paved the way for the rise of Daniel O’Connell. This was bad news for the liberals, whose electoral support depended – then as, indeed, ever since – on bridging the sectarian gap and building an alliance between the open-minded people of both communities, one focusing on economic and social concerns rather than theological divides (p. 96). As the century went on, liberals discovered that this could best be done by taking up issues such as land reform and tenant rights, to which both Protestant and Catholic farmers were increasingly responsive. In this respect Hall’s decision to end his book in 1868 or 1876 is strange, for Ulster liberals experienced a major revival – linked to their land reform campaign – in 1880. Later, those Ulster liberals who adopted radical land reform proposals were the only ones who prospered – as illustrated by the career of T. W. Russell, the Liberal MP for South Tyrone for about thirty years until 1918, during which he stood as a Liberal, a Liberal Unionist and a Liberal again, but always as a radical agrarian reformer.

Beautifully produced and effectively marketed by Four Courts, this book is a major addition to the scholarly literature and to the debate on a less well-known, but nonetheless significant, alternative tradition in Irish politics.

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Online reviews

Introduction to *Reviews in History* for *Journal of Liberal History* readers

by **Danny Millum**

REVIEWS IN HISTORY (<http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews>), founded in 1996, is a freely-accessible online-only journal published by the Institute of Historical Research and featuring reviews of books and digital resources. Coverage extends to all geographical areas and types of history, and its chronological scope extends back to AD 500.

Its aim has always been to review major recently published works of history in a serious and scholarly way, and at greater speed and fuller length than in most printed journals. The online format, of course, is perfect for this, allowing us to commission pieces of 2,000 to 3,000 words and publish them immediately, without the constraints of typesetting or fixed publication dates which affect a printed journal. A further unique feature is the right of reply afforded to authors, taken up by many, through which *Reviews* hopes to encourage constructive discussion and debate.

The commissioning process relies on a combination of suggestions by academics, recommendations by our Editorial Board and the careful perusal of publishers’ catalogues, and this currently produces four new reviews every week, with over 1,400 having now been published.

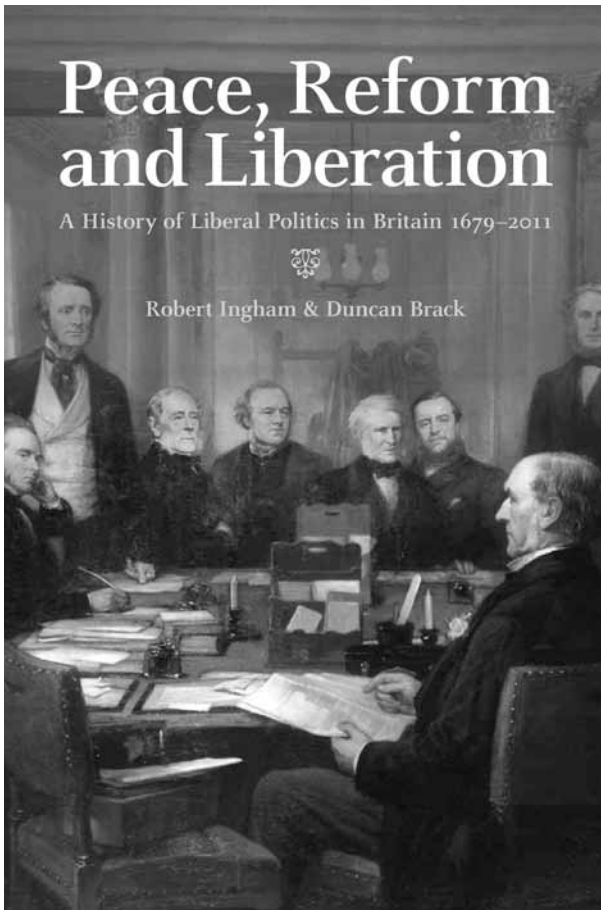
Although the scope of *Reviews* is wide, there is, reflecting publishing trends, a great deal of material that may appeal to students of British Liberal history, and political history in general. The website features a fully-faceted search function, so it is possible very quickly to limit the reviews to, say, British and Irish political history from the twentieth century (<http://bit.ly/U4wzHj>). This then produces 114 reviews (at the time this article was written!) which can be browsed, or further filtered by keyword (e.g. ‘liberal’).

Glancing through these, your eye might be drawn first to a recent review by Jason Peacey (<http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/>

[review/1267](http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1267)) of *The History of Parliament Online*, a good example of a classic resource for political historians now being transformed by digital technology. Such resources are now proliferating, but it is often harder to find in-depth objective reviews for something like this than it would be for the equivalent book, and this gap is one which *Reviews* has striven hard to fill, both in terms of coverage and also in providing would-be reviewers with guidance as to the criteria to apply to such resources. This piece has also elicited a response (<http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1267#author-response>) from the editor of the project, and this is a good example of how this feature allows questions raised in the initial review to be answered by those most qualified to do so.

In terms of books we have covered which are more specifically geared to liberal politics, and the Liberal Party, a nice example would be this piece (<http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/661>) by Helen McCarthy on *The Strange Survival of Liberal England: Political Leaders, Moral Values and the Reception of Economic Debate*, edited by Duncan Tanner and Ewen Green. The book’s title draws on George Dangerfield’s 1935 classic *The Strange Death of Liberal England*, and the longer format allows the reviewer to explore this, and to fully site the collection in the historiography inspired by Dangerfield’s polarisation thesis. Once again, there is a significant response from the editors, tackling in detail the issues and criticisms raised in the original piece.

For those interested in other reviews surrounding the rise of Labour and eclipse of the Liberals in the first half of the twentieth century, see Laura Beers (<http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/985>) on *Parties and People, England 1914–1951* by Ross McKibbin. Turning back to the era of Liberal ascendancy, we unsurprisingly find a number of reviews of works taking a variety of different perspectives



'This new volume, taking a long view from the later seventeenth century to the Cameron-Clegg coalition of today, is a collective enterprise by many hands ... This is an excellent book.'

Kenneth O. Morgan, *Cercles*

'I had not expected to enjoy this book as much as I did, or to learn as much from it.'

William Wallace, *Lib Dem Voice*

'The editors and their fourteen authors deserve congratulation for producing a readable one-volume history of Liberal politics in Britain that is both erudite but perfectly accessible to any reader interested in the subject.'

Mark Smulian, *Liberator*

Written by academics and experts, drawing on the most recent research, *Peace, Reform and Liberation* is the most comprehensive and most up-to-date guide to the story of those who called themselves Liberals, what inspired them and what they achieved over the last 300 years and more. An essential source for

anyone interested in the contribution of Liberals and Liberalism to British politics.

Available at a special discounted rate for *Journal of Liberal History* subscribers: £24 instead of the normal £30.

To order, please send a cheque (made out to 'Liberal Democrat History Group') for the cover price plus postage and packing at the rate of £4 for one copy; £7 for two copies; £9 for three copies; and add £1 for each further copy. Orders should be sent to: LDHG, 54 Midmoor Road, London SW12 0EN.

on Gladstone. So we have *Reading Gladstone* by Ruth Windscheffel (<http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/787>), and *Gladstone: Heroic Minister, 1865–1898* (<http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/89>) and *Gladstone: God and Politics* (<http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/698>) by Richard Shannon. These illustrate another feature of *Reviews* which readers may find useful – the automatically generated 'related reviews' list which appears on the right of the review, and which compares

the most commonly occurring words in a review with the rest of the database, and lists the top five matches. This can lead to obvious connections (all three Gladstone biographies appear as being related to the others), and less obvious ones – a book on altruism, for example, or one on Margaret Thatcher.

Another potentially interesting feature for readers is the section listing other freely-accessible reviews of the book (see 'Other reviews' at <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/698>, for example),

which again affords the opportunity to seek other opinions besides those of our reviewer.

Reviews in History is one of most popular of the IHR's offerings, with over 100,000 visits a month, and an email subscriber list of around 4,000. As such, it offers a great platform for both authors and reviewers to get their ideas across to a broad audience of academics, postgraduates and the informed general public. We are always keen to engage with our audience, and readers of the *Journal of Liberal History*

should feel free to contact the deputy editor (danny.millum@sas.ac.uk) with any suggestions they may have for review – although reviewers are normally selected by invitation, volunteers are always welcome. It would also be great to receive suggestions about the website in general, so if you have any ideas as to features you would like to see, do just get in touch.

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