

Journal of Liberal

HISTORY



A forgotten Lib–Con alliance

Alun Wyburn-Powell

The Constitutionals and the 1924 election A new party or a worthless coupon?

David Dutton

'A nasty, deplorable little incident in our political life' *The Dumfries Standard*, 1957

David Cloke

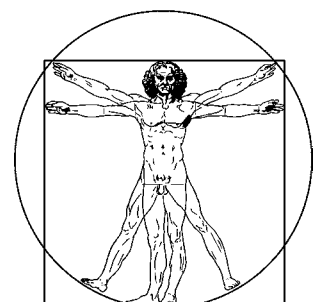
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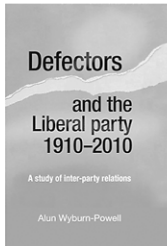
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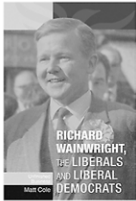
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Journal of Liberal History

The *Journal of Liberal History* is published quarterly by the Liberal Democrat History Group.

ISSN 1479-9642

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An annual subscription to the *Journal of Liberal History* costs £20.00 (£12.50 unwaged rate). This includes membership of the History Group unless you inform us otherwise. Non-UK subscribers should add £10.00.

Institutional rate £50.00, including online access. As well as printed copies, online subscribers can access online copies of current and past *Journals*. Online subscriptions are available to individuals at £40.00.

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Payment is also possible via our website,
www.liberalhistory.org.uk.

Cover design concept: **Lynne Featherstone**

Published by the Liberal Democrat History Group,
c/o 54 Midmoor Road, London SW12 0EN

Printed by **Kall-Kwik**,
18 Colville Road, London W3 8BL

July 2013

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Liberal Democrat History Group

The Liberal Democrat History Group promotes the discussion and research of topics relating to the histories of the Liberal Democrats, Liberal Party, and SDP, and of Liberalism. The Group organises discussion meetings and produces the *Journal of Liberal History* and other occasional publications.

For more information, including historical commentaries, details of publications, back issues of the *Journal*, and archive and other research sources, see our website at: www.liberalhistory.org.uk.

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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

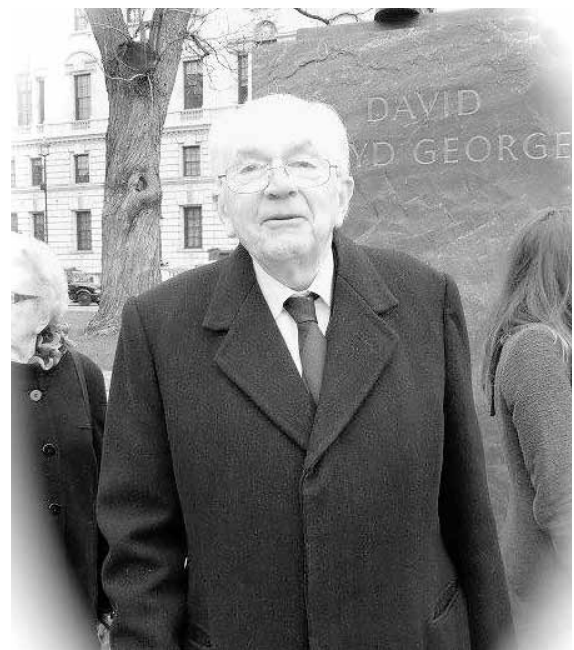
sponsored by Liberal Democrat Assembly Member Cllr William Powell and organised by Professor Russell Deacon, Chairman of the Lloyd George Society, with original materials created by the Welsh political artist Dan Petersen. We understand that the exhibition was the best attended event of this kind ever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

At the age of nine, Gladstone wrote in his diary that he hoped his father would bequeath the church to him because he loved it so much.

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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.’



A FORGOTTEN LIBERAL—

THE CONSTITUTIONALISTS AND THE 1924 GENERAL E

Collaboration between Liberals and Conservatives in British politics is not new. Some past arrangements, such as the Lloyd George Coalition, or the National Government of 1931, have been well researched, while others, including the Constitutionalists, have barely received any attention. Whilst it is fairly well-known that Churchill labelled himself as a Constitutionalist at the 1924 general election, in an attempt to straddle the Liberal–Conservative divide, he was not the only candidate bearing the label. **Alun Wyburn-Powell** identifies the other candidates who also styled themselves Constitutionalists, and investigates their electoral records, their views and their objectives.



CONSERVATIVE ALLIANCE ELECTION – A NEW PARTY OR A WORTHLESS COUPON?

IN ANALYSING THEIR performance at the 1924 election, it is possible to draw conclusions about the success of the Constitutionalist experiment and its impact on the Liberal Party, placing it in the wider context of the Liberals' decline and, in doing so, to answer the question as to whether the Constitutionalist were a putative new party, or simply a loose grouping using a coupon for short-term electoral advantage.

The Lloyd George Coalition and the 1920 attempt at fusion

The closeness of the political relationship between some Liberals and Conservatives was such that during the Lloyd George Coalition Government of 1916–22, there were moves towards 'fusion' of the Coalition Liberals and the Conservatives. However, these manoeuvres were not seen favourably throughout the parties and the moves were blocked, even within the Lloyd George Liberal side of the alliance, in 1920. At the following election in 1922, Lloyd George led a depleted band which stood for that election under the name 'National Liberal', exposed to competition from Labour and, in some cases, also from Asquithian Liberals. Hastily-made arrangements for the National Liberals to be spared Conservative opposition were only partly implemented and 43 of Lloyd George's

Winston Churchill in 1924, after his election as Constitutionalist MP for Epping

162 candidates faced a Conservative contender.¹

By the following election, in 1923, the political landscape was very different. Lloyd George and Asquith were reconciled and the Liberal Party was more or less reunited, in opposition to the Conservatives' plans for protection. The Liberals gained seats, winning 159, against 191 for Labour and 258 for the Conservatives. The inconclusive outcome of the election placed the Liberals in the invidious position of having to permit or deny Labour their first opportunity to form a government. They allowed Labour a milestone nine-month term in office, much to the annoyance of most Conservatives and many right-leaning Liberals. For many voters, and even some Liberal MPs, this suggested that the Liberal Party had become superfluous, with the essential battle of ideas raging between the Labour Party and the Conservatives.

Between the ending of the fusion plans in 1920 and the 1924 election, three former Liberal MPs – Hilton Philipson, Arthur Evans and Walter Waring – defected to the Conservatives. Other Liberals, in particular Winston Churchill, continued to harbour hopes for some form of alliance with the Conservatives. It was against this background that the Constitutionalist emerged as an attempt at an anti-socialist alliance. The aims of the Constitutionalist were similar

to those of the Fusionists, and some of the groups' membership overlapped. Whilst the Fusionists had been more strategic in their long-term ambition permanently to merge their branch of Liberalism with the Conservatives, the Constitutionalist were more short-term and their focus was primarily concerned with maximising their chances of victory at the 1924 election, by avoiding a local Liberal–Conservative contest.

The first publicity for a putative Constitutionalist group appeared in *The Times* in September 1920, as a display advertisement inviting readers to attend a conference in London to 'help to carry out the preliminary organisation of the Constitutional Party'.² It was placed in the name of Charles Higham, an export merchant, who sat as the Coalition Conservative MP for Islington South from 1918 to 1922. No further publicity appeared and no new party emerged. The Constitutionalist label was used occasionally in the early 1920s in local politics, notably by the ruling Liberal–Conservative alliance in Bootle in 1920–21 and then by the local Conservatives alone in 1922–23.³

The term reappeared in national politics when George Jarrett, the one-armed former chief organiser of the Lloyd George Coalition-supporting National Democratic and Labour Party (NDP), described himself as a 'constitutionalist' in

a letter to *The Times*. He stood in the 1922 election as the nominee of both the National Liberal and Conservative associations in Dartford, winning the seat against both Labour and Asquithian Liberal opposition. At the following contest, in 1923, Jarrett wrote in his election address: 'A year ago you honoured me by returning me ... without respect to party ... Again I stand as the Constitutional Candidate.'³ His name appeared on both the Liberal and Conservative Party official lists of candidates in 1923. However, in a straight fight with Labour, he was defeated. Jarrett thus served only one year in Parliament, from 1922 to 1923, but was the first to do so as a Constitutionalist.³ He formally joined the Conservative Party in January 1924.

Jarrett was a close associate of Algernon Moreing, who was first elected for the East Yorkshire constituency of Buckrose as a Coalition Liberal in 1918. He was a strong advocate of fusion in 1920.⁶ In 1922 Moreing changed constituencies and was successful as the National Liberal candidate for Camborne. However, the 1923 election in this constituency illustrated that Liberal reunion was less than total; the only two candidates in Camborne were both Liberals, Moreing's only challenger being the Asquithian Liberal, Leif Jones. Moreing's name also appeared on the official list of Conservative candidates. Unresolved differences between the followers of Lloyd George and Asquith in Camborne led to the nomination of the two Liberal candidates and the so-called United Liberal Committee in London declared its neutrality between the candidates, rather than risk fuelling the local split. Jones was the winner of the 1923 contest. In February 1924, Moreing and Jarrett wrote to Churchill complaining about the difficult position in which they had been put by the Liberals' support for Labour and declaring that they looked to Churchill for leadership.⁷

By 1922 Winston Churchill had already been a Conservative, a Liberal, a Coalition Liberal and a National Liberal. As an enthusiastic advocate of fusion, he had considered calling the proposed new party 'The Constitutional Reform Party'.⁸ He continued to speculate about other possible labels, to aid his return to Parliament after his

1922 defeat at Dundee. In May 1923, he described himself in private as 'a Tory Democrat'.⁹ However, the arrival of the general election in December 1923 forced him to abandon his oscillation over party labels. He settled for the Liberal candidacy at West Leicester, where he hoped that he might be spared a Conservative opponent, although it was, as Roy Jenkins observed, impossible to see why he should have thought this 'remotely likely'.¹⁰ His wife, Clementine, so often more objective than her husband about his career, advised Churchill: 'I am sure the old *real* Liberals will want you back but ... do not give them cause ... for thinking that you would like a new Tory Liberal Coalition ... if you were to lose a seat ... it would be better for you to be beaten by a Tory (which would arouse Liberal sympathy) than by a Socialist'.¹¹ Churchill lost West Leicester to Labour and, like Jarrett and Moreing, he was very unsympathetic towards the Liberal Party when it supported Labour after the 1923 election. When he was asked in February 1924 to stand again as a Liberal, Churchill replied that he would not be willing to fight the Conservatives.¹² On 26 February 1924 the *Glasgow Herald* declared that Churchill was preparing the way for his return to the Conservative Party.¹³

When the Westminster Abbey by-election was called in February 1924, Churchill was caught between parties. He was convinced that Baldwin wanted him returned, and wondered if the local Conservative association might adopt him as their candidate, despite the fact that he was not even a member of their party.¹⁴ But when the Westminster Conservative Association adopted Otho Nicholson as their candidate instead, Churchill decided that he would still contest the seat. Baldwin did not intervene. Churchill was variously described in the press as a 'Constitutionalist' or as an 'Independent anti-Socialist'.¹⁵ Even though a Liberal candidate was standing in the by-election, the party was virtually inactive in the election; Asquith was ill and Lloyd George took no part in the campaign. Churchill lost to Nicholson by just forty-three votes, but performed the 'paradoxical feat of opposing an official Conservative ... while moving himself

in a more Conservative direction'.¹⁶ The result turned Lloyd George's thinking away from his plans for an alliance with the Labour government and towards a revival of a Liberal-Conservative arrangement. To Lloyd George, and many other Liberals, the Abbey by-election result demonstrated the strength of Anti-Socialist Liberalism and, at the same time, the weakness of the Liberal Party. This was a widely-drawn conclusion at the time but, as pointed out by Chris Cook, an erroneous one. Churchill had mainly attracted former Conservative voters and the Liberal Party had hardly campaigned.¹⁷ Churchill's eve-of-poll speech had advocated a united Conservative party 'with a Liberal wing'.¹⁸

The 1924 cast of Constitutional characters

After the Westminster near-miss, Churchill decided to improve his negotiating position by gathering around him a Liberal group ready to co-operate with the Conservatives; he envisaged that his followers would occupy the same position as the Liberal Unionists had in 1886. On 10 May 1924 Churchill informed Baldwin that he was organising a group of Liberal MPs who would be willing to co-operate with the Conservatives – Churchill provisionally called them 'Liberal-Conservatives'.¹⁹ He told Baldwin that there were at least twenty Labour seats which could be won by Liberals, and only Liberals, if they were given Conservative support.²⁰ This helped Churchill persuade Baldwin to try and find him a safe Conservative seat in or near London and, if possible, a seat for which there was no Liberal candidate. They agreed that at this stage Churchill would not join the Conservative Party, but that he could stand under the label of 'Constitutionalist'. On 5 August 1924 the Chairman of the Epping Conservatives wrote to Churchill to ask if he would allow his name to go forward as a candidate for the seat.²¹ He did; but a Liberal candidate was also in the field. As the October 1924 election approached Churchill was in negotiation with the Unionist Central Office to arrange for a raft of his 'Constitutionalist' candidates to be given a clear run by the Conservatives. He reported

When the Westminster Abbey by-election was called in February 1924, Churchill was caught between parties. He was convinced that Baldwin wanted him returned, and wondered if the local Conservative association might adopt him as their candidate, despite the fact that he was not even a member of their party.

hopefully that the deal would cover '25 or 27' candidates.²²

Hamar Greenwood was Churchill's key ally in the Constitutionalist venture. Brought up in Canada, Greenwood had strong Imperial leanings and was brother-in-law to the arch-Imperialist Conservative MP, Leo Amery.²³ During his first spell in the House of Commons, from 1906 to January 1910, Greenwood had been Churchill's Parliamentary Private Secretary. He was re-elected in December 1910 and rose to be Chief Secretary for Ireland. He lost his seat in 1922 and failed to be re-elected the following year. By 1924, he was exploring alternative avenues back to the Commons, and was offered the Liberal candidature for Central Cardiff, at the instigation of Lloyd George.²⁴ However, Greenwood declined, saying that: 'the best way to defeat Socialism ... is ... to unite in common action. These views must preclude acceptance of your suggested nomination ... where there is already a Conservative and a Socialist candidate in the field'.²⁵ A more attractive offer came when the Unionist MP for East Walthamstow announced his retirement in late September 1924 and an arrangement was reached for Greenwood to stand there as a Constitutionalist, unopposed by the Tories.²⁶ However, like Churchill, Greenwood was not given a clear run against Labour. He also faced a Liberal opponent, who argued that the withdrawal of his own candidature would make a present of the seat to Labour; he claimed that Greenwood had tried to persuade Liberal headquarters to have him 'retired'.²⁷ However, in the event only Greenwood, Moreing and Churchill went into the 1924 election facing a Liberal opponent; the other Constitutionlists managed to avoid this.

Considerably less strident in his anti-Socialist views than most of the others who became Constitutionlists, and not alienated by the Liberals' attitude to the first Labour government, was John Leng Sturrock. Sturrock was first elected as Coalition Liberal MP for Montrose in 1918, being re-elected in 1922 and 1923. He wrote after the 1923 election that: 'If ... [Labour leader Ramsay] MacDonald desires to form a Government he is entitled to do so'.²⁸ While serving as a Liberal

MP, Sturrock publicly questioned his party's continued survival, writing to *The Times* a letter including the comment: 'When the obituary of the Liberal Party comes to be written, as come it may ...'.²⁹ In 1924, Sturrock moved south to contest North Tottenham as a Constitutionalist with Liberal and Conservative support.³⁰

Henry Cairn Hogbin was first elected to Parliament in 1923, for Battersea North. Standing as a Liberal, he beat his only opponent, Shapurji Saklatvala, then standing as a Labour-Socialist candidate.³¹ In 1924 Hogbin again faced only Saklatvala, but by this time the two men had both changed party labels; Hogbin stood as a Constitutionalist, and Saklatvala as a Communist, having been denied Labour support. Thus, the contest had the unusual feature of having no Liberal, Labour or Conservative candidate. If ever there was a contest where Constitutionalism had an unfettered opportunity to pit its virtues against its antithesis, this was it. Hogbin put the question of the Constitution in the forefront of his address and claimed that the great issue was 'whether you will have Constitutional Government ... or submit to the forces of revolution and disorder'.³²

By background, John Ward had little in common with most of the other Constitutionlists, who were mainly wealthy and well-educated. Ward had received little formal education, working initially as a navy and only learning to read as a teenager. In 1886 he had joined the far-left Social Democratic Federation and three years later he founded the 'Navvies' Union. In 1914 Ward was commissioned into the army as a Lieutenant-Colonel and, using his connections with organised labour, recruited five battalions. His service as a commissioned officer was, however, a distinction which he shared with many of the other Constitutionlists.³³ The Constitutionlists' military training may have contributed to their tendency to focus on results, irrespective of the means. Ward represented Stoke in Parliament from 1906, initially as a Lib-Lab member. He had refused to sign the Labour Representation Committee constitution in 1903, and was elected without their endorsement.³⁴ He therefore

Hamar Greenwood was Churchill's key ally in the Constitutionalist venture.

faced repeated Labour opposition. In 1924, Ward stood as a Constitutionalist, although the Liberal Party always claimed him as one of their members and supported his candidature. He was ill and unable to take an active part in the election campaign, but there was a joint campaign of Liberals, Conservatives and trade unionists on his behalf.³⁵ The press commented that the local Conservatives, who had been 'lukewarm' at the previous election, rallied enthusiastically to his support in 1924 'in a joint Anti-Socialist effort'.³⁶

In 1924, nine of the ten Staffordshire seats saw straight fights between Labour and one other challenger. In seven of these nine, the Conservatives faced Labour, without Liberal intervention. In the remaining two – Stoke and Burslem – Labour faced a challenger fighting under the Constitutionalist banner. Ward contested the Stoke seat and William Allen fought Burslem as the Constitutionalist candidate.³⁷ Allen was a barrister and had been a Liberal MP from 1892 to 1900. In 1924, no party label appeared on the front of his election address.³⁸ The document had very little policy content, was moderately anti-Labour in tone, and made no mention of the Conservatives, or of any party leader at all, but Allen did declare that he had 'accepted the invitation of the Liberal Association to become a Candidate'.³⁹

(John) Hugh Edwards was the author of three biographies of Lloyd George. Before the First World War, Edwards had become notorious for his anti-socialist campaigning. He sat for Mid Glamorgan from December 1910 until his defeat in 1922.⁴⁰ He then stood in Accrington in 1923, where he was elected as a Liberal. In 1924 he again stood for Accrington, this time as a Constitutionalist with support from the local Liberal and Conservative associations. Edwards was received with 'great cordiality' at the Accrington Central Conservative Club, where his candidature was adopted unanimously. Edwards pledged himself 'that he would never lose an opportunity of voting against Socialists'. He claimed he had done so 'even to the annoyance of the heads of his own party' and that he had 'stuck to the Conservatives on all occasions' since the last election.⁴¹

A FORGOTTEN LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE ALLIANCE

Thomas Robinson used the label Constitutionalist for his campaign in Stretford in 1924, where he was already the sitting MP. During the whole period from his first election in 1918 to his retirement in 1931, he was elected as the result of a local Liberal–Conservative pact. He stood under a variety of labels, generally variations on ‘Independent Free Trade and Anti-Socialist’, although he was always claimed by the Liberal Party as one of their candidates.⁴² Robinson’s 1924 election address was strongly anti-Labour in tone.⁴³

Abraham England was another Lancashire MP who was elected as the result of a local pact between the Liberals and Conservatives, and who stood as a Constitutionalist in 1924. Robinson and England, although adopting the Constitutionalist label in 1924, were therefore effectively just continuing a pre-existing local arrangement. England claimed he had ‘been no Party hack ... I am anti-nothing ... If you examine my record for the last Parliament you will probably be astonished to find the number of votes I gave to the Labour Party. I

have never let Party influence any vote.⁴⁴ However, he was one of the Liberal MPs who had defied the party whip on 21 January 1924 and voted against putting Labour into office, along with Hogbin, Robinson, Edwards and Sturrock. As a result, local Conservatives strongly supported England’s candidature in 1924, some signing his nomination papers.⁴⁵

The assembled group of Constitutional candidates fell well short of Churchill’s target. Ten Liberal or former Liberal MPs stood as Constitutionalists, listed in Table 1.

In addition to the former Liberals mentioned in Table 1, four other candidates were listed in some newspapers as Constitutionalists. These were the former Coalition NDP MP, C. Loseby, standing in Nottingham West, film producer, E. Doran, standing in Silvertown, the former Conservative candidate and heraldry expert, A. Fox-Davies, in Merthyr Tydfil and first-time candidate J. Davis, contesting Consett.⁴⁶ Higham, the promoter of the first attempt at a Constitutionalist organisation, had retired from the House

of Commons in 1922 and did not contest another election. Jarrett had joined the Conservative Party before the 1924 election and unsuccessfully fought this and two later elections as a Conservative candidate, never being re-elected.⁴⁷

Constitutionalist candidates only stood in England and Wales, nearly all in urban seats, mainly north-east of London and in Lancashire and Staffordshire. In most Scottish constituencies, an informal pact existed between the Conservatives and Liberals, but the label Constitutionalist was not used. Only 15 Scottish seats of the total of 71 had both a Conservative and a Liberal candidate in 1924.⁴⁸

The past electoral record of the Constitutional candidates convinced them that their chances of victory would be much enhanced if they faced only Labour opposition. Between them at the last two elections (1922 and 1923) they had prevailed in every straight fight with Labour except one (ten of the eleven such contests); whereas they had failed in all but one of their other contests (five of the six), as shown in Table 2.

There are no records of meetings of the Constitutionalists to thrash out party policy, and certainly nothing to suggest that the group agonised over their political philosophy. Their election addresses did not bear the hallmark of any central co-ordination. The choice of the name Constitutionalist loosely fitted their political positions and highlighted their fears of an unbridled socialist government. The origins of Constitutionalism can be traced back to the theories of John Locke, that government should be legally limited in its powers and that its authority depended on its observing these limits. In Britain, with its uncodified constitution, the potential for government excess was certainly present in theory, but the record of the first, timid, respectable, safe and rather rule-bound Labour government had already dispelled most fears on this score.

The Constitutionalists did not co-ordinate their activities as a group in the approach to the 1924 election. They had no party manifesto and organised no joint meetings. A common theme of their election addresses was the absence of any mention of political parties

Table 1 Former-Liberal Constitutional Candidates in 1924

Candidate	Constituency	Incumbent MP
W Allen	Burslem	W E Robinson, Lib, retiring
W L S Churchill	Epping	C Lyle, Con, retiring
J H Edwards	Accrington	Edwards incumbent Lib
A England	Heywood & Radcliffe	England incumbent Lib
H Greenwood	Walthamstow East	L S Johnson, Con, retiring
H C Hogbin	Battersea North	Hogbin incumbent Lib
A H Moreing	Camborne	L Jones, Lib, re-standing
T Robinson	Stretford	Robinson incumbent Lib
J L Sturrock	Tottenham North	Morrison, Lab re-standing
J Ward	Stoke-on-Trent	Ward, incumbent Lib

Table 2 Previous Results for Constitutionalist Candidates

	1922		1923	
	Opponents	Result	Opponents	Result
Churchill	SPP, ⁴⁹ Lab, Lib, Con	lost	Lab, Con	lost
Greenwood	Con, Lab, Lib	lost	Con, Lab	lost
Hogbin	Lab, Lib	lost	Lab	won
Edwards	Lab	lost	Lab	won
Moreing	Lib, Lab	won	Lib	lost
Ward	Lab	won	Lab	won
England	Lab	won	Lab	won
Robinson	Lab	won	Lab	won
Sturrock	Lab	won	Lab	won
Allen	Did not stand	–	Did not stand	–

or of the leaders whom they supported; only those leaders whom they opposed were mentioned. Whilst the common enemy was clearly Labour, the stridency of their criticism varied from mild in the case of Allen to rabid in the case of Moreing. The Constitutionalists did not behave as a party, and were not treated as such by the other parties. At the 1924 election, Ward, England, Edwards, Allen, Sturrock and Robinson had the backing of their local Liberal associations and faced only Labour opponents. Moreing, Churchill and Greenwood, who did not have the backing of their local Liberal associations, were faced with Liberal opponents.

The Constitutionalists' election results

The Constitutionalists' results in the 1924 election were mixed. Seven of the ten former Liberal Constitutionalists were elected. This represented a net loss of one seat – Battersea North, contested by Hogbin – when comparing seats where the same candidate contested the 1923 and 1924 elections. However, when comparing votes where the candidates contested the same seats as in 1923, their aggregate majorities improved by 14,984, giving an average improvement of just under 2,500 votes per seat.⁵⁰ The 1924 election was a much more difficult election than 1923 had been for candidates standing as Liberals and, had the Constitutionalists all stood under the Liberal banner, their aggregate vote would almost certainly have fallen. Three of the Constitutionalists failed to achieve a clear run against Labour, but still won their contests. Conversely, two who enjoyed a clear run against Labour failed to be elected, as did Hogbin, standing against only a Communist challenger, as shown in Table 3:

Ward, Edwards, England and Robinson repeated their victories of 1923, in the same constituencies, with straight wins against Labour. The Constitutionalist label helped to ensure that they did not face a Conservative challenger, but the Conservatives had not contested any of these seats in the last two elections anyway. However, the label helped to galvanise a greater level of active support from local Conservatives than would have

<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Opponents</i>	<i>Result</i>	<i>Majority⁵¹</i>	<i>Change from 1923 result⁵²</i>
Churchill	Lib, Lab	Won	9,763	different seat
Greenwood	Lib, Lab	Won	3,066	different seat
Moreing	Lib, Lab	Won	2,310	+6,008
Robinson	Lab	Won	9,306	+4,786
Ward	Lab	Won	4,546	+3,929
England	Lab	Won	3,824	+1,934
Edwards	Lab	Won	2,243	-945
Hogbin	Comm	Lost	-542	-728
Sturrock	Lab	Lost	-557	different seat
Allen	Lab	Lost	-606	did not stand

been the case had the candidates stood as Liberals.

The position of Churchill, Greenwood and Moreing was different. They were seen to be closer to being Conservatives than Liberals by this stage, and their results can more reasonably be compared to that which Conservative candidates would have achieved in the same constituencies. Churchill's seat at Epping was essentially a safe Conservative seat. Walthamstow East, where Greenwood was elected, had been a Conservative seat at the last three elections, but more marginal. Moreing's constituency of Camborne was a knife-edge marginal, where left and right had alternately won; however, the main contest recently had been between the two brands of Liberalism – Moreing as a Lloyd George Liberal and Leif Jones as an Asquithian. In 1924, with a revival on the right and a Liberal decline, the seat would probably have swung to the more rightward contender, whatever the party label.

So, overall, the Constitutionalist experiment achieved modest success as a defensive tactic, but it did not herald an electoral breakthrough or the emergence of a new party, or even a grouping, with a distinct identity.

The diverging paths of the Constitutionalists after the 1924 election

After the election, the 'Constitutional Group' of MPs held a dinner at the Constitutional Club, which was attended by over fifty guests. The Constitutional Club had been founded in 1883, one year after the National Liberal Club, both in anticipation of a large number of

potential members as a result of the widening of the franchise in 1884. The longer-established Conservatives' Carlton Club and the Liberals' Reform Club were both, by that time, fully subscribed. Members of the Constitutional Club had to pledge support to the Conservative Party.

The only Constitutional candidates to attend the dinner at the Constitutional Club were Churchill, Greenwood and Moreing.⁵³ Ward was invited but sent his apologies. Almost all the other attendees at the dinner were figures from the Conservative Party. Churchill claimed at the dinner that although he 'and his Constitutionalist friends represented a very small group of members in the House of Commons ... [t]hey also, to some extent, represented a larger group of Liberal members, who had stood with Conservative support and who would certainly recognise that fact in the action which they would take in the new Parliament'.⁵⁴

This was not to be so. The Constitutionalists' political paths were already diverging. Table 4 illustrates the political paths which the Constitutionalists subsequently followed.

Ironically, it was in the announcement of its demise that the press finally accorded the Constitutionalists the status of a party. 'The Constitutional Party is no more', the *Times* reported only seven weeks after the 1924 election:

It has always been difficult to calculate exactly how many members the party embraced, but the general impression after the election was that the correct total was seven ... then Mr. Churchill joined the Government and

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Candidate	1924 result	Subsequent allegiance
Churchill	Won	took Conservative whip
Greenwood	Won	took Conservative whip
Moreing	Won	took Conservative whip
Sturrock	Lost	would have taken Conservative whip
Hogbin	Lost	defeated as a Conservative in 1927
Robinson	Won	took Liberal whip, then Independent
Edwards	Won	took Liberal whip
Ward	Won	took Liberal whip
England	Won	took Liberal whip, Liberal National in 1931
Allen	Lost	re-elected in 1931 as a Liberal National ⁵⁵

'followed the Chancellor in his transfer of allegiance'.⁵⁷ However, he retained a benevolent attitude towards the Liberal Party, warning that: 'Liberals ... represent an element not inferior, at least intellectually or patriotically, to what one may find in Conservative or Socialist ranks ... [T]elling Liberals to put their shutters up immediately ... is calculated to produce anything but an exact antithesis of what is desired ... Government supporters are unwise to indulge in an anti-Liberal vendetta.'⁵⁸ Hogbin endured the distinction of being the only Liberal MP ever to be defeated by a Communist. He was given one more opportunity to avenge his defeat at the hands of the left, and it was potentially an easy path. He was selected to stand as the Conservative candidate at the Stourbridge by-election in 1927, caused by the death of the sitting Conservative MP, who had enjoyed a majority of just under 2,000 votes. At a meeting the week before the by-election Hogbin arrived saying that he was 'all to pieces' and had come against the advice of his doctor.⁵⁹ His campaign suffered and he lost the election to Labour by a margin of over 3,000 votes, thus ending his political career.

Robinson continued his ambiguous relationship with the Liberal Party for the rest of his parliamentary career, which lasted until he retired in 1931. In 1929, he again had the support of both Conservatives and Liberals, but said that he 'acknowledged no party Whip in the House of Commons. He went there, not in the interests of any party, but in the interests of the nation.'⁶⁰ In a letter to the *Daily News* in 1929, he claimed that he had been 'an Independent MP' since the Coalition was dissolved in 1922. 'Notwithstanding this', he said, 'my Liberal friends in the House of Commons generously continued to send me their whip which I have regarded as an act of courtesy. To prevent however any possibility of misunderstanding in the future on this point, I arranged that the sending of the whip to me should be discontinued in this Parliament'.⁶¹

The remaining three successful Constitutional candidates – Edwards, Ward and England – all resumed their allegiance to the Liberal Party in the House of Commons after the 1924 election.

	1923	1924	1929
Camborne	Lib	Const	Lib
Epping	Con	Const	Con
Walthamstow East	Con	Const	Lab
Stoke-on-Trent, Stoke	Lib	Const	Lab
Accrington	Lib	Const	Lab
Heywood & Radcliffe	Lib	Const	Lib
Stretford ⁶⁴	Lib	Const	Ind
Tottenham North	Lab	Lab	Lab
Battersea North	Lib	Comm	Lab
Stoke-on-Trent, Burslem	Lib	Lab	Lab

was classified as a Conservative, and the Liberals claimed Colonel England, Colonel Ward, Mr. Edwards and Sir Thomas Robinson, reducing the party to two, Sir Hamar Greenwood and Captain Moreing, who have both now agreed to accept the Conservative Whip.⁵⁶

The varied career paths of the Constitutionlists after 1924 demonstrated that they were never more than a loose grouping, using the Constitutionlist label as a coupon to avoid splitting the anti-Labour vote.

The three successful Constitutional candidates who took the Conservative whip after the 1924 election – Churchill, Greenwood and Moreing – enjoyed varying fortunes in their subsequent careers. Churchill was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer in the new Conservative government and remained in Parliament as a Conservative until 1964, twice

serving as Prime Minister. Greenwood served just a single further term in the House of Commons, but never returned to ministerial office. In 1929 he was elevated to the peerage, after which he served as honorary treasurer to the Conservative Party, being advanced to a viscountcy towards the end of his term. Moreing beat his arch-rival, Leif Jones, in 1924, but in 1929, in the last head-to-head contest between them, Jones overturned the result. Moreing was by then labelled as a Conservative. This was his last outing at the polls, having stood in five successive elections, each time under a different party label: Coalition Liberal in 1918, National Liberal in 1922, Liberal in 1923, Constitutionlist in 1924 and Conservative in 1929.

Two of the unsuccessful Constitutional candidates – Sturrock and Hogbin – would also have taken the Conservative whip in the House of Commons had they been elected. Sturrock announced that he had

Edwards re-took the Liberal whip once it was clear that there was no prospect of closer formal ties between the Liberals and Conservatives. He sat until the 1929 election, when he was defeated as the official Liberal candidate by Labour. He then retired from national politics. Ward, like Edwards, served out the full 1924 Parliament as a Liberal and stood as the party's official candidate at the 1929 election. He was beaten by Lady Cynthia Mosley, representing the Labour Party, and retired from active politics. After the 1924 election, England re-took the Liberal whip, but 'acknowledged the great help of the Conservative Party, who had given loyal support to a candidate not quite their own colour'.⁶² In 1929 his election address said that he again offered himself as the 'Liberal Candidate'; however, he included a separate message from the local Unionists saying that they would not nominate a candidate and would again urge support for him. He supported the Liberal Nationals in 1931, but retired at the election that year.

Although Allen had sat as the Liberal MP for Newcastle-under-Lyme from 1892 to 1900, he failed to in his bid to return in 1924. However, he was re-elected as the Liberal National MP for Burslem, for one Parliament, in 1931. His return to the House of Commons after an absence of thirty-one years was probably the longest interval between periods of service of any MP.

Loseby, the former Coalition NDP MP from 1918 to 1922, failed to return to Parliament as a Constitutionalist in 1924. He again lost in 1929, standing as a Conservative in Nottingham West. Davis fought only the one, unsuccessful, election campaign as a Constitutionalist candidate, in Consett in 1924. Fox-Davies did not contest any further parliamentary elections, but he did sit as a Conservative local councillor. Doran, who failed as a Constitutionalist in 1924, was eventually elected as a Conservative in 1931. However, his time in Parliament was controversial for his anti-Semitic views and he was defeated in 1935.⁶³

The Impact of the Constitutionlists on the Liberal Party

The Constitutionalist episode provided a route for Churchill,

Greenwood, Moreing, Sturrock and Hogbin to transfer their allegiance from the Liberal Party to the Conservatives, avoiding a public rupture with the Liberals and the need for a personal explanation of defection. They were following a path which they would have followed in any case. However, it was a one-way street: no Conservative came to the Liberal Party via the Constitutionalist route. Although the Liberal Party lost some of its already erring personnel, it did not lose a single seat to the Conservatives as the result of the Constitutionlists venture, when comparing the situation in 1923 (before the Constitutionlists) with that in 1929 (after the Constitutionlists). Of the seats involved in the Constitutionalist venture, those lost went to Labour, and this was in line with prevailing national trends. Table 5 illustrates the changes in party incumbency in the seats where Constitutionlists stood in 1924.

Conclusions

The Constitutionalist episode accounted for a very small proportion of the total exodus of MPs and former MPs from the Liberal Party. The departure of Churchill was a serious loss to the Liberals, but it would have occurred in any event, even without the Constitutionalist venture. What is, perhaps, surprising is that Churchill, with all his leadership skills, actually took fewer defectors with him than did John Simon – generally regarded as a political loner – during the Liberal National split after 1931.

In the longer term context, one-sixth of all the Liberal or Liberal Democrat MPs elected from the December 1910 to the 2010 elections – 116 of the 707 elected – defected from the party at some stage after their first election.⁶⁵ Within this context, the Constitutionalist departures were a small augmentation of an established trend. Including the Constitutionlists who went on to join the Conservatives, 34 Liberal MPs or former MPs defected to the Tories over the course of the century from 1910 to 2010; a slightly larger number (47) defected to Labour. A striking feature of this exodus was that all those former Liberals who joined the Conservatives remained happy in their new party, whilst over half

of those joining Labour regretted their move.⁶⁶ This strongly suggests that, among other factors, there is a fundamental cultural compatibility between Liberals and Conservatives which does not apply to the relationship between Labour and the Liberals or Liberal Democrats. This compatibility was evident in the relations which were established between the Constitutionlists and their local Conservative associations in 1924. It reappeared with the Liberal Nationals after 1931 and it was again borne out in the events leading up to the formation of the 2010 coalition.

Alun Wylburn-Powell is the author of Clementine Davies – Liberal Leader (Politico's, 2003) and Defectors and the Liberal Party 1910 to 2010: A Study in Inter-party Relations (Manchester University Press, 2012). He was awarded his PhD from the University of Leicester on the day that the Liberal Democrat-Conservative coalition was formed in 2010 for his thesis 'Defectors and the Liberal Party since December 1910'.

What is, perhaps, surprising is that Churchill, with all his leadership skills, actually took fewer defectors with him than did John Simon – generally regarded as a political loner – during the Liberal National split after 1931.

- 1 The figure excludes Independent Conservative challengers and two-member seats where one Conservative and one National Liberal stood.
- 2 *Times*, 17 September 1920, p. 7, col f.
- 3 Davies, S. and Morley, B., *County Borough Elections in England and Wales, 1919–38*.
- 4 *Gravesend and Dartford Reporter*, 18 October 1924, p. 4, col e.
- 5 W.D. Harbison was also designated as a 'Constitutional and Democratic' candidate for Saffron Walden at the 1922 election. He was included on the official list of National Liberal candidates, but he was not elected.
- 6 Moreing to Guest, 31 March 1920, Parliamentary Archives, Lloyd George Papers, LG/F/22/25.
- 7 Moreing and Jarrett to Churchill, 5 February 1924, Churchill Papers, Churchill Archives Centre, CHAR 2/132/29–31.
- 8 Maclean MSS 467 fol 69, 17 January 1924, quoted in Hart, M.W., 'The decline of the Liberal Party in parliament and in the constituencies, 1914–1931', Oxford, D. Phil., (1982), 176.
- 9 Riddell Diary, discussion Riddell and Horne, 30 May 1923, quoted in Gilbert, *Churchill, Volume V*, 7–8.
- 10 Jenkins, Roy, *Churchill*, (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2001), 381–5.
- 11 Clementine Churchill to Churchill, n.d. (November 1923?), quoted in

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- Gilbert, *Churchill, Volume V*, 18.
- 12 Gilbert, *Churchill, Volume V*, 25–26.
- 13 *Glasgow Herald*, 26 February, 1924.
- 14 Gilbert, *Churchill, Volume V*, 28.
- 15 *Times*, 3 March 1924, p. 12, col d.
- 16 Jenkins, *Churchill*, p. 390.
- 17 Cook, C. and Ramsden, J., *By-elections in British Politics* (Macmillan, 1973), pp. 53–62.
- 18 Jenkins, *Churchill*, pp. 388–90.
- 19 Gilbert, *Churchill, Volume V*, 43.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 39, quoting letter Birkhead to Derby, 28 March 1924.
- 21 Gilbert, *Churchill, Volume V*, 43.
- 22 Churchill to Balfour, 11 October 1924, quoted in Gilbert, *Churchill, Volume V Companion Part 1*, p. 218.
- 23 Notes on Greenwood, n.d. but 1917 or later, Lloyd George Papers, LG/F/168/2/12.
- 24 Greenwood to Lloyd George, 3 October 1924, Lloyd George Papers, LG/G/8/9/1.
- 25 Greenwood to Saunders, 4 October 1924, Lloyd George Papers, LG/G/8/9/1.
- 26 *Walthamstow and Leyton Guardian*, 26 September 1924, p. 4, col c.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 17 October 1924, p. 5, col b.
- 28 Letter by Sturrock, *Times*, 15 December 1923, p. 8, col b.
- 29 Letter by Sturrock, *Times*, 21 April 1924, p. 4, col a.
- 30 *Montrose Review*, 17 October 1924, p7, col c.
- 31 *Battersea Borough News*, 31 October 1924, p. 3, col b.
- 32 *Times*, 29 November 1923, p. 13, col g.
- 33 These included Moreing, Greenwood, Churchill, England and Allen.
- 34 Brodie, Marc, 'Ward, John (1866–1934)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
- 35 *Staffordshire Weekly Sentinel*, 18 October 1924, p. 9, col a.
- 36 *Staffordshire Weekly Sentinel*, 1 November 1924, p. 6, col a.
- 37 Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results, 1918–1949*, (Macmillan, 1977), p. 251.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 18 October 1924, p. 9, col a.
- 39 Allen, Election Address, 1924, Bristol University Archives.
- 40 The constituency was renamed Neath in 1918.
- 41 *Accrington Gazette*, 18 October 1924, p. 3, col a.
- 42 Craig, *Parliamentary Election Results, 1918–1949*, p. 406.
- 43 Robinson, Election Address, 1924, Bristol University Archives.
- 44 *Radcliffe Times*, 25 October 1924, p. 6, col d.
- 45 *Radcliffe Times*, 18 October 1924, p. 4, col b.
- 46 Craig describes Loseby and Davis as Constitutionalists, and Doran and Fox-Davies as Conservatives.
- 47 Freddie Guest, the former Coalition Liberal Chief Whip, did not use the label Constitutionalist at the 1924 election, but he was closely associated with those who did. Guest's 1924 election address described him as the 'Liberal Anti-Socialist Candidate' and he stated that he was prepared to support a Conservative Government under Baldwin's leadership.
- 48 Excludes Dundee, a two-member seat which had one Liberal and one Conservative candidate in 1924.
- 49 Scottish Prohibition Party
- 50 Calculated by aggregating the increases or decreases in margins of victory or defeat from all the seats where the same candidate contested the seat in 1923 and 1924.
- 51 Positive figures represent a majority, negative figures represent a margin of defeat.
- 52 Where the same constituency was fought by the same candidate at the 1923 and 1924 elections.
- 53 Freddie Guest also attended.
- 54 *Times*, 4 November 1924, p. 16, col c.
- 55 Allen is described by Craig, p. 251, as Nat (NL) after the 1931 election.
- 56 *Times*, 17 December 1924, p. 14, col c.
- 57 Letter by Sturrock, *Times*, 18 February 1929, p. 8, col d.
- 58 *Ibid.*
- 59 *County Express*, 19 February 1927, p3, col d.
- 60 *Stockport Advertiser*, 10 May 1929, p11, col c.
- 61 Robinson to *Daily News*, 8 July 1929, quoted Craig, *Parliamentary Election Results, 1918–49*, p. 406.
- 62 *Radcliffe Times*, 1 November 1924, p. 6, col f.
- 63 The Constitutionalist label made one, unrelated, reappearance, when used by Leslie Haden-Guest in 1927. Haden-Guest was no relation to Freddie Guest and was from a Labour background.
- 64 Stretford was held by Robinson in 1923, 1924 and 1929 under different party labels.
- 65 Wyburn-Powell, Alun, 'Defectors and the Liberal Party since December 1910', University of Leicester PhD., (2010), p. 27.
- 66 Wyburn-Powell, 'Defectors and the Liberal Party', pp. 153–54.

Joseph Chamberlain: Imperial standard-bearer, national leader, local icon

Conference: Newman University, Birmingham, 4 July 2014; The Library of Birmingham, 5 July 2014

Joseph Chamberlain, the most significant mayor of modern Birmingham, MP for Birmingham East for thirty-seven years, President of the Board of Trade from 1880 to 1885, Colonial Secretary from 1895 to 1903 and 'the man who made the weather' in British politics for twenty years, died on 2 July 1914.

Although the event was overshadowed by the Bosnian crisis caused by the assassination of Franz Ferdinand four days earlier, *The Times* printed an obituary of Chamberlain that ran to three pages and public activity in Birmingham completely halted as a mark of respect during his funeral after the Chamberlain family rejected an internment at Westminster Abbey.

Chamberlain's complex and frequently misunderstood career is to be the subject of a major international conference to be organised jointly by the *Journal of Liberal History* and Newman University, Birmingham, in collaboration with Birmingham City Council and Severn Trent Water.

The first day, at Newman University, will begin with a keynote address from Professor Peter Marsh, author of *Joseph Chamberlain: Entrepreneur in Politics* and *The Chamberlain Litany* and will focus on Chamberlain's career beyond Birmingham. Panels of presentations will explore themes such as Chamberlain's career as an educational reformer, his relations with other senior figures of the late Victorian establishment and his political, economic and social philosophy.

That evening, a conference dinner with a speaker will be held at Joseph Chamberlain's home, Highbury Hall.

On 5 July, at the new Library of Birmingham in the city centre, the leader of Birmingham City Council will introduce a day debating Chamberlain's contribution to the 'Second City'. There will be a panel of MPs from each of the three major parties arguing that their party embodies Chamberlain's inheritance, and posters, artefacts and documentary evidence from the city's archives and museums for delegates to explore. It is hoped that the event will conclude with a walking tour of important sites in the City associated with the Chamberlain family.

Proposals for papers may consist of individual papers or of papers grouped for a panel session. For session proposals, two, or preferably three papers should relate to a common theme, not necessarily bound by a chronological framework.

For an informal discussion of ideas for papers or panels or other issues, please contact the conference organiser, Dr Ian Cawood, Head of History at Newman University and author of *The Liberal Unionist Party 1886–1912: A History* at i.cawood@newman.ac.uk.

LETTERS

Honor Balfour I

Helen Langley's excellent article on Honor Balfour (*Journal of Liberal History* 78, spring 2013) mentions that at the 1943 by-election in Darwen which she fought – and lost by only 70 votes – the local newspaper refused to publicise her campaign because she had dared to break the wartime electoral truce agreed between the major parties.

Even though her Conservative opponent, Stanley Prescott, was the same age, Honor thought that he was a callow youth and she complained that she 'was not only fighting the press boycott but was also fighting the boy Prescott'!

Prescott remained as MP for Darwen until retiring at the 1951 election. He later committed suicide in June 1962 at the age of 50.

Michael Meadowcroft

Honor Balfour II

In her article 'Honor Balfour and the Liberal Party', Helen Langley notes in footnote 44, in relation to Aubrey Herbert, that 'it has proved difficult to establish more about Herbert other than he was a journalist'. I do not blame her for this, but surely her editor should have put her right about Aubrey Herbert OBE (1905–81), Chief Agent of the Liberal Party for a time after 1945, a Liberal parliamentary candidate in seven elections between 1929 and 1966 – nearly winning Chester in 1929, and contesting Westmorland (now Tim Farron's seat) in 1964 and Berwick-upon-Tweed (now Alan Beith's seat) in 1966 – and a real, dedicated Liberal at a time when there were far too few such people around.

Hugh Pagan

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman

A Scottish Life and UK Politics 1836–1908

by Dr Alexander (Sandy) S. Waugh, BSc(Econ), BD, PhD, ASSC, FSA Scot

It is expected that this new biography of The Rt Hon. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, GCB (Liberal Prime Minister in 1905–08) will be published in 2014, the year of the 115th anniversary of his election to the Liberal Leadership in the House of Commons.

Early Notes of Interest will be appreciated to give the author an optimum contact list for circulating publication details when available.

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LIBERAL HISTORY QUIZ 2012

In the last issue, *Journal of Liberal History* 78, we published the questions in our annual history quiz at the Liberal Democrat conference in Brighton in September last year. The winner was David Maddox, with an impressive 19½ marks out of 20. Below we reprint the answers.

1. Lady Megan Lloyd George
2. Shirley Williams
3. Jo Swinson
4. The Campaign for Gender Balance
5. 1921
6. Birmingham Hodge Hill
7. 1886
8. Argyll and Bute
9. Mary
10. *Winston Churchill as I Knew Him*
11. Enid Lakeman
12. Lynne Featherstone
13. Rabbit
14. Trinidad
15. Southport
16. First four women to be Liberal parliamentary candidates, at the 1918 general election
17. Nancy Seear
18. Darwen, Lancashire
19. Sutton Courtenay churchyard, Oxfordshire
20. First two women Lib Dems to be elected to the Scottish Parliament

'A NASTY, DEPLORABLE LITTLE INCIDENT' LIBERALISM, NATIONAL LIBERALISM AND THE PRESS

In a brief statement on 22 June 1957 the *Dumfries and Galloway Standard and Advertiser* announced that its editor for the past three years, A.G. Williamson, had ceased to be associated with the newspaper. Robert Fergusson, until then the political correspondent of the *Glasgow Herald*, would take over with immediate effect.¹ In the long, troubled

and, it must be said, sometimes corrupt relationship between British politicians and the country's press the dismissal of the editor of a small Scottish newspaper and, subsequently, the suggested involvement of the local MP in this development was scarcely an event of international significance. Yet, because of the embarrassment

it caused to the British government, it was reported as far away as the United States.² It was hardly even a matter of national importance. But it did prompt a heated debate in the House of Commons and a statement by the Prime Minister of the day. It was perhaps, as one MP put it, 'a nasty, deplorable little incident in our political life'.³ By **David Dutton.**

Dumfries High Street in the 1940s



INCIDENT IN OUR POLITICAL LIFE'

EDITORSHIP OF THE *DUMFRIES STANDARD*, 1957

FOUNDED IN 1843, the *Standard* had a long tradition of support for Liberalism. By the second half of the twentieth century this made it something of a rarity within the British press. At a national level, the *News Chronicle*, which itself closed in 1960, was the nearest thing to a Liberal title, and even it gave its support to the Labour Party in the general elections of 1945, 1950 and 1951.⁴ The *Manchester Guardian*, still published in Manchester but enjoying a national circulation, was also broadly sympathetic. But local Liberal-supporting newspapers, of which there were around twenty, were significant factors in sustaining the party's vitality in such disparate locations as Carlisle, Huddersfield, Rochdale, Greenock and Aberystwyth.⁵ 'We have never tried to hide our Liberalism under a bushel', declared the *Dumfries Standard* in 1955, 'no one can accuse us of concealing where our true sympathies lie'.⁶ The close relationship between the newspaper and the local party was symbolised by the tradition, dating back to 'the early days of Queen Victoria's reign', whereby successful Liberal and earlier Radical parliamentary candidates would address their supporters following the declaration of the poll from the first-floor window of the newspaper's offices in the centre of Dumfries.⁷

But the picture was in fact more complex than the *Standard's* repeated expressions of its underlying commitment to Liberalism might suggest. The newspaper had been complicit in the defection of the sitting Liberal MP to the Liberal National camp in the early 1930s. Indeed, the *Standard* was an important factor in ensuring that Liberalism in the Dumfriesshire constituency became in practice Liberal Nationalism. The key to its influence lay in the fact that James Reid, editor of the paper

since 1919, was also chairman of the Dumfriesshire Liberal Association. In an understated obituary following Reid's death in 1962, the *Standard* declared that the leading political articles of the former editor had been 'forceful, fluent and persuasive'.⁸ When in 1934, after a lengthy period of uncertainty, Dr Joseph Hunter MP announced that he was not only joining the Simonite group of MPs in the House of Commons but also taking up a senior administrative post within the Liberal National Party, the *Standard* and the local Liberal Association both gave their full support. So total was the resulting eclipse of orthodox Liberalism in the constituency that the association was able to hold on to the title of 'Dumfriesshire Liberal Association' until as late as 1960. In its editorial columns the *Standard* insisted that not only Hunter, who died suddenly in 1935, but also his Liberal National successor, Sir Henry Fildes, had every bit as much right to the designation 'Liberal' as did representatives of the mainstream party – who were in any case conspicuous by their absence from the constituency. The only difference was that Liberal Nationals recognised the need, even at the cost of the temporary abandonment in a hostile world of the traditional Liberal doctrine of free trade, to enter into governmental partnership with the Conservatives to resist the domestic challenge of socialism and, later, the increasingly menacing threat of political extremism in continental Europe.

Such a line was just about plausible. Having succeeded by the middle of the 1930s in creating the apparatus and infrastructure of a national political movement, and with the allegiance of around three dozen MPs, the Simonite faction had some claim to represent the authentic voice of modern Liberalism, not least in the context of the

ongoing and apparently irreversible decline of the orthodox Liberal Party.

After 1945, by contrast, the Liberal National Party looked to be little more than an increasingly anomalous survival from an earlier era, especially once the Woolton–Teviot Agreement of 1947, and a subsequent arrangement relating specifically to Scottish constituencies, allowed for the fusion of Conservative and Liberal National (soon to be renamed National Liberal) Parties at constituency level.⁹ As National Liberals survived only by courtesy of their Tory masters, and became almost indistinguishable from them, the *Standard's* position was ever harder to justify.

In maintaining the same attitude towards Major Niall Macpherson, elected as a Liberal National with Conservative support in 1945 and thereafter as a National-Liberal-Unionist, as it had towards Hunter and Fildes, the *Standard* could justly be accused of colluding in an act of deception. Addressing the Annan branch of the Dumfriesshire Unionist Association in December 1946, Macpherson insisted that he was 'a Liberal and proud to be one'. But, he continued, the interests of Conservatives and Liberals were 'identical', even though their backgrounds were different. 'Their interests would gain the day in the long run and he was confident that the Liberals and Conservatives would be fighting side by side at the next election.'¹⁰ A short-lived attempt the previous year to re-establish an orthodox Liberal presence in the constituency, including a forlorn candidature at the general election, soon spluttered out. No Liberal would contest the seat again until a by-election in 1963. In these circumstances Macpherson laid claim to represent Liberalism – without prefix or suffix – in Dumfriesshire with little fear of contradiction. As the 1950 general

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election approached, the *Standard* argued that 'there is no difficulty in Dumfriesshire, where a good Liberal is standing in a straight fight with a Labour opponent'.¹¹ The close and, as a small but growing group of critics argued, unhealthy relationship between the MP and the local newspaper was emphasised by Macpherson's practice of holding his regular constituency surgeries in the *Standard*'s offices, treating its premises 'as almost an official office'.¹²

In 1954, however, the octogenarian Reid finally stood down from the editor's chair. He was replaced by A. G. Williamson, formerly editor of the *Stirling Journal*. It was a curious appointment granted that Williamson was a committed supporter of the orthodox Liberal Party. The proprietors of the *Standard* perhaps believed that the new editor would malleably follow the political line so long pursued by his predecessor. Alternatively, they may have come to believe their own propaganda that National Liberalism was a genuine and legitimate variant of the Liberal creed, and expected Williamson to do the same. At all events, the new appointment soon effected a marked change in the coverage and editorial line of the *Standard*. This was greeted by a significantly increased circulation and, as far as could be divined from the newspaper's correspondence columns, a warm reception from its readership. One correspondent expressed his relief that the *Standard* 'seems to have taken a stand for the principles for which it was founded, and discarded the mean expediencies which could only have brought it into disgrace and disrepute'.¹³ Support for the Liberal Party inevitably involved opposition to the National Liberals, whom the *Standard* now described as merely 'henchmen' of the Conservatives.¹⁴ It also meant disowning most of the political analysis developed by the previous editor. The National Governments of 1931 and 1935, which had given the National Liberals their *raison d'être*, were now castigated as 'the worst Governments in history'.¹⁵ For the time being, however, any criticism of Macpherson personally remained muted. The MP was recognised to be a conscientious and reliable constituency Member and the

newspaper was in any case apprehensive that any attempt to unseat him by the nomination of a Liberal candidate at the next general election might simply serve to split the 'Liberal vote' and thus allow for the return of a socialist. The ideal scenario from the *Standard*'s point of view was an arrangement with the Conservatives similar to that which existed in Liberal seats such as Bolton West and Huddersfield West. Macpherson, an 'ideal Member in every way, could not hold the seat as a Conservative without Liberal support'. 'As a Liberal newspaper in a traditionally Liberal constituency, the *Standard* would be happy if it had a Liberal Member, without any other political tag, who would have the support of Conservatives at election times.'¹⁶

What changed matters was the Suez Crisis of 1956. As a junior minister in Anthony Eden's government, Macpherson had either to give full support to the Prime Minister's fateful policy, or to resign. He opted for the former course and thereby inevitably incurred mounting criticism from the *Standard*. Although the Parliamentary Liberal Party under Clement Davies had tended, more often than not, to vote with the Conservative government of 1951–55, Suez opened up a clear division between the two parties.¹⁷ The *Standard* presented the issue as clearly as it could:

Major Niall Macpherson, MP for Dumfriesshire, who claims to represent the Liberal as well as the Conservative interests in the constituency, again voted for the Government in the vital opposition censure motion last Thursday 1 November 1956. Mr Clement Davies, Leader of the Liberals and the Liberal MPs in the House all voted against the Government. Yesterday, Major Macpherson told the *Standard*: 'I am sorry that your views and mine seem to be so far apart in regard to the action of the Government in intervening in the Israeli–Egyptian war. My own view is that we are both legally and morally entitled to do so, and that we are acting in the best interests, not only of ourselves, but of world peace, however paradoxically it may appear at the present time.'¹⁸

The newspaper adopted a harsher tone towards the MP than at any time since his first election to parliament more than a decade earlier:

When a man thinks that the 60 nations who condemned the Government at the United Nations General Assembly are 'very probably wrong' as he remarked to the writer of this column on Saturday 24 November 1956, he is showing a good deal of independent thought. However, most Liberals, including Mr Clement Davies and Mr Jo Grimond, who have personally approved the stand the *Standard* has taken, remain unconvinced.¹⁹

As the dust began to settle on Eden's disastrous Middle Eastern adventure, the *Standard* referred, without elaborating, to the 'concerted pressure' brought to bear upon it to force it to 'abandon its 113-year-old Liberal principles' and back the government. This was a matter of 'real concern to everyone, irrespective of political sympathies' which 'struck at the very roots of a free press in this country' and had to be resisted 'no matter the source' from which it came.²⁰

It was later revealed in parliament that, as early as August 1954, only five months into Williamson's editorship, Macpherson had asked him not to differentiate so clearly between Liberalism and National Liberalism. The following month he raised the matter again and said that he wanted to discuss it with the directors of the newspaper.²¹ This was arranged and Macpherson attended a meeting of the directors on 29 September. An uneasy truce then remained in place between the MP and the editor until the Suez Crisis of 1956 brought matters to a head. Macpherson now complained again to Williamson and the directors. The latter met on 20 November to consider the position against the background of the recent decision of the South West Scotland Liberal Federation to select a candidate to oppose Macpherson at the next general election. The directors decided to invite Macpherson to a meeting the following Saturday, 24 November. Ironically, in view of the fate which awaited him, Williamson was asked to issue the invitation:

Dear Major, Following upon the decision by the Liberal Federation to contest the seat at the next General Election, the directors had a meeting on Tuesday morning to consider the new situation which has arisen, and it was felt that a word with you would be helpful. Could you come to my room at 11.30 on Saturday morning, when they will be there to see you? ... If I do not hear, I will assume you will be present. Many thanks. Regards. Yours sincerely, A.G. Williamson²²

When the meeting took place the chairman, before allowing the business to begin, required Williamson to leave the room, even though that room was the editor's own office. Williamson did so under protest.

Precisely what happened next is an area of some dispute. What is clear is that when Williamson was allowed to return he was told that the *Standard* would in future support Macpherson and the Conservative government. Williamson asked whether the *Standard* was still a Liberal newspaper and was told that it was. His suggestion that a genuinely Liberal paper could not give full support to either the MP or the government was left unanswered.

There matters rested until 19 June, the following year, when Williamson was summarily dismissed.²³ He was given two months' salary and informed that there would be a new editor in the editor's chair the following morning. But what was the relationship between these developments and the November meeting? The Labour MP Tom Fraser later told the House of Commons that the minutes of the meeting had subsequently been deleted from the firm's minute book and a revised set substituted from which Macpherson's role was omitted. Furthermore, Fraser claimed that the minutes of another meeting, at which consideration was given to the question of whether to support Macpherson or the official Liberal candidate for Dumfriesshire at the next general election, were also deleted and the relevant paragraph rewritten by one of the directors.²⁴ The board of directors, however, later issued a statement insisting that Williamson was dismissed because the board

was dissatisfied with the conduct of matters 'unconnected with politics' and that his removal had not been 'at the instigation of the member of Parliament for the constituency'. Indeed, the board's decision was 'in no way influenced' by Macpherson who had 'no part whatsoever' in choosing the new editor.²⁵ Yet Williamson claimed to have been told by the chairman of the board that the directors were dissatisfied with his work and considered that he was 'going towards Labour in his writing'.²⁶ This last charge is difficult to sustain on the evidence of Williamson's recent editorials and only makes sense in light of the difficulty the directors would have faced in accusing the editor of supporting 'Liberalism', when this remained the official stance of the newspaper. As Williamson later put it, 'As for my alleged Labour leanings, a newspaper which was personally commended by two successive leaders of the Liberal party and Liberal headquarters for its Liberalism was in no danger of going Socialist.'²⁷ Furthermore, when Macpherson was interviewed on the matter by the *Scottish Daily Express*, he admitted that, about two months after the November meeting, he was asked by one of the directors whether, in the event of Williamson's dismissal, he knew of anyone who might take his place. 'I thought about it', recalled Macpherson, 'and mentioned Mr Fergusson' – Williamson's eventual replacement.²⁸

Williamson claimed compensation for wrongful dismissal and his claim was supported by the Newspaper Society and the Guild of Editors. More significantly, he appears to have approached at least one opposition MP. At a time when the Conservative government remained in some disarray following the upheavals of Suez, the Labour Party in particular quickly appreciated the opportunity to cause it further embarrassment. On 23 July 1957, Tom Fraser, Labour MP for Hamilton, asked the Scottish Secretary, Jack MacLay, himself a National Liberal, whether he was aware that his Under-Secretary, Macpherson, had had a meeting with the directors of the *Dumfries Standard* at which the editor had been criticised for writing editorials hostile to the government and that 'as a result of that

'This ridiculous row has been elevated into a great scandal', Macmillan noted. 'PQs and protests to me from Labour and Liberal MPs.'

meeting the editor was sacked'.²⁹ After an intervention by the Leader of the Opposition, Hugh Gaitskell, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan agreed to look into the matter. When the Prime Minister made a statement two days later, he chose to focus his defence of Macpherson on the rather narrow point that the Under-Secretary was involved 'solely as the member for the constituency' and not as a junior minister. Not surprisingly, this argument failed to satisfy Macpherson's critics. Gaitskell tried to ridicule the MP's actions. To opposition laughter he suggested that Macpherson had complained to the directors about the level of attention given by the newspaper to Liberalism instead of National Liberalism. 'Was it not very unreasonable to ask the editor to devote more space to National Liberalism', enquired Gaitskell, 'when not one of us knows what it is?' Fraser, by contrast, insisted on tabling a motion 'that this House has taken note of the action of the Joint Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the member for Dumfriesshire, which led to the dismissal of the editor of the *Dumfries and Galloway Standard* and strongly deprecates such action as being inconsistent with his tenure of office as a Minister'.³⁰

A further statement by Macmillan on 30 July to the effect that Macpherson had not been involved with Williamson's dismissal failed to close the matter, especially as it coincided with Macpherson's own admission that he had indeed been asked for suggestions about a possible replacement editor.³¹ Labour members gave the Prime Minister's statement a noisy and hostile reception, with Gaitskell suggesting that it was quite unconvincing. Macpherson, he argued, should resign. A censure motion was tabled for 1 August.³² Macmillan was sufficiently concerned to record these developments in the privacy of his diary. 'This ridiculous row has been elevated into a great scandal', he noted. 'P[arliamentary] Q[uestions] and protests to me from Labour and Liberal MPs. There is now a hostile motion on the order paper (supported by Grimond) and I have told the Chief Whip that we must dispose of it by debate if necessary.'³³

Opening the debate, with Macpherson sitting silently on the Treasury bench, Fraser argued

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that, at the November meeting, the Dumfries MP had exercised 'improper influence' over the directors to have the editor sacked. On the evidence available, suggested Fraser, Macpherson had 'been in the whole affair up to the neck'. He had 'behaved in a way inconsistent with his tenure of office as a Minister'. Fraser called upon the Prime Minister to appoint an independent enquiry to establish all the facts of the case. His motion was seconded by the Liberal leader, Jo Grimond, and vociferously supported by opposition MPs who, even without an enquiry, appeared convinced that Macpherson had behaved improperly. 'This was a plot', insisted Emrys Hughes, Labour MP for South Ayrshire and Bute, 'to get rid of an editor who had courage and independent-mindedness and who had become something of a thorn in the side of the Tory Party' in South West Scotland.³⁴ In response, Macmillan pointed to the inconsistency between Fraser's censure motion and his call for an independent inquiry before the House reached a conclusion on the matter. It was, argued the Prime Minister, 'a compromise by malice out of innuendo'.³⁵

These were difficult days for a government still struggling to recover from the seismic shock of the Suez Crisis and the resulting change of premier but, when the House divided on strictly party lines, Fraser's motion was rejected

by 293 votes to 233. Macmillan seemed well pleased with his own performance and with the impact of the vote:

I spoke for twenty minutes or less, and managed to squash the accusation. The Opposition (Lib and Labour) was very weak. Gaitskell behaved lamentably. He allowed the whips to be put on; but (altho' he was in his place when I sat down) he hadn't the courage to answer me. We won easily, and our boys were very pleased at a) my loyalty b) my success in the debate. All this helps, with so many divisions and disaffections in the Party on more serious affairs.³⁶

Macpherson thus survived and went on to hold a succession of junior offices in the governments of Macmillan and Alec Douglas-Home until the Tories lost office in the general election of October 1964.³⁷ But for the Liberals, struggling to re-establish a genuine presence in South West Scotland after more than two decades of virtual extinction, the loss of the *Standard's* support was a significant blow. The South-West Scotland Liberal Federation had been set up in February 1955 with the clear aim of recreating a Liberal infrastructure that would enable the party to put forward candidates in Dumfriesshire and the adjoining constituency of Galloway as soon as was

Harold Macmillan MP (Prime Minister 1957–63); Major Niall Macpherson MP

realistically possible. At the Federation's annual general meeting in Dumfries in February 1958 it was announced that the *Carlisle Journal*, a newspaper with a 160-year-old radical tradition, untainted by association with the National Liberals, would shortly launch a South West Scotland title, based on Dumfries and under the editorship of the ex-*Standard* editor, A. G. Williamson. Sir Gordon Lethem, chairman of the Federation, referred to the recent silencing of 'one of the most vigorous and independent voices in their midst'. Now, he was happy to report, the voice of Liberalism was again to be raised.³⁸

The *South-West Scottish Journal* duly made its first appearance on 7 March 1958 amid messages of welcome and support from leading Liberals such as Jo Grimond and sympathetic journalists, including Alastair Hetherington of the *Manchester Guardian*. With a cover price of just 2d, it was clearly intended to undercut its rivals and, by the end of the month, it was reported that total circulation already exceeded that of the five established newspapers currently serving the Dumfries and Galloway area.³⁹ One of the new paper's key aims was to undermine Macpherson's position and, in particular, his continuing pretensions to represent the Liberal cause. 'Why go on masquerading under the guise of Liberal', asked the *Journal*, 'when even the head of the Tory Party and their chief

propagandist Lord Hailsham, the Conservative Party Chairman goes out of his way to attack Liberalism? The electorate is not all that daft not to see through the stratagem.³⁰

The most important thing was for the Liberals to put up a candidate and thus prevent Macpherson from tapping unchallenged into the continuing Liberal vote. 'The Dumfriesshire Liberals must contest the seat at the next General Election, if only to dispose of the National Liberal myth, or cease to be a political force in the constituency.'³¹ The *Journal* sought to differentiate between the two movements laying claim to the title 'Liberal' with a clarity to which the *Standard* had seldom aspired in the years since the original split of the early 1930s. It looked forward to a time when the political life of South West Scotland 'would not be as confused as it is today'. At present, 'we have two rival Liberal organisations, one of which just manages to hold itself together to give the National Liberal Member its blessing and the other does all it can to prepare for the day when it expects to throw him out'.³² But the new paper's momentum was not maintained. Just six months after its launch the *South-West Scottish Journal* was merged with its parent publication, the *Carlisle Journal*.

One key question remains. Why was Macpherson, supported by the *Dumfries Standard*, so determined to preserve his National Liberal credentials at a time when all objective indicators pointed to his being an unreconstructed Tory? Both Macpherson and many of his political opponents believed, almost as an article of faith, that the MP would be unable to hold on to his constituency without the support of a significant number of Liberal votes, or even, on the basis of its electoral history before the 1930s, that Dumfriesshire was a 'natural' Liberal seat. This proposition had not been seriously tested. Because of a lack of time in 1955 and out of the apparent fear in 1959 that a split Liberal vote would result in the return of the Labour candidate, the South-West Scotland Liberal Federation drew back from fielding a candidate. To the mounting irritation of his critics, therefore, Macpherson continued to put himself forward to the voters of Dumfriesshire as the National-Liberal-Unionist

candidate in a calculated effort to extend his electoral appeal. This 'disguise', argued Lethem, 'had caused misunderstanding and had deceived a number of Liberals who were perhaps too guileless to realise there were people who could be so treacherous as to fight their political battles under the flag of the other side'.³³ When the Liberal Party in Dumfriesshire finally managed to re-form a constituency association, its chairman, Ralph Hetherington, called upon Macpherson to make it 'abundantly clear' that he did not represent Dumfriesshire Liberals. 'Otherwise', Hetherington added with scarcely concealed sarcasm, 'people might be led to suspect the Unionist candidate of a little sordid vote-catching'.³⁴

On the national plane, the brief life of the *South-West Scottish Journal* did witness one decisive moment in the relationship between the Liberal and National Liberal Parties. The seat of Torrington in Devon, held by the National Liberals ever since 1931, was recaptured by the Liberals at a by-election in March 1958. This was the first time that the Liberals had gained a seat at a by-election since 1929 and victory was all the sweeter for being secured at the expense of a 'National Liberal and Conservative' opponent. As Lady Violet Bonham Carter, whose son Mark was the victorious candidate, later recalled, there was a 'strange sense of being a member of an army of liberation entering occupied territory which for years had been ruled by quislings and collaborators and that their day was over once and for all'.³⁵ With one eye clearly on the local situation, the *Journal* echoed this sentiment. Its leading article was confidently entitled 'Torrington Means End of National-Liberals'. The lesson, it claimed, was clear: 'the sham of the Liberal-Nationalist cum Conservative label is clearly understood by the electorate and ... the days of the so-called Liberal-Nationalist are well and truly over'. It was now important that 'every effort should be made to perfect organisation in the constituencies ... What was done at Torrington should be possible in many other places at the general election if some time and effort are devoted to organisation now'.³⁶

In many parts of the country the *Journal's* prediction was quickly

fulfilled. Over the next few years several local Conservative associations reached the conclusion that the National Liberals had exhausted their usefulness and took the decision to drop the hybrid labels under which they had been known ever since the Woolton-Teviot Agreement of 1947. Yet this was not the way matters were seen in Dumfriesshire, where Macpherson continued to cling tenaciously to his National Liberal affiliation, while stressing the ongoing similarity between Liberalism and the modern Conservative Party. Electioneering in 1959, he suggested that everything advocated by the Liberal Party in its manifestos for 1951 and 1955 had been implemented by the Conservative government of which he was a member.³⁷ Even in 1963, when the Conservative administration's mounting troubles gave rise to renewed expectations of an imminent general election, it was announced at the annual general meeting of the Dumfriesshire Unionist Association that the MP would once again be standing as a National-Liberal-Unionist. By this stage even the *Standard*, while still offering Macpherson its support, doubted the wisdom of his designation and suggested that it would now be difficult to find 'even a handful of the old National Liberals' in the constituency.³⁸ Macpherson, however, justified the designation with a logic which at least satisfied himself, if not his Liberal critics:

The title National-Liberal-Unionist fits the facts and no one can object to a title that fits the facts. It is historically and factually accurate. I am a member of the Liberal Unionist group in the House of Commons and everyone knows I am a member of the Conservative Government. There is nothing whatever incompatible in this and there is nothing strange or anomalous in the joint title National-Liberal-Unionist.³⁹

Hector Munro, chairman of the Unionist association, offered a less opaque explanation: 'We have no intention of surrendering our right in choosing a label that is most appropriate'.⁴⁰ In other words, Dumfriesshire Tories would hold on to their hybrid designation for

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as long as they saw advantage in doing so.

In the event, the new Prime Minister, Alec Douglas-Home, determined that Macpherson could best serve the interests of his beleaguered government from the House of Lords. In the resulting by-election a genuinely Liberal candidate stood in the constituency for only the second time since 1931. In that contest the Unionist candidate stood as just that – albeit with the stated support of the National Liberal Association, whose very existence in any meaningful form many now questioned. Meanwhile Charles Abernethy, the Liberal candidate, spoke confidently of his aim to ‘return the constituency to the Liberal tradition’³¹ and of the voters’ opportunity of ‘returning again to their old allegiance and voting Liberal’.³² In the event the Unionists narrowly held off Labour’s challenge; but the Liberal candidate lost his deposit.³³

Over thirty years, excepting the brief interval of Williamson’s three-year editorship, the *Dumfries Standard* had played a significant role in transforming Dumfriesshire from a ‘natural’ Liberal to a ‘natural’ Conservative seat. The National Liberal ‘deception’ had done lasting damage to the Liberal cause which the restoration of more honest politics at the 1963 by-election could not easily reverse. Writing in the mid-1920s the celebrated newspaper magnate, Lord Beaverbrook, argued that when politicians and newspapers were in ‘cordial and sincere agreement on any departure of policy, nothing but good results from their cooperation in educating the nation’. But, he continued, ‘the agreement must be an honest one in which both parties attain conviction by a process of rational argument’.³⁴ Over a generation the *Dumfries Standard* and a succession of Liberal National, National Liberal and National-Liberal-Unionist MPs had acted in ‘cordial and sincere agreement’. But the ‘honesty’ of which Beaverbrook wrote was marked only by its absence.

David Dutton is the author of Liberals in Schism: A History of the National Liberal Party (I. B. Tauris, 2008) and A History of the Liberal Party since 1900 (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), and contributes regularly to the Journal of Liberal History.

- 1 *Dumfries and Galloway Standard and Advertiser* (hereafter *Standard*), 22 June 1957.
- 2 *New York Times*, 2 August 1957.
- 3 Emrys Hughes, Labour MP for Ayrshire South and Bute, 1946–69, House of Commons Debates (hereafter H of C Debs), 5th Series, vol. 574, col. 1553. The son-in-law of Keir Hardie, this left-wing MP was as often a thorn in the side of his own party, which twice withdrew the whip from him, as he was, as on this occasion, of the Conservatives.
- 4 York Member, ‘Who killed the *News Chronicle*?’, *Journal of Liberal History*, 69, winter 2010–11, p. 5.
- 5 For a recent analysis of the importance of a supportive local press in the constituency of Colne Valley, see Matt Cole, *Richard Wainwright, the Liberals and Liberal Democrats: Unfinished Business* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2011), pp. 61–66.
- 6 *Standard*, 25 May 1955.
- 7 *Standard*, 28 May 1955.
- 8 *Standard*, 24 January 1962.
- 9 Fusion did not in fact take place in Dumfriesshire. The Unionist and ‘Liberal’ Associations retained their separate identities, but agreed to form a joint committee of equal membership at election times to support their candidate. *Standard*, 25 October 1947.
- 10 *Standard*, 11 December 1946.
- 11 *Standard*, 8 February 1950.
- 12 Sir Gordon Lethem quoted in *Manchester Guardian*, 16 November 1957.
- 13 *Standard*, 2 April 1955, letter from A I Milton.
- 14 *Standard*, 11 June 1955.
- 15 *Standard*, 25 May 1955. The *Standard* extended this description jointly to the Lloyd George Coalition of 1918–22.
- 16 *Standard*, 19 September 1956.
- 17 For the broader significance of the Suez Crisis for the Liberal Party, see M McManus, ‘Liberals and the Suez Crisis’, *Journal of Liberal History*, 42, spring 2004, pp. 38–41.
- 18 *Standard*, 7 November 1956.

- 19 *Standard*, 28 November 1956.
- 20 *Standard*, 5 December 1956.
- 21 The *Standard* was owned by Thos Hunter, Watson and Co. Ltd. It was taken over by George Outram and Co. Ltd, owners of the *Glasgow Herald*, in August 1958.
- 22 *Manchester Guardian*, 31 July 1957.
- 23 *Manchester Guardian*, 27 July 1957.
- 24 Enquiries to the current Deputy Editor of the *Dumfries Standard* have failed to determine the present location of these minute books or, indeed, whether they still survive.
- 25 *Manchester Guardian*, 27 July 1957.
- 26 *ibid.*
- 27 *ibid.*
- 28 *Scottish Daily Express*, 27 July 1957.
- 29 *Standard*, 24 July 1957.
- 30 *Standard*, 27 July 1957.
- 31 H of C Debs, 5th Series, vol. 574, col. 1069.
- 32 *The Times*, 31 July 1957.
- 33 P. Catterall (ed.), *The Macmillan Diaries. Prime Minister and After 1957–1966* (London: Macmillan, 2011), p. 52.
- 34 H of C Debs, 5th Series, vol. 574, cols 1539–56.
- 35 *The Times*, 2 August 1957.
- 36 Catterall, *The Macmillan Diaries*, p. 53.
- 37 Macpherson served as Joint Under-Secretary at the Scottish Office, June 1955–October 1960; Parliamentary Secretary at the Board of Trade, October 1960–July 1962; Minister of Pensions and National Insurance, July 1962–October 1963; and, as Lord Drumalbyn, Minister of State at the Board of Trade, October 1963–October 1964. He re-emerged as Minister without Portfolio in Edward Heath’s government, October 1970–January 1974. In the wake of this last political reincarnation, the waspish newspaper proprietor, Cecil King, commented: ‘Lord Drumalbyn (né Macpherson), a pleasant fool, is resurrected to be Minister without Portfolio to deal with the new Labour Relations Bill in the Lords.’ *The Cecil King Diaries 1970–1974* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), p. 48.
- 38 *Carlisle Journal*, 25 February 1958.
- 39 *South-West Scottish Journal* (hereafter *S-W S Journal*), 28 March 1958.
- 40 *S-W S Journal*, 4 April 1958.
- 41 *S-W S Journal*, 20 June 1958.
- 42 *S-W S Journal*, 30 May 1958.
- 43 *Standard*, 20 November 1957. For a discussion of the wider significance of the National Liberal factor in Scottish politics after 1945, see I G C Hutchison, *Scottish Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Palgrave: Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 76–8.
- 44 *Standard*, 23 September 1959.
- 45 Arthur Cyr, *Liberal Party Politics in Britain* (London: John Calder, 1977), p. 101.
- 46 *S-W S Journal*, 4 April 1958.
- 47 *Standard*, 3 October 1959. The dying years of the National Liberal party in Britain as a whole are considered in David Dutton, *Liberals in Schism: A History of the National Liberal Party* (London: I B Tauris, 2008), chapter 5, ‘The Long Road to Extinction, 1947–68’.
- 48 *Standard*, 5 October 1963.
- 49 *ibid.*
- 50 *ibid.*
- 51 *Standard*, 27 November 1963.
- 52 Ewart Library, Dumfries, box 10, Abernethy election leaflet.
- 53 The full result was: David Colville Anderson (Unionist) 16,762; Ian Jordan (Labour) 15,791; Charles Abernethy (Liberal) 4,491; John Gair (Scottish Nationalist) 4,001
- 54 Lord Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the Press* (London: Hutchinson, 1925), p. 10.

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REPORTS

David Lloyd George: The Legacy

Conference fringe meeting, 9 March 2013, with Kenneth O. Morgan and David Howarth; chair: Celia, Baroness Thomas
Report by **David Cloke**

IN THE 150TH anniversary of his birth, in a joint meeting with the Lloyd George Society at the spring 2013 Liberal Democrat conference, representatives and Group members were invited to consider the legacy of David Lloyd George – not just for Liberalism, and for the party, but for the country as a whole.

Baroness Thomas opened the meeting with a vignette which highlighted the extent to which Lloyd George has played such an integral part in the lives of British Liberals. Her family owned a postcard of a great Welsh disestablishment rally, with Lloyd George wagging his finger at the audience; up in the organ loft was her grandfather.

Lord Morgan, introduced as the world's greatest expert on Lloyd George, was called upon to reflect upon LG's legacy to the country. David Howarth, former Liberal Democrat MP for Cambridge, confined his remarks to the impact that Lloyd George had on his party and the lessons from that for the Liberal Democrats. It would be fair to say that one presentation was rather more positive than the other!

Lord Morgan recalled that when he had spoken on behalf of Lloyd George at the Group's 2007 fringe meeting on the greatest Liberal, he had lost out to John Stuart Mill. He wondered whether, now that the Liberal Democrats were in government, members might look more favourably upon him!

He considered first Lloyd George's legacy to the country. Three Ps stood out: Parliament, premiership and party. On all of these, Lord Morgan claimed, Lloyd George had a quite extraordinary impact.

Parliament

For Lord Morgan Lloyd George brought the force of mass

democracy into British parliamentary politics more powerfully and with more lasting effect than anyone before him, including Joseph Chamberlain. He used the force of populism (notably in the Limehouse and Newcastle speeches in 1909) and the power of the media to get things done. This was most notable in the confrontations with the Lords over the 1909 People's Budget and the subsequent Parliament Act. Lord Morgan did not believe that Lloyd George intended the Lords to throw out the budget but he was quite prepared to face them down if they did. Quite extraordinarily, he had urged his cabinet colleagues to spend as much they could in order to build the case for land duties. He wondered to the audience – and to Lord McNally in particular – whether a member of any other cabinet had had a similar experience!

In his campaigning for the Parliament Act Lloyd George indulged in what Lord Morgan described as democratic confrontation, despite the opposition of the King, the Archbishop of Canterbury and other members of the Establishment. Interestingly, given later developments in Liberal policy, fearing a Conservative majority Lloyd George did not want an elected House of Lords, but rather an enfeebled one so, that the elected House would always prevail.

Premiership

Lloyd George was clearly, in Lord Morgan's eyes, the first modern Prime Minister, creating, as he did, so many of the institutions of the modern premiership: the Cabinet Office, special advisers (in the famous 'Garden Suburb' in the garden of Number 10) and personal handling of foreign policy, industrial disputes and the government's

public relations. He cultivated a presidential style, which no Prime Minister had done previously. For some, this style, and his closeness to some newspapers, was too much. Members of the cabinet were reportedly particularly upset at having to meet in Inverness Town Hall in order to accommodate Lloyd George's holiday.

Lord Morgan also noted that Lloyd George was the first Prime Minister to write his memoirs, and to make significant amounts of money as a result. This may also be a reflection of the fact that he was the first Prime Minister not to come from a financially privileged background.

Party

Lord Morgan acknowledged that Lloyd George had divided his party in 1918, but in his view this was a reflection of what had happened during the war. Nonetheless, the split between the pro- and anti-government Liberals had been very rough and ready and there were a number of casualties in the process. This in turn led to the division of the party and serious consequences for all Liberals. It was interesting to note that two of Lloyd George's great heroes had been Joseph Chamberlain, who himself had split the Liberal Party, and Theodore Roosevelt, who broke from the US Republican Party to form the Progressives.

The resulting peacetime coalition (on which, incidentally, Lord Morgan believed he had written his best book) had achievements at first, especially in the area of social reform. It created a different kind of politics, at least for a time, and one much reflected on since the 2010 general election. However, Lloyd George's coalition was inherently unstable; coupled with the smell of corruption and conspiracy, exemplified by the scandal over the sale of titles, this meant that one of his legacies was to make coalitions inherently unpopular. (As an aside, Lord Morgan noted that the atmosphere of the Lloyd George coalition government had been well caught in Arnold Bennett's novel *Lord Raingo*.)

In addition to splitting the Liberal Party and discrediting coalition government, Lloyd George enabled the Labour Party to become the majority party of the

Lloyd George was clearly, in Lord Morgan's eyes, the first modern Prime Minister, creating, as he did, so many of the institutions of the modern premiership.

left. Lord Morgan recalled George Bernard Shaw's advice to the Labour Party conference in 1918: 'go back to Lloyd George and say "nothing doing"' – very sound advice, in Lord Morgan's view.

Lord Morgan then turned to some general reflections on the broad cultural changes initiated by Lloyd George, which had had a very direct, powerful and long-lasting impact, down to the present time. First, Lloyd George helped to make Wales a political reality. He had not been alone in this – Lord Morgan acknowledged that there had been others who were influential, notably Tom Ellis – but Lloyd George, through disestablishment and through tackling the power of the Welsh gentry, made Wales a more democratic nation, increasingly confident of its own capacity. *Cymru Fydd* (Young Wales or Wales of the Future), which he helped lead, clearly anticipated devolution.

In elaborating during questions, Lord Morgan added that the concept of home rule was a fluid one, but he was confident that it meant something like the devolution of our own day. It was something that Lloyd George wished for other countries of the Empire, not just Wales, and had seen implemented in South Africa in the aftermath of the Boer War. Lord Morgan also argued that it was inconceivable that Wales would break away and in that there was a distinction with Ireland.

No other politician, Lord Morgan argued, could make a stronger claim as the founder of the welfare state. Lloyd George laid the basis for it in the 1909 Budget (and later in 1914) using a redistributive, progressive budget to fund welfare, create employment and assist children. This was followed by the National Insurance Act of 1911, creating a comprehensive system of universal benefits and a new concept of 'social citizenship'. All this was drawn on by Beveridge in his later report. An extraordinary achievement, Lord Morgan believed, accomplished without much help from others in the cabinet, apart from Asquith.

This concern for social reform did not end in 1914. The 1918 coalition began with a very strong social programme: subsidised public housing, started under his minister Christopher Addison, and the

widening of the scope of unemployment insurance. Lord Morgan noted that Lloyd George was often accused of pursuing the low road, but many of the great minds of public life had worked closely with him in pursuing this agenda.

Whilst Lloyd George's jingoism and militarism during the First World War meant that it was not Lord Morgan's favourite part of his career, it demonstrated that he was an extraordinary leader. In contrast to Churchill, he succeeded despite not having full control of the House of Commons and despite the Generals playing politics and conniving with the Court. The war made the state much more powerful in social, economic and cultural spheres and this too was part of Lloyd George's legacy – including votes for women, which he had always supported, and a strengthened role for trades unions.

In foreign affairs, Lord Morgan acknowledged that Lloyd George has been much-criticised for the part he played in the creation of the post-war world and the entrenchment of the principle of nationality that we still have today. Beyond Europe, two of his creations, Palestine and Iraq, caused serious problems which proved to be mishandled by successive governments. Nevertheless, he was, as Keynes recognised, the one 'peacemaker' who sought to revise the Versailles settlement, though this sometimes drifted into appeasement. By the very end of the inter-war period, however, he had become a powerful and brilliant critic of appeasement and assisted Churchill in becoming Prime Minister.

Lord Morgan also argued that Lloyd George had a very special insight into Ireland. As a Welshman he had a sense of what it meant to be under the heel of the English, and as a Nonconformist he appreciated the outlook of the Protestants of Ulster. Despite that, he was responsible for the very dark phase in Anglo-Irish history, the shameful exploits of the 'black and tans'. However, he had a reverse gear; he changed the policy and created a settlement that has broadly lasted – a major achievement for these islands, in Lord Morgan's view. A consequential legacy of this time, however, was that the Irish Catholic vote went to the Labour Party.

During the inter-war years Lloyd George was the major political proponent of Keynesianism and, indeed, anticipated him in the 1924 and 1925 Liberal Summer Schools. The slogan 'We can conquer unemployment' demonstrated a leader who was not paralysed by the idea of debt but believed that depression could be counteracted by promoting growth, investment and employment. It was a positive characteristic of both Keynes and Lloyd George, Lord Morgan argued during questions, that their ideas evolved.

In summing up Lord Morgan argued that Lloyd George's adoption of new ideas and desire to move forward was a positive contrast with the other great British war leader, Winston Churchill. The appeal of Churchill was a nostalgic one and he himself fought to maintain an outmoded class system and a fading Empire. By contrast, Lloyd George was a critic of the class system, of the Establishment and of conventional wisdom: 'a critic who changed his world'. As depicted in his statue in Parliament Square, Lloyd George points the way forward. And as Lloyd George himself said of Abraham Lincoln at the unveiling of his statue, also in Parliament Square, 'he lost his nationality in death ... truly he belongs to the ages'.

Lady Thomas then turned to former Cambridge MP and now the Director of the MPhil in Public Policy at the University of Cambridge, David Howarth, for his thoughts on Lloyd George's legacy and lessons for the party.

Howarth prefaced his remarks by noting that he could not match Lord Morgan's depth of knowledge of Lloyd George and that he was merely giving the views of a retired politician and current social scientist. He also noted that he was probably going to give a more negative judgement than Lord Morgan. He then outlined an aspect of Lloyd George's character that made the whole exercise problematic. As Lord Riddell, one of the great diarists of early twentieth century had observed, Lloyd George 'is the only person I know who is not obsessed with ghosts'. As Lord Morgan had said, Lloyd George looked forward; there was thus something of a paradox in worrying about the ghost of

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someone who did not worry about them himself.

For Howarth the place to start was to try and look for a parallel figure in more recent history, and for him that was Tony Blair. Both men proved to be enormously disruptive figures in their respective parties; both were dynamic, with frequent eye-catching initiatives; both indulged in tactical manoeuvres of dazzling rapidity; both were, in their different ways, brilliant orators and able to come to terms with the media of their day; and both, some might allege, did not always have the highest standards of honesty.

They were also both obsessed with big business, and admired businessmen; Lloyd George, for example, once said that Leverhulme was worth ten thousand sea captains. In Howarth's view, bringing men like Sir Eric Geddes into his government was a sign of his excessive admiration of the dynamism of big business. There was also a link with Lloyd George's cultivation of Keynes. Similarly, Tony Blair was keen on bringing in new theorists and new ideas, though he often subsequently fell out with them.

Possibly connected to these strands was a similar attitude to 'big-tent politics': that one person could rise above party, could be bigger than their party and could reconstruct politics around their own personality. They were also both uninterested in history, which had significant consequences for what they did. The big difference between them was that Blair did not split his party – which, Howarth contended, gives us a glimpse at how divisive a figure Lloyd George was.

To highlight this, Howarth turned to the 1918 general election and its consequences. He began by saying that he did not believe that the 1918–22 government marked the end of Liberal England; that occurred in the 1930s, when the party split three or even four ways. Nonetheless, what happened in this period did represent a serious weakening of the party, which meant that it was less able to survive what happened in the 1930s.

In Howarth's view, Lloyd George's manoeuvres in 1918 were utterly disgraceful. Having decided that the Liberal Party was dead the Coalition Liberals

began negotiating for an electoral pact with the Tories very early on, with a view to putting forward a joint programme. Howarth suggested that the Maurice debate of May 1918 gave Lloyd George the justification he required; in that debate Asquith had led his official Liberals into the lobbies against the government over the allegation, made in the press by a senior army officer, that it had starved the Western Front of resources in order to use them in the Mediterranean, and had misled Parliament over it. This meant that Lloyd George was able to argue (to himself at the very least) that the Liberals that had voted against him could not be trusted with post-war reconstruction.

This argument did not stand up to much scrutiny, however, as Howarth pointed out that the list of MPs that voted against the government and the list of those who received the coalition 'coupon' in the 1918 election were not mutually exclusive. In addition, some who had supported him were abandoned because they were in the wrong seats, which left a very bad taste.

Lloyd George's attitude to his fellow Liberal MPs was also reflected in the speech he gave on 12 November 1918, to which he had invited all Liberal MPs. In it he claimed that he would be a Liberal until he died, and would never abandon the party. He then went through a list of measures important to Liberals and argued that the coalition should continue; a motion was then passed in support. At the same time, however, he was negotiating a joint programme with the Tory leader Bonar Law, including a loosely disguised form of Imperial Preference.

A combination of puzzlement at the joint programme and the use of the coupon caused deep resentment throughout the 1920s and beyond. Indeed, Howarth had personal connections with people who had known Asquith – they hated Lloyd George.

Howarth believed that Lloyd George had a peculiar notion as to his friends were. He had an ambitious plan to form a 'fusion party' with the Conservatives. Strangely it was not an alliance of moderates but of extremists; Howarth wondered whether it was an attempt to reunite the Chamberlainite wing

According to Howarth the lessons for the Liberal Democrats, therefore, were: don't pursue a centre vote that does not exist, and don't alienate the party.

of the Conservative Party with the collectivist wing of the Liberals. Despite expending a great deal of time on this project it fell apart, but one consequence of it, however, was that it made reunification of the Liberal Party in 1923 extremely difficult.

Howarth also noted that when Lloyd George decided to start his own party it had no activists. The Liberal Party locally had not split. He had money and access to new ideas, but the painful truth is that the breakthroughs mentioned by Lord Morgan did not lead to electoral success. Why was that, Howarth asked? In his view it was very clear that the events of 1918–22 had alienated too many of the troops on the ground; they wandered away. It was noticed at the time that Labour campaigns in constituencies were being run by previous Liberal activists. Labour did not just capture Liberal Party intellectuals, it gained its local base as well.

According to Howarth the lessons for the Liberal Democrats, therefore, were: don't pursue a centre vote that does not exist, and don't alienate the party.

In answering the questions that followed, the speakers were able to provide some further illumination on the points that each of them had made. Regarding the split in the Liberal Party, Lord Morgan argued that the big division occurred before Lloyd George became Prime Minister, over conscription, and that this reflected the unhappiness of many Liberals over the war. He did not agree, however, that Lloyd George shared responsibility for dragging the country into an unnecessary war. He did not think that doing nothing was an option, and having decided to go to war Lloyd George argued that the government should exercise the full power of the state to win it. Lloyd George felt that many Liberal critics of the war only half wanted to win it.

On the Maurice debate Lord Morgan argued that it had been a major mistake by Asquith and that if Lloyd George had lost it the war would have been run by the army and not the civil power. Howarth agreed with him on the substance of the debate. His difficulty was with how Lloyd George gone about winning it – a dilemma that continues to trouble Liberals in the present day.

THE SOUTH A AND ITS EFFECT ON TH

The 1899 war between the British Empire and the two Boer republics in South Africa was a turning point not only for British imperial history but also for the parties in Parliament. The Second Boer War brought forward questions about imperialism, national identity and morality which resulted in a break in the alliance between the Liberal Party and the Irish nationalists. **James Fargher** analyses the impact of the war on the relations between the two parties and on the political history of Irish home rule.



AFRICAN WAR THE LIBERAL ALLIANCE



Boers at the
Battle of Spion
Kop, 23–24
January 1900

THE LIBERAL PARTY and Charles Stewart Parnell's Irish Parliamentary Party had allied themselves in 1886 over the issue of home rule in Ireland. Although both parties had fallen into opposition after the Unionist victory in the election of 1895, a shared belief in home rule kept the Liberals and the now-fragmented Irish nationalists allied together until 1899.¹

But the outbreak of the South African War caused an intense wave of nationalist sympathy for the Boers amongst the Irish, who openly championed the Afrikaner farmers in their struggle. Whilst the Liberals had tolerated previous grievances between themselves and the Irish, in 1899 the nationalists separated themselves to such a degree that eventual reconciliation with the Liberal Party in the early twentieth century was to be difficult, and lukewarm, for both sides. The pressure of the Boer War and the issue of patriotism would cause both sides to renounce their alliance, ensuring that home rule would not be truly revived until 1910, when a desperate Liberal minority government was forced to make terms with the reunited Irish Parliamentary Party in order to control the House of Commons. But the sincere spirit of cooperation present in the nineteenth century had evaporated, after the allies turned against each other when

confronted with the South African War.

Originally, Gladstone had developed a personal passion for Irish home rule, and the Liberal Party had come to accept it as one of the reforms in the party's mission, beginning with the first Home Rule Bill in 1886. This platform was sincerely maintained even after the failures to pass Irish home rule in 1886 and 1893. Campbell-Bannerman, for example, felt that 'until the social order was restored in Ireland by some means or other [the Liberals] could not attend to the reforms urgently required for both Scotland and England'.² Although in opposition after the 1895 general election, the Liberals refused to repudiate their alliance with the Irish until 1899.

The Boer War marks the end of this awkward period between the allies and its influence merits further analysis. Some have argued that a passionate Liberal belief in home rule flowed from Gladstone to the eventual passage of the third Home Rule Bill in 1914, despite occasional minor breaks between the Liberals and the Irish nationalists. This conventional understanding points to Gladstone's two failed home rule bills and notes the reluctance of Liberal leaders to attempt to once again fight an impossible Parliamentary battle – even though they maintained their support for home rule in principle. Patricia Jaland, for example, in her book *The Liberals and Ireland: the Ulster Question in British Politics to 1914*, argues that 'without some such obligation to fulfil a historic pledge, some sense of commitment to a firm principle, the Liberal Party would surely have abandoned home rule entirely in the years after 1894'.³ This claim demonstrates a reasonable analysis of Liberal and Irish relations, but it confuses the genuine, or Gladstonian, alliance which both parties paid homage to before the South African War with the ungainly and tense relationship between the two parties from 1906 to 1914. Rapprochement, to some extent, did occur after the war, but with considerable difficulty and was marked by the dissension of the Liberal Imperialists, who jettisoned home rule as their Liberal Unionist predecessors had done in 1886.

Another view emphasises the underlying antagonism between

the two parties, and sees the demise of the Liberal alliance as inevitable. Historians in this field tend to argue that there was no lasting Liberal commitment to home rule from 1886 all the way to 1914, and that the Liberal alliance could never overcome the powerful nationalist currents of the multinational United Kingdom. Stephen Howe, for instance, argues that the various elements of the Irish Parliamentary Party could not balance Irish nationalism and loyalty to the United Kingdom, ultimately making a true Liberal alliance impossible.⁴ H. C. G. Matthew also commented on the disagreements between the Liberals and the Irish in the late 1890s, saying, 'the split over English education, the different standards demanded by the Irish of the Liberals and the Unionists, and the disputes within the Irish themselves brought a *de facto* end to the alliance'.⁵ It is true that the two parties were not inherently natural allies, but it is important to recognise the reluctance on both sides to formally end the alliance before the outbreak of war in 1899.

Furthermore, given this long history of cooperation, it is remarkable that an Irish Home Rule Bill was not introduced until as late as 1912. Indeed, H. W. McCready has commented that although it was entirely possible for the Liberals to re-introduce home rule into Parliament in 1906, 'it is striking that this electoral victory and the great impulse it gave to one of the most dynamic governments in the whole history of British liberalism was not followed, as had the last two liberal victories under Gladstone, by the introduction of a third home rule bill'.⁶ Although theoretically continuing to support home rule, the Liberal Party effectively abandoned this platform until after the 1910 general election. Not only, in McCready's view, was home rule unofficially dropped from the Liberal platform and only resurrected under the direst of circumstances,⁷ it 'cannot be explained solely by the fact that the liberals were long in opposition and then, in office, became dependent upon Irish support only with the election of 1910, important as those factors were'.⁸

McCready even goes as far as to say that vitriolic Irish opposition to the Boer War 'alienated in very large measure the sympathy

McCready even goes as far as to say that vitriolic Irish opposition to the Boer War 'alienated in very large measure the sympathy for Ireland and for home rule which had been created in a large section of the liberal party and aroused feelings of distrust and indignation in all sections of public opinion'.

for Ireland and for home rule which had been created in a large section of the liberal party and aroused feelings of distrust and indignation in all sections of public opinion'.⁹ However, and crucially, McCready states that the alliance disintegrated after the failure of the second Home Rule Bill and was non-existent during the late 1890s.¹⁰ This paper will attempt to show that, in fact, although the Liberal–Irish alliance may have arguably broken down by the late 1890s *de facto*, it was not formally repudiated until the outbreak of the Boer War, and that both the Liberals and the Irish referenced the theoretical alliance from 1895 to 1899 – indicating a reluctance to completely abandon the idea of a Liberal–Irish alliance until the outbreak of war in South Africa. The devastating split in 1899 meant that attempts to revive the alliance in the 1900s were hampered by the poisonous legacy of the war, and while partially successful, were dogged by defections from key Liberal leaders and marked by an absence of the previous commitment to Irish home rule.

It is useful to begin by examining one of the fundamental difficulties to the Liberal alliance, namely the religious division between the parties, and to appreciate the efforts subsequently required to uphold this partnership. By the late nineteenth century, the backbone of the Liberal Party was made up of Protestant Nonconformists, or Dissenters. Methodism in particular, one of the most influential of the Nonconformist sects, had a history of anti-Catholicism which stretched back to John Wesley himself.¹¹ This strain between the largely Nonconformist Liberal Party and the nationalist Irish Catholics was made apparent when Gladstone first made home rule a Liberal Party goal in 1886. Stephen Koss notes that:

... in 1886, the Grand Old Man embarked on an Irish policy that shattered his party and alienated a considerable number of Nonconformists ... even those who stood by him regretted it as a sell-out to Roman Catholics and hooligans (the two being more or less synonymous), who usurped priority from more legitimate Nonconformist claims.¹²

Nonconformists had enormous political influence over the Liberals, and they helped to form the Liberal agenda.

Despite this religious difference, the Liberals and the Irish maintained the Gladstonian alliance even after the defeat of the second Home Rule Bill in 1893. True, the Liberals began to concentrate on other reform projects, much to the frustration of the Irish, but this period following Gladstone's resignation was also marked by an interest in home-rule-all-round, which would 'simultaneously sol[ve] the nationalist problem and the problem of business congestion in the Commons ... Home-Rule-all-round enjoyed some popularity as a means of uniting the various nationalists within the Liberal Party'.¹³ Home-rule-all-round would ultimately founder with the collapse of nationalist parties in Scotland and Wales, but with the formation of a home-rule-all-round committee the Liberals still effectively demonstrated their commitment to the Irish, and members such as Richard Haldane could still boast 'he was a Home Ruler in 1886 and he was a Home Ruler in 1896'.¹⁴

This period after 1893 became, however, more fractious between the parties as they began slowly drifting apart, especially over educational matters which 'strained'¹⁵ the Liberal-Irish alliance, in the words of H. C. G. Matthew. Starting in 1896, for example, the Liberals and the Irish disagreed over the Unionists' Education Bill, which promised to give increased power to sectarian education. The Bill was an affront to the secular Liberals, but it was eagerly supported by the Catholic Irish nationalists, leading some to believe that 'the Irish are Catholic first and Home Rulers a long way afterwards'.¹⁶ It was true that the Liberals criticised the Irish for voting along with the Unionists, but the parliamentary alliance continued, despite this setback. Although they opposed government support of religious, especially Catholic, education, the Liberals were able to tolerate occasional deviations from the alliance, in this case quelling hostilities between their own Nonconformist voters and the Irish Catholics as well as 'still mak[ing] a pretence of reliance on the Irish vote to assist them in divesting the bill of

its sectarian character'.¹⁷ In a rare case of Irish National Federation and Irish National League unity, the Irish too 'pledged themselves to stand by the Nonconformists in trying to gain some protection against [certain] clauses'.¹⁸ The alliance was rooted in home rule and, to a lesser extent, a common opposition to the Anglican Church, and it is significant that even three years after the failure of the second Home Rule Bill the parties were able to maintain a veneer of cooperation over contentious theological matters. This desire to maintain the alliance would only change with the start of the Boer War, when even the *de jure* arrangement was repudiated.

This religious conflict would only plague the alliance when it uncomfortably juxtaposed the opposing national identities and when it reminded Liberals that their Irish allies were ultimately nationalists. A rift opened over the issue of a publicly funded Roman Catholic university in Ireland, which the Liberals firmly opposed due to their secularist principles, but which the nationalists saw as a matter of Irish autonomy. John Redmond, leader of the Parnellite Irish National League, exclaimed in the House of Commons in February 1898 that:

... to preserve this Liberal alliance Ireland has been called upon to pay and she has made great sacrifices ... it is my belief that the unity of the statesman of the century was sacrificed in order to maintain the Liberal alliance ... and all in return that Ireland has received is practically nothing.¹⁹

But William Harcourt, then leader of the Liberals, responded by reminding the Irish of all the Liberal sacrifices made for home rule and the current alliance.²⁰ John Dillon, leader of the Irish National Federation, which comprised the majority of the former Irish Parliamentary Party, suggested instead that the Liberals should, in compromise, reassure the House that 'Home Rule headed their programme'.²¹ What is noteworthy is the fact that all three leaders paid homage to the idea that the alliance was still active, even if having setbacks in the Commons.

In fact, in December 1898, the Irish even tried to use religious pressure to bring the parties closer together. When the government introduced yet another religious schooling bill, it was supported by the Irish, much to the frustration of the Liberals. The Irish nationalists used this opportunity to try to coerce the Liberal Party into raising home rule as its first priority, above all other Liberal reform efforts, the *New York Times* reporting the Irish as 'delighted because they calculate that the worse the position of the Liberal Party becomes, the greater will be its temptation to make terms'.²² This episode highlights the overwhelming Irish desire for national autonomy, and the paramount importance of the alliance as they attempted to persuade the Liberals to jettison other distracting reform projects in favour of home rule alone. Religious division, in this instance, served as a potential tool for strengthening the Liberal alliance. This would seem to reaffirm the idea that neither party had forgotten or abandoned the parliamentary alliance during the years of opposition.

The allies were also often in active agreement with each other over non-home rule issues during this period. For instance, John Dillon supported the Liberals over a dispute involving Parliament's South African Committee (the body responsible for overseeing events in South Africa, including relations between the British colonies and the Boer republics) where it appeared that the Irish nationalists were under-represented. Dillon and the Irish National Federation so enthusiastically cooperated with the Liberals that it even caused William O'Brien, head of the small United Irish League faction, to shout 'let the honourable Member for East Mayo tear himself away from the Liberal party and assert the rights of the Irish Members!'²³

Meanwhile, the Unionists attempted to subvert home rule by introducing the Local Government (Ireland) Act of 1898, which granted local autonomy to popularly elected county and district councils, as in the rest of the United Kingdom, alongside their policy of 'killing home rule with kindness.' In a bid for at least a shred of self-government, the Irish nationalists voted to pass the Bill, much to the

John Dillon, leader of the Irish National Federation ... suggested instead that the Liberals should, in compromise, reassure the House that 'Home Rule headed their programme'.



dismay of the Liberals who saw it as unfairly enfranchising wealthy Irish landlords, as it would provide them with agricultural grants from the Treasury. Charles McLaren, a Scottish Liberal, opined:

as a Liberal and a supporter of the Irish Nationalist Party in all their political reforms, I have a right to ask why, on this occasion, they are deserting the Irish tenant in favour of the Irish landlord ... we have seen Irish Members watching, in apparent satisfaction, a Tory Government voting money in support of the landlords of Ireland.²⁴

Again, this speech emphasises the idealised unity of the parties. Their disagreement only stemmed from the fact that, for the Irish nationalists, the Local Government Act represented another step towards home rule whilst for the Liberals, it was a surrender to the landed, privileged class.

This is not to minimise the fact that the Liberal–Irish alliance had been slowly disintegrating due to parliamentary quarrels and Irish frustration over the lack of progress towards home rule. In February 1899, only a few months before the war, John Redmond called this situation ‘a shameful repudiation of the pledges to the Irish people.’²⁵ He went on to say that:

Home Rule is the most urgent of all questions of domestic reform, and therefore must be dealt with first. That surely was an essential condition of the alliance when we were told that the highest interest of Ireland was to support the Liberal Party. And it ... at any rate has gone to the winds. That ... was the programme and platform of the Liberal Party when the Irish alliance was entered upon, and it was on the faith of the condition that Home Rule should have foremost place in the programme of the Liberal Party that the Irish people – to their great sorrow, as I believe they now realise – consented to abandon the great man who had extracted that alliance from the Liberal Party.²⁶

In response, Haldane mused, ‘if the honourable Member desires to make cooperation with the members of the Liberal Party difficult upon this subject, I cannot help thinking that he selected the best possible means of doing it’.²⁷

betraying a note of fatigued exasperation.²⁸ The Irish nationalists had started to become more outspoken in their demands for Irish home rule, further alienating the Liberals who were both home rulers and aware that home rule had failed twice before, the second time before the insurmountable Lords. In spite of this, Redmond’s reference to the alliance demonstrates that it lived on, even if only on an abstract level, before the outbreak of the Boer War. It is significant that the Liberal Party refused to explicitly renounce the alliance until hostilities in South Africa began in 1899. Therefore, the dissolution of the alliance during the war is a powerful indicator of a sharp shift in consciousness for both the Liberal and Irish parties.

In August, the issue of Roman Catholic university education in Ireland once again surfaced. Trouble was brewing in South Africa, and Irish nationalist contempt for British imperial policy was polarising opinions. Robert Perks, a prominent Methodist Liberal Member, delivered a blistering speech against the Irish nationalists. He acknowledged that:

... the *unholy alliance* seems to have come to an end, or it will come to an end when my Irish friends thoroughly appreciate the fact that they will get nothing from Her Majesty’s Government ... How absurd it is for Irish Members to argue that English Nonconformists have no right to express an opinion on Irish religious questions, when they are the very men who come forward to help the Government saddle upon English Nonconformists an obnoxious system of elementary education!²⁹

It is difficult to say whether Perks was exaggerating the situation between the parties or if the alliance genuinely was on the verge of collapse even on a conjectural level. But the speech shows that some form of alliance had survived from 1893 to this critical moment, arduously maintained in the face of increasing strain.

Meanwhile, tensions were building up in South Africa, especially over the issue of the Uitlanders – settlers, largely British, who flocked to the Transvaal after the



discovery of massive gold deposits in the Rand in 1886. Sensing an opportunity to absorb the Boers into the Empire, the Unionist government had begun to demand unprecedented voting rights and exclusive civil liberties for the Uitlanders. Calls for war mounted, following continued refusal from the Boers to grant citizenship benefits to foreign gold prospectors. While the Liberals criticised the government's handling of the diplomatic situation with the Boer republics, ultimately they did feel a sense of imperial loyalty which the Irish nationalists did not. As storm clouds gathered, Robert Perks and another prominent Methodist MP, Henry Fowler, actively campaigned amongst Nonconformists to support the British position in South Africa. Perks announced at a public meeting that 'the Cape Colony and the Colony of Natal are as much British territory as the counties of Cornwall and Kent'.³⁰ The Liberal Party was trapped, needing simultaneously to appear patriotic as well as being morally opposed to war with the small republics. As Jeffrey Butler writes about the approach of the South African War,

Imperialism and Home Rule both involved the issue of security. Gladstone's actions on many issues raised at various times the question whether the Liberals could be trusted with the security of the nation ... The Venezuela crisis, the [Jameson] Raid, the Kruger Telegram, another Ashanti War, Dongola, the Jubilee, Omdurman, and Fashoda – put pressure on Liberal leaders ... to prove their patriotism.³¹

In contrast, the Irish nationalists continued to empathise with the Boers, seeing them as white fellow victims of British – specifically English – imperialism.

Hence, whilst William O'Brien's United Irish League drafted resolutions of sympathy with the Boers 'in [their] courageous opposition to the dishonest attacks of Rand capitalists and their allies in the British Ministry',³² the Liberals became critically alienated from their erstwhile parliamentary allies by such virulent attacks against the Empire. Despite their own principled opposition to the

war, the Liberals could no longer find any further common ground with the Irish nationalists. The nationalists celebrated any obstacle to British imperialism for patriotic reasons because, as Christine Kinealy notes in her book, *A Disunited Kingdom*, the Irish sympathised with the Boers as a free people fighting against British colonialism. She writes that 'many [nationalists] viewed [the war] as an attempt by British imperialism to crush the self-determination of the Boer people. This sentiment was particularly evident in Ireland, where Home Rule dominated the political agenda'.³³ The Liberal electorate may not have been in favour of the war, but they were acutely aware of the nationalists' anti-imperial rhetoric.

This stance came at a price, however:

But if the Liberals were often viewed with indifference or contempt by their Irish political allies ... in Unionist eyes they appeared to be taking again the part of England's enemies ... always with a blindness that was folly or an intent that could only be called treacherous, sapping and straining at the pillars of a great Empire.³⁴

It is also crucial to remember that the Liberal Party as a whole only began to denounce the methods of warfare (much less the war itself) as the conflict entered its counter-insurgent phase in mid 1900, and Kitchener began using the infamous 'methods of barbarism' to stamp out the Boer guerrillas.³⁵ Even Campbell-Bannerman's condemnation of the concentration camps and atrocities 'nearly finally split the Liberal front bench',³⁶ with Liberal Imperialist leaders such as Asquith and Grey dissenting.³⁷ At the outbreak of the war, Liberal opposition to the conflict was much more muted than it would later become. The fact that the Boers had declared war on the United Kingdom placed the Liberal Party in an awkward position, G. H. L. Le May affirming that 'technically the Boers were the aggressors; the fact that Kruger [President of the Transvaal] got his ultimatum in first alienated from the Transvaal much sympathy that it might otherwise have received in Britain',³⁸

underlining the dilemma in which the Liberals found themselves.

The joint Boer ultimatum had expired on 11 October 1899, demanding a withdrawal of all British troops from South Africa. When Britain refused, the South African Republic and the Orange Free State declared war. The war would be the tipping point for the Irish–Liberal alliance, severing the last connections between the various Irish factions and the Liberal Party, and proving to be too great of a rupture for the tottering Gladstonian alliance.

When Parliament was recalled to address the new war in South Africa on 17 October, John Redmond disgustingly remarked, 'there is now a state of war, and we are told the Liberals and Tories unite, and I am sorry to say in regard to English Liberalism that is largely true ... let the Liberals and Tories do as they will; thank God there are in this House a few men who ... will register their votes against this measure'.³⁹ He was followed by another Irish nationalist MP who stated that, 'our sympathies are entirely with the Boers ... as an Irish Member, I protest against this unjust war, and I trust that God will defend the right'.⁴⁰

In another case, Edward Saunderson, a staunch Irish Unionist, acutely remarked on 17 October:

I am happy to know that on this occasion, as on all similar occasions when this country is at war, party politics are forgotten, and Englishmen, whether they are Liberals or Radicals or Conservatives, stand shoulder to shoulder. The principal speakers in this debate have been Irish Members ... I think some surprise must be felt at the vigorous manner in which Roman Catholic Irishmen support the Boers.⁴¹

Saunderson perfectly captured the mood of the House when he observed the dramatic division of the British and the Irish nationalist Members. Speaking later during the war, one Irish nationalist declared that 'as long as that is the spirit which animates the Front Opposition Bench the Liberals are destined for a long time to sit on those benches' and they had become 'simply a mockery and a reproach'.⁴² To be sure, a few fringe and radical

Irish nationalist leaders:
John Redmond (1856–1918)
John Dillon (1851–1927)
William O'Brien (1852–1928)

Liberals still stuck with the Irish in their bitter resistance to the war, but the overwhelming majority of the party (at least at the outset of war) refused to take the Irish position and angrily repudiated charges that the party as a whole was 'pro-Boer' or unpatriotic.⁴³

Indeed, the leaders of the Liberal Party in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords expressed a sense of solidarity with the government after war had been declared. Lord Kimberley, leader of the Liberals in the Lords, addressed the peers, saying 'whatever may be our opinions as to the past history of this melancholy business, we are ready as the usual supporters of the government to give our support to whatever measures may be necessary to vindicate the honour of the Empire and to protect its interests'.⁴⁴ Although Campbell-Bannerman, leader of the opposition in the Commons, stated that the Unionists' mishandling of the situation 'did more than anything else to end all chances of success from the negotiations',⁴⁵ he ultimately agreed that 'actual hostilities have commenced and an active aggression has been committed which is the plain duty of our Ministers, of Parliament, and of the people to resist'.⁴⁶ Campbell-Bannerman, and the vast majority of his party, felt that above all else British South Africa must be protected from the Boer invasions. In the words of *The Methodist Recorder*, the influential Nonconformist newspaper, 'there is a melancholy satisfaction in learning ... the Transvaal declared war against England, and that England never invaded the territory of the two Republics nor fired the first shot'.⁴⁷ With the exception of a small group of pro-Boer Liberals including Lloyd George (called the 'feeblest' section of the party by Kenneth Morgan⁴⁸) and before Kitchener's brutal counter-insurgent campaign, the Liberal Party noted its moral opposition to the war before voting through the money and supplies necessary for the Unionist government to wage war in South Africa.⁴⁹

In fact, when John Dillon moved to publish a statement condemning the war – '[it] has been caused by the assertion of claims which interfere with the internal government of the republic in direct violation of the terms of

the treaty of 1884, and by massing large bodies of British troops on the frontier of the republic'⁵⁰ – it was voted down with an overwhelming majority of 322 to 54. As the *New York Times* reported, 'the minority consisted mainly of Irish Members and a few Radicals ... the majority included the occupants of the front Opposition bench and the bulk of the Liberals'.⁵¹ Even Campbell-Bannerman and his Liberals refused to vote in favour of this amendment. Indeed, as the *New York Times* observed 'the Irish Members are not in high favour just now, even in the Liberal press, on account of their unpatriotic speeches'.⁵² The Liberals had utterly divorced themselves from the Irish; in the face of a common national enemy they had opted to reach out to the Unionists rather than to remain loyal to the now defunct Liberal alliance.

This was further reinforced as the debate over the war dragged on. When asked to clarify why the Irish sided with the Boers, Patrick O'Brien, Member for Kilkenny, replied 'what is more natural than that the people of Ireland "rightfully struggling to be free", should be with the Boers, who are also rightly struggling to maintain their freedom and to keep you out of the Transvaal?'⁵³ John Dillon criticised the government, saying that Great Britain had consistently neglected the Irish and that it ought to have 'shown the same zeal as she now displays on a gigantic scale for the removal of the largely ... bogus grievances of the Uitlanders'.⁵⁴ In fact, William Redmond, brother of John Redmond, was so spirited in his defence of the Boers that he had to be escorted from the House by the Serjeant at Arms.⁵⁵ He would go on to comment towards the end of the conflict, 'there ought to be some representative of the Liberal party in the House manly enough to adopt the policy of Mr. Gladstone long ago'.⁵⁶ Herbert Gladstone, the son of William Gladstone himself, even announced in December 1899, that 'the alliance between the Liberals and the Nationalists has been dissolved'.⁵⁷ This is noteworthy not only because he was the son of the Grand Old Man, but he also was to remain a principled home ruler throughout the rest of his career. His suggestion that the Liberal alliance had officially ended late in 1899 was therefore a significant one.

Even Campbell-Bannerman and his Liberals refused to vote in favour of this amendment. Indeed, as the *New York Times* observed 'the Irish Members are not in high favour just now, even in the Liberal press, on account of their unpatriotic speeches'.

Other Liberal leaders agreed, and during the war the party renounced the last pretences of an alliance with the Irish. Matthew notes that during the election of 1900, virtually no speeches were made regarding Ireland, and the party 'held to Herbert Gladstone's view that it was best to allow the question to fall as far into the background as possible'.⁵⁸ One year later, in the summer of 1901, Perks wrote a letter to Rosebery outlining the new electoral plan of campaign, part of which was 'to repudiate the alliance, [and] declare that Gladstonian Home Rule is dead'.⁵⁹ Matthew himself commented that, 'this aspect of the campaign had little to do with Ireland; it was a dissociation from the Irish in their capacity as pro-Boers',⁶⁰ and that 'these Liberal Imperialists thus committed themselves to the position of an absolute Liberal majority ... on the ground that unless the de facto breakdown of the alliance was explicitly and publicly accepted by the Liberals, they would not win over the "centre of the nation"'.⁶¹ For both electoral as well as principled reasons, the Liberals decided to officially end the last vestiges of the Irish alliance, which had been struggling ever since the defeat of the second Home Rule Bill. It is however noteworthy that it was the outbreak of the South African War which finally caused both sides to accept a formal termination of their partnership.

McCready further observes that both Herbert Gladstone and Campbell-Bannerman considered it unwise to pursue Irish home rule with the voters due to the nationalists' unpopularity with the British public following the outbreak of war.⁶² Many Liberals were shocked, for instance, when some of their former allies began openly urging Irish immigrants in South Africa to take up arms against government troops.⁶³ Campbell-Bannerman, a sincere home ruler, believed that the 'recent follies'⁶⁴ of the Irish nationalists during the war made it impossible for the Liberal Party to support home rule, at least in the immediate future. Gladstone, realising the hostile attitude towards home rule in Great Britain after 1899, managed to quietly drop it from the party's electoral platform in both the 1900 and 1906 elections.⁶⁵

As for the Irish, in February 1900 John Redmond put a bill

before the House demanding an end to the war in South Africa; he freely admitted that 'when the Empire is involved in complications a feeling of hope and satisfaction stir[s] the majority of Irish home and abroad'.⁶⁶ When icily asked whether he feared losing all prospects for home rule from the Liberal Party, Redmond retorted that 'Ireland has nothing to lose and everything to gain by raising her voice on the side of justice and liberty'.⁶⁷ Just before the proposal was voted down, by 368 to 66, one Liberal rose and 'said that there was one day that the Boers would never celebrate, and that was the day on which the British Parliament should surrender'.⁶⁸ The Liberals were patriotic Britons first and Irish sympathisers a long way afterwards. The war itself also was a major cause of the reunification of the Irish factions into the Irish Parliamentary Party in early 1900 and indicates perhaps a search for inner strength following their collective divorce from the Liberals.

In late 1905 the Liberal Party once again came to power, easily winning a majority in the House of Commons in early 1906 and ending their need to search for parliamentary allies. But unlike in the 1880s and 1890s, when the party had supported home rule, the new Liberal government had a drastically different Irish policy and relationship with the nationalists. Hamer notes that, 'the great causes of the past ... [such as] Home Rule ... had either turned sour or now aroused passions that seemed to Liberals very frightening and un-virtuous ... issues like the Irish Question became transmuted into *hideous and frightening new forces*'.⁶⁹ That swift change was due, in part, to the Irish reaction to the Boer War.

Lord Rosebery, the former Liberal leader, made an important speech in December 1901, speaking at length about the South African War before turning to party politics and 'called on Liberals to cast aside "fly-blown phylacteries of the past," including home rule'.⁷⁰ Although Rosebery no longer controlled the party, his influence was enormous and this declaration seriously threatened to cause a party split.⁷¹ Indeed, under him the Liberal Imperialists emerged as a powerful sub-group within the party, forming the Liberal League which

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included Henry Fowler, Asquith and Grey (the same group of men who had opposed Campbell-Bannerman's 'methods of barbarism' speech).⁷² The League was explicitly opposed to Irish Home Rule and it fed off Liberal resentment towards the Irish.⁷³

Although the war may not have made rapprochement impossible, it was certainly strained. A limited degree of cooperation existed between the parties after the Irish reunified in 1900 and the Liberals lost the khaki election of that year. However, McCready has speculated that warming Irish-Liberal relations, especially in the run-up to the 1906 election, were influenced largely by concerns that the Unionists would once again triumph. Failing to anticipate their landslide victory and desperate to pull themselves out of opposition, the Liberals reached out to fellow Irish MPs and Irish voters.⁷⁴ Rather than an indication of sincere partnership, this smacks more of political lobbying than of Gladstonian cooperation.

Interestingly, the Irish had more acutely sensed an upcoming Liberal victory, especially after the end of the South African War and the advent of new issues such as tariff reform. The stakes for the nationalists were high and they:

... had to exert every effort to secure that the liberal leader [Campbell-Bannerman] ... should not succumb to pressure from that section of the party ... which was still believed to be antipathetic to home rule, but should rather concede guarantees to the Irish party comparable to those which had made possible such close cooperation between the nationalists and the liberal party of Gladstone's day.⁷⁵

The war's legacy had clearly taken its toll on Liberal-Irish relations, resulting in a considerable swing in the party against Irish home rule, both amongst the backbenchers as well as the leaders of the Liberal League. The new antipathy towards home rule was now exemplified by the likes of Augustine Birrell, President of the National Liberal Federation, who remarked,

It is utterly out of the question in the coming Parliament to stand by the Treasury Bench

and introduce either of Gladstone's Home Rule measures. No such measure, by whomever introduced, could possibly pass, and, therefore, to hold it up as a thing which as to affect people's votes is ridiculous; it is a bogey, a bugbear.⁷⁶

And yet, surely home rule stood just as much chance of passing the Lords in 1906 as it had in 1893? Moreover, the party was happy to allow Duncan Pirie, Liberal Member for Aberdeen North, to introduce two Government of Scotland bills, one in 1906 and one in 1908, which promised home rule for Scotland.⁷⁷ Neither of these measures had the slightest chance of passing (although in 1908, the bill received support from nearly 30 per cent of the Commons⁷⁸), but they prove that it was *Irish* home rule specifically which the Liberals were keen to avoid.

Due to lingering animosity over the Boer War and facing a possible mutiny from the Liberal Imperialists and their supporters,⁷⁹ Campbell-Bannerman embraced a more moderate, 'step-by-step' process after his victory in 1906.⁸⁰ McCready has argued that this step-by-step approach was 'a surrender of the Gladstonian wing of the party to the position which the liberal imperialists had been promoting for some years', and indeed, this new policy came originally from Grey.⁸¹ After a year in office, a conservative offer was made to the Irish, proposing a Home Rule council in Ireland, some members appointed, a few elected, which would be in charge of petty Irish administration and be presided over by the veto-wielding Lord Lieutenant. Redmond '[denounced] it as totally unacceptable'⁸² and another nationalist MP refused to vote for the proposal because, 'I discovered in it the Liberal Imperialist alternative to Home Rule'.⁸³ Such a striking departure from Gladstone's vision of Irish home rule is remarkable, and surely is connected with the vicious divisions which split the Liberals from the Irish at the outbreak of war in South Africa. This new change in attitude came from those in the party 'in favour of scrapping home rule ... [or] further to defer it'⁸⁴ – those who had been influenced by the Irish attitude during the Boer War. In this manner,

the split between the parties in 1899 was perpetuated until 1912 by the war's poisonous legacy.

There was difficulty in rallying the Gladstonian home rule spirit in 1910 as well. The general mood of the party was not one of empathy for the Irish, and the partnership which the Liberals formed with the nationalists in 1910 was one of necessity, not choice. Grey (now Foreign Secretary), for example, reflecting upon the crisis in which the minority Liberal government found itself after the two 1910 general elections, suggested that even in these desperate times the Liberals should dismiss the idea of coalition with the Irish, believing that both the Liberals and the Conservatives had failed to win the nation's confidence and that 'we cannot inspire this by patching up working arrangements either with the Labour or Irish parties'.⁸⁵ It is significant that even the Foreign Secretary, when faced with a hung parliament, disdained to return to the Irish nationalists, the only hope which the Liberals had to cling on to power. The party would ultimately be forced to form a new partnership with the Irish, but not without strong reservations, not least from the Foreign Secretary and from Asquith, now Prime Minister.

The Irish themselves were extremely suspicious about the 1910 Liberal government's intentions. Thomas O'Connor, one prominent Irish nationalist leader, wrote to John Dillon to 'go straight ahead and do what we think right, fight through thick and thin with the Liberals ... get them to propose Home Rule immediately or break with them'.⁸⁶ Dillon agreed, and the united Irish prompted a Cabinet crisis when they refused to pass the budget through Parliament until a solemn promise was reluctantly issued by Asquith to pass home rule.⁸⁷

Ronan Fanning concluded that 'the government had little stomach for home rule',⁸⁸ and that the Irish had resorted to much arm-twisting until the Liberals finally passed the third Home Rule Act in 1914. To be sure, there were Liberals that genuinely supported the cause of home rule, and it is perhaps ironic that it was the Liberal Imperialists who ultimately conceded to the Irish.

When Gladstone embarked upon his home rule policy in 1886,

The Boer War marked the end of the Gladstonian relationship and created bitterness amongst many Liberals towards the Irish nationalists.

he had married his party to the Irish nationalists. Despite the failure of two home rule bills and the electoral defeat of 1895, the spirit of alliance continued between the parties, as has been shown through their relationship in Parliament. This loose home rule union would be maintained until the eve of the war in South Africa, when the Liberals were horrified to find that their allies not only opposed defending the two white British colonies, but even lobbied on behalf of the enemy.

The Boer War marked the end of the Gladstonian relationship and created bitterness amongst many Liberals towards the Irish nationalists. Although they managed, somewhat, to repair the alliance to a suitable degree to stumble together towards home rule in the 1900s, this process was not without serious opposition from Liberals influenced by the events of 1899–1902. This paper has attempted to underline the contribution which the war made to this political shift, amongst other factors.

The Boer War therefore snapped the connections which bound the Liberals and the Irish together in the cooperative, Gladstonian spirit. There was a sharp distinction between the degrees of Liberal support for home rule before and after the Boer War, and it was the war itself which caused the Liberal Party to explicitly renounce their shaky alliance with the Irish. Attempts to compromise throughout the latter half of the 1890s were replaced with a bitter divide over the war, and it is no coincidence that Herbert Gladstone announced that the alliance had ended in December 1899, nor that the Liberal League and its opposition to home rule was born during this period. In a larger sense, the Boer War demonstrates the powerful impact of imperial politics on the domestic front. It marked the end of the Victorian-era relationship between the Irish Parliamentary Party and the Liberal Party, both of whom would eventually be replaced with more radical groups, and heralded the coming of a more extreme Irish effort to achieve not only autonomy, but complete independence.

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study at King's College London, where he aims further to explore the links between imperial history and modern international politics.

- 1 In 1890, the Irish Parliamentary Party was rocked by the Parnell divorce scandal, which split the party into the Parnellite Irish National League and the anti-Parnellite Irish National Federation. A third faction, the United Irish League, was formed in 1898. All three were to reunite into the new Irish Parliamentary Party in 1900, largely in response to the Boer War. This paper will specifically address the relationship between the Liberals and these components of the IPP. These groups will simply be referred to generally as 'the Irish nationalists' or 'the Irish'.
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- 24 C McLaren, Speech to the House of Commons, 17 May 1898, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, vol. 57 (1898), 1640. Emphasis added.
- 25 J Redmond, Speech to the House of Commons, 16 February 1899, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, vol. 66 (1899), 1189.
- 26 *ibid.*
- 27 R Haldane, Speech to the House of Commons, 16 February 1899, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, vol. 66 (1899), 1195.
- 28 In fact, the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, one of the foremost Methodist preachers and a skilled orator called the Irish Catholics 'the spoiled darlings of party politicians', exposing perhaps frustration with the continued Liberal support for the Irish nationalists. (Henry Norman, 'As London Sees European Politics,' *The New York Times*, 5 February 1899.)
- 29 R Perks, Speech to the House of Commons, 3 August 1899, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, vol. 75 (1899), 1339. Emphasis added.
- 30 Michael Hughes, *Conscience and Conflict: Methodism, Peace and War in the Twentieth Century* (Peterborough: Epworth, 2008), p. 27.
- 31 Jeffrey Butler, *The Liberal Party and the Jameson Raid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 285.
- 32 'War Feeling in England,' *The New York Times*, 13 August 1899. This statement was actually written on behalf of the United Irish League by Michael Davitt MP, who would resign from Parliament in protest of the Boer War.
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- 34 R B McCallum, *The Liberal Party from Earl Grey to Asquith* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1963), p. 83.
- 35 Butler, *The Liberal Party and Jameson Raid*, p. 286.
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- 60 *ibid.*, p. 274.
- 61 *ibid.*
- 62 McCready, 'Home Rule and the Liberal Party, 1899–1906,' p. 319.
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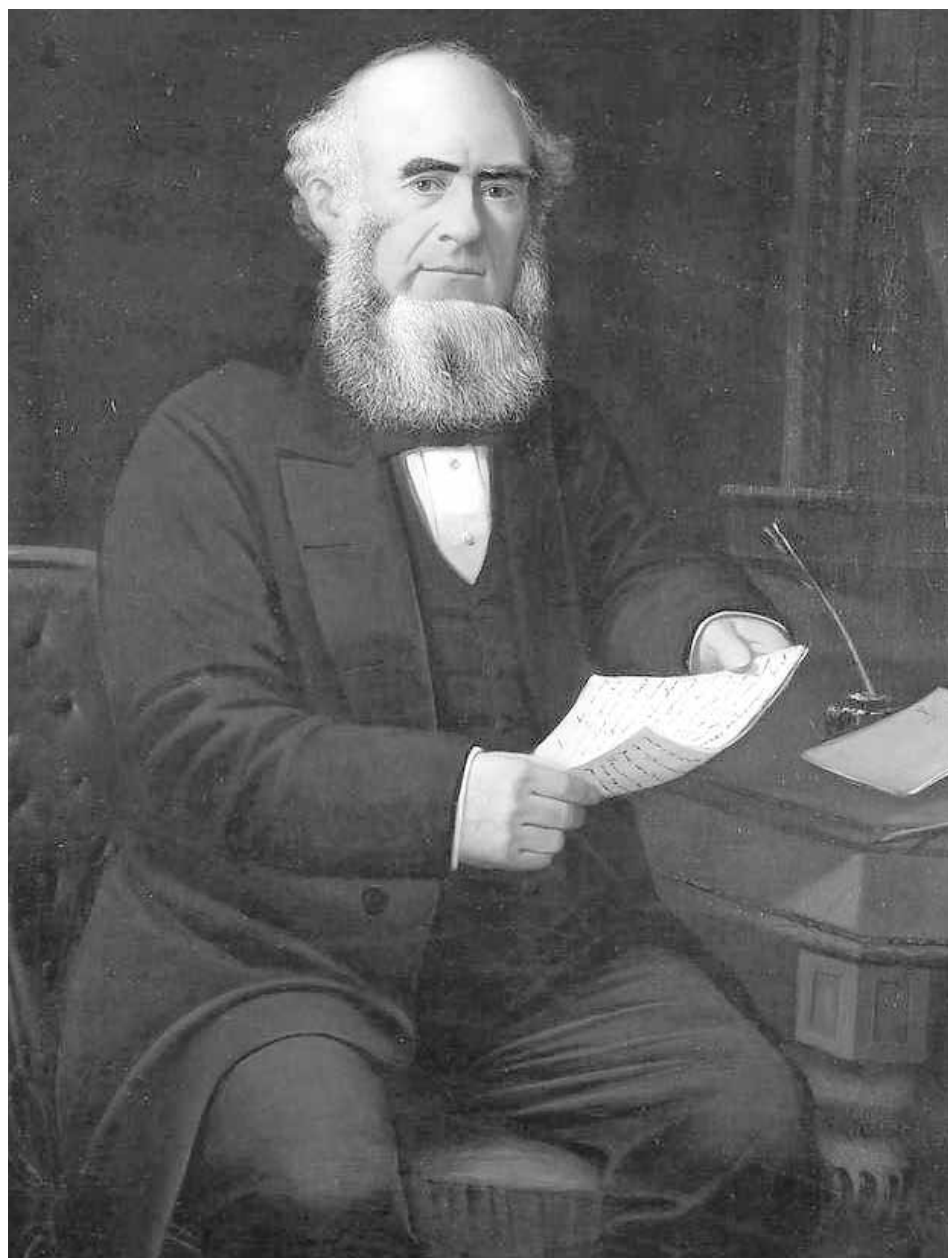
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THE RELEVANCE OF

The issues of the present day make it particularly appropriate to reflect on the long and controversial career of Henry Richard. Born in rural Tregaron, in southern Ceredigion in 1812, the issues which he championed have a remarkable contemporary relevance. Since one of Richard's famous slogans was '*Trech gwlad nag Arglwydd*' (A land is mightier than its lord) it may appear paradoxical that his career should be re-evaluated by a member of the present (still unelected) House of Lords. For all that, this provides an opportunity to recall one of the most remarkable and courageous Welshmen of the modern world. By (Lord) **Kenneth O. Morgan**.



F HENRY RICHARD

HE WAS ASSOCIATED with great causes – notably as the proclaimed *apostol heddwch* (apostle of peace) in the crusade for world peace which took him from the Peace Treaty of Paris in 1856 to that of Berlin in 1878, and in the challenge to militarism and imperialism which led to confrontations with both Gladstone and Disraeli. In Wales itself, he is most celebrated as the radical victor in the important electoral contest in Merthyr Tydfil in 1868, ‘the cracking of the ice’ in the old neo-feudal political and social order, and an immense landmark in the achievement of democracy in our nation.

Richard is now largely a forgotten figure, other than in the annual Richard memorial lecture faithfully maintained by the United Nations Association in Wales. After his triumph in 1868, he turned into a kind of revered licensed rebel, the doyen of Welsh members, a national treasure honoured, acclaimed and usually ignored. Although he stayed on as member for Merthyr until his death in 1888, he seemed marginalised by the new currents of radicalism after 1880, and was swept aside by far younger, more glamorous and charismatic nationalist figures like Tom Ellis and David Lloyd George. Stuart Rendel (himself a middle-aged Englishman with an Eton and Oxford background) wrote in his memoirs of Richard as ‘the leader ... of a section of the House which was exceedingly English’, for all his accepted chairmanship

of the Welsh MPs. He did not sympathise with agrarian agitation in Wales, nor in pursuing disestablishment of the Church for Wales on its own, separately from England. He was bracketed with other ‘old hands’, senior Welsh Liberals like Lewis Llewellyn Dillwyn, Sir Hussey Vivian and Fuller-Maitland. In language reminiscent of Tony Blair a hundred years later, Rendel saw Richard as ‘old Wales’, aiming at ‘respectability above all things’ and ‘very “middle class”’. (This from Rendel, who made millions from armaments manufacture and kept a comfortable residence on the French Riviera). The alternative to Richard’s ‘old Wales’, contrary to Tony Blair’s formulation, was felt to be ‘young Wales’ rather than ‘new Wales’.¹

This characterisation of Henry Richard endured, with his being seen as a kind of beleaguered backwater from a previous age. Despite the massive upsurge of interest in the social and political history of modern Wales, he has remained a surprisingly neglected figure. The work of a historian like Matthew Cragoe treats him unsympathetically, almost dismissively. Despite the existence of a goodly collection of Richard’s political papers in the archive of the National Library of Wales, there has been no biography since C. S. Miall’s extraordinarily old-fashioned work of 1889, a ‘life and letters’ of traditional Victorian piety.² In his entries in both the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and the *Welsh Encyclopaedia*,

Henry Richard
(1812–88)

Richard has not been well served, perhaps in part because his strain of anti-separatist Welsh radicalism does not relate easily to the historical antecedents of Plaid Cymru.

However, Richard represents something of much importance in the spectrum of nineteenth-century Welsh Liberalism, so often seen purely introspectively – its internationalist dimension. In this, he emulated William Rees, ‘Gwilym Hiraethog’, the inspirational bard/publicist who met and corresponded with Mazzini, who worked closely with the American anti-slavery movement and who championed Abraham Lincoln and made him a Welsh popular hero – and who also lacks a decent modern biography.³ Richard, like Hiraethog, operated on a world stage. In the peace movement, he collaborated with great Frenchmen like Lamartine, Tocqueville and particularly Victor Hugo, who addressed the 1848 Peace Congress in Paris. Henry Richard, more than most Welsh radicals, was a citizen of the world. This was acknowledged by another great internationalist MP, Keir Hardie, when he was elected MP for Merthyr himself in 1900 during the mass jingoism of the South African War. Hardie was elected primarily as a socialist, on class grounds, though he gained wider radical support in Liberal circles. But he paid his full tribute to Merthyr Tydfil’s unique political tradition, and to the followers of Henry Richard in 1868 ‘who were then uncorrupted’.⁴ A seamless

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tradition of radical, pacific internationalism and fraternalism had been restored.

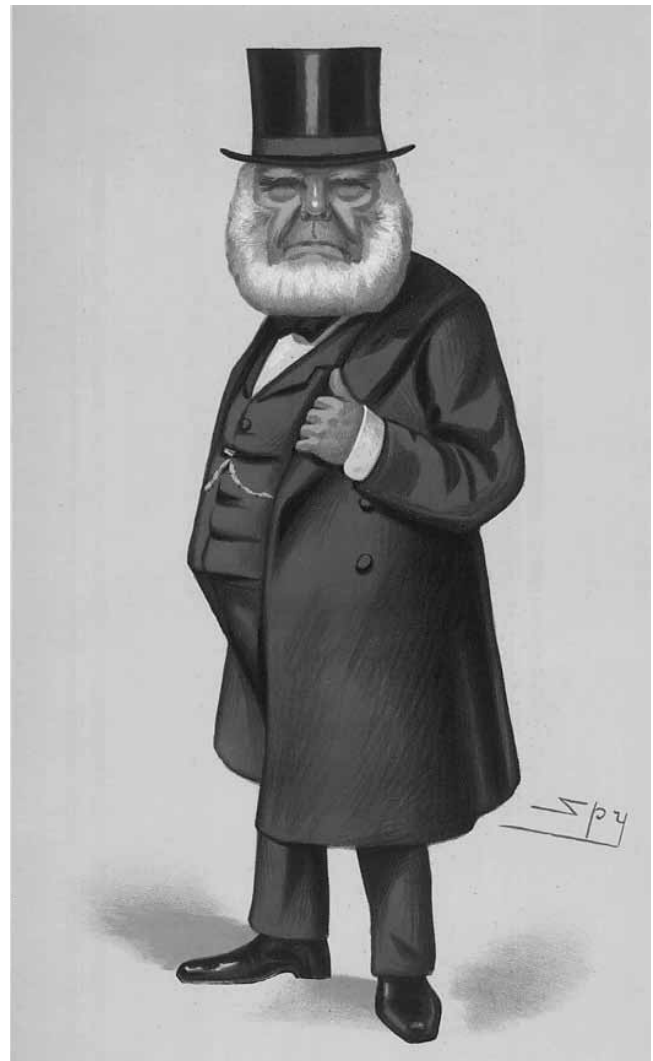
It is therefore of much importance to Welsh historians to re-investigate both the central themes of Richard's long career in his own day and their later relevance. Because the crusades in which Richard so willingly enlisted, far from dying with him, have been ongoing and remain of deep significance in Wales and the world at present.

There were four Henry Richards whom we should define and celebrate. First, of course, there was Henry Richard the Welshman. The son of a Calvinist Methodist minister in Tregaron, the Rev. Ebenezer Richard, he became a Congregationalist after entering Highbury Congregational College, and became a minister of Marlborough Chapel in the Old Kent Road in 1835. From then on, he lived primarily in England. He seemed destined for an active career spent primarily in the world of English dissent. But it was Welsh issues that began to call him. He wrote in the English press offering social and religious explanations of the factors lying behind the Rebecca riots of the early 1840s with their assault on toll-gates. More powerfully, he became one of the leading opponents of the notorious Blue Books of 1847, that *Brad y Llyfrau Gleision* which traduced Wales in its culture, language, religions and moral probity. Richard was appalled and his highly effective retaliatory articles in the *Daily News* and elsewhere gave him a new status in his native Wales.⁵

Richard's view of Welsh nationhood linked it indissolubly with Nonconformity. All the many positive features of the Welsh he identified with the values of the chapel – its populist democracy, its vibrant Welsh-language culture, its love of music and poetry, the absence of crime. Wales was *gwlad y mennyg gwionion*, the land of the white gloves, a place unpolluted by violence with few of its people in prison, where judges were presented with white gloves at the assizes to celebrate a crime-free, respectable community, and where policemen hung around looking for something to do. Here, Richard was far from wholly wrong though he did focus on 'Proper Wales', and

tended to ignore the ports and larger towns of the industrialising south where 'the population had long ceased to be distinctively Welsh'.⁶ He vindicated Wales most eloquently and effectively in a famous series of articles on the social and political condition of Wales in the *Morning and Evening Star* in 1866, in which emphasis was laid heavily on Wales as a 'nation of Nonconformists', shown in Horace Mann's 1851 census of religious worship to be 78 per cent Nonconformist and only 22 per cent Anglican. It was on this basis, as the voice of Welsh Nonconformity, that he became Liberal candidate for Merthyr Tydfil in 1868, its electorate having been massively expanded by the Reform Act of the previous year. His very adoption made it plain that it was as a Nonconformist that he offered himself to the electors. The body that put itself forward described itself as 'The Henry Richard or Nonconformist Committee'.⁷ When, in this two-member constituency, he came top of the poll, out-polling his fellow Liberal, the ironmaster Richard Fothergill, and ousting the Liberal industrialist, Henry Austen Bruce, shortly to become Gladstone's Home Secretary, it was widely perceived that, in a nation hitherto conspicuous for its political unimportance, a new more democratic era had dawned.

Richard's view of his native Wales was thus defined by his religious background. His *Letters* in the English press had depicted Wales as a deeply divided country, with a small, privileged landlord class, English in speech and sympathy, and, crucially, Anglican in religion, fundamentally separated from the Nonconformist mass of the population. There was a profound inequality entrenched within its society, and therefore his political priority henceforth, throughout his two decades in parliament, was the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of England in Wales. He had the enormous encouragement in his very first



Caricature of Henry Richard (with the caption 'Peace'), *Vanity Fair*, 4 September 1880

session in parliament of Gladstone's measure to disestablish the Church in Ireland. This established, he wrote, several important principles.⁸ It acknowledged that where the established church was not the church of the nation its position was anomalous. It recognised that ecclesiastical property was national property as it had endured since the middle ages. Above all, it disposed of the fallacy of a collective state conscience which imposed its own beliefs as an established creed on resistant dissenters. Along with other favourable measures such as the repeal of the Test Acts for Oxford and Cambridge, Richard and his allies in the Liberation Society could see an irresistible onward momentum for the various Nonconformist causes.

Welsh disestablishment was not, however, at all a straightforward matter. In the first place, there was an urgent need for leadership and direction in pressing the matter home. Only since the 1868 election had the issue gained

a clear overwhelming priority in Wales.⁹ Even then support for disestablishment amongst Welsh MPs was limited. Thirty of the thirty-three members were Anglican, and twenty-four were landowners, all the ten Conservatives and fourteen of the Whig-liberals who formed the bulk of the Gladstonian ranks. Only three Welsh MPs were Non-conformists, Richard himself, Evan Matthew Richards (Cardiganshire) and Richard Davies (Anglesey). There was significant bickering when Watkin Williams, Liberal member for Denbigh District and an Anglican, put forward a motion for Welsh disestablishment and disendowment in August 1869 without consulting his colleagues. This led to much protest. Many doubted whether the maverick Watkin Williams was really a Liberal at all, and it was darkly murmured that he had voted against John Stuart Mill in the Westminster constituency at the recent general election. Henry Richard himself thought the motion ill-advised and badly timed. The issue of the secret ballot should have been dealt with first, with a commission of inquiry to collect data on the strengths of the various religious bodies in Wales. The influential journalist John Griffith ('Gohebydd') thought Williams's *demarche* was a 'very great misfortune'.¹⁰ When Williams's motion was finally debated on 24 May 1870, Richard inevitably spoke and voted for it, but it gained only forty-seven votes. Only seven Welsh MPs voted for it, eight Welsh Liberals voted against, and ten others were absent or abstained, including the Non-conformist E. M. Richards, and E. J. Sartoris (Carmarthenshire) who had been advised not to vote for it for fear of jeopardising his seat.¹¹ Perhaps most seriously, Gladstone himself felt impelled to deliver an *ex cathedra* statement opposing Welsh disestablishment (one which was to embarrass him greatly in later years). The Welsh Church, he declared, had 'a complete constitutional, legal and historical identity with the Church of England' and it was impossible to legislate for it separately.¹² This was not the way in which intelligent would-be disestablishers ought to proceed, in Richard's view.

But his dissenting view went beyond matters of parliamentary tactics. He did not favour pressing

for disestablishment for Wales alone. His roots were in the London-based Liberation Society of which he was a leading officer and which had been a powerful force on his behalf at the polls in 1868. Richard was no kind of nationalist or home ruler. In a parliamentary debate on international arbitration in 1873, he asked rhetorically, 'Is not England our country?'¹³ He saw a fundamental difference between Wales, an intrinsic part of the United Kingdom, albeit one with grievances and priorities of its own, and Ireland, where many saw disestablishment as a precursor to home rule. To Richard, by contrast, disestablishment was an alternative to it. He felt it was dangerous to press the case on quasi-nationalist grounds, and it also risked the possibility of Wales losing valuable Church endowments in the process. This was also the view of his colleague, Sir George Osborne Morgan (Denbighshire): 'I entertain strong doubts whether it is possible to separate the question of disestablishment in Wales from that of England – Wales being, politically at least, as much a part of England as Yorkshire or Cornwall.'¹⁴ Richard agreed with Sidney Buxton that the general case for disestablishment in England, Wales and Scotland together 'would be of greater interest and command a much larger circulation' than if it were confined to Wales on its own.¹⁵

In spite of this, Richard's role as an advocate for Welsh causes was a powerful one, and his speeches in the Commons, often of great length, commanded much respect. By the 1880s, his outlook on the basic rationale for the Welsh Church question was clearly shifting. In a debate on a further motion to disestablish the Welsh Church, he and his fellow veteran Liberal Lewis Llewellyn Dillwyn (Swansea District) took a clear national stand. The Welsh Church was now briskly dismissed as an 'alien Church'; it was *Eglwys Loegr*, 'the Church of England in Wales'. Richard's own exceedingly lengthy speech, which took up eleven columns in Hansard, focused on the historical alienation of the Church from the Welsh nation over the centuries.¹⁶ He was now far more emphatic on the distinctive cultural and political features of Wales as providing the basic arguments for Welsh

disestablishment. The primacy of the Church in Wales should be removed because the people of Wales wanted it, and demonstrated the fact with large Liberal pluralities in successive general elections from 1868 to 1886. Richard and his Liberationist colleagues also recognised the historic importance of the Welsh Sunday Closing Act of 1881 as setting a precedent for solely Welsh legislation, even though his support for this measure stemmed mainly from his temperance rather than his nationalism. He was turning his attention also to the Welshness of the Church of England in the appointment of its bishops, and also to retaining the Meyricker endowments at Jesus College, Oxford, for the Welsh scholars for whom they were intended. Principal Harper of Jesus seemed on the verge of frittering them away. Richard worked to this end with sympathetic Welsh Anglicans such as Dean Henry T. Edwards, the Liberal brother of the ferocious defender of the Anglican establishment, Bishop A. G. Edwards of St. Asaph.¹⁷

Over a wide range of issues he was recognised over a generation as the most authoritative voice on behalf of the religious, civic and educational demands of Welsh Liberals. In the 1880 general election, Gladstone's aide Lord Richard Grosvenor was to urge Richard to speak on behalf of William Rathbone in Caernarfonshire. 'You have a peculiar faculty of raising the enthusiasm of Welshmen and Mr. Rathbone labours under the disadvantage of not being able to speak one word of Welsh'.¹⁸ Richard was also urged to lend his vocal support to the Liberal the Hon. G. C. Brodrick in his unsuccessful contest in highly anglicised Monmouthshire.¹⁹ He was thus able to draw attention to the needs and historic identity of Wales as no politician had previously been able to do. In particular, he had a clear impact on the ideas of Gladstone, who made plain in a speech at the Mold eisteddfod in 1873, near his Hawarden home, that Richard's *Letters* had made a profound impression upon him. 'A countryman of yours – a most excellent Welshman – Mr Richard MP did a great deal to open my eyes to the facts.'²⁰ It was Richard, as much as Rendel, who helped Gladstone

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to become in time a great Welsh hero, 'the people's William' in a special sense in the principal-ity – not to mention becoming the people's disestablisher. It might be added that it was very much to Gladstone's advantage that in 1886 Richard, somewhat reluctantly in view of his powerful commitment to Protestantism, declared his support for Irish Home Rule, in contrast to such Nonconformist comrades as the Rev. R. W. Dale and (for a time) Thomas Gee.²¹ The secessions to the Liberal Unionists in Wales were kept to a minimum. With regard to Welsh affairs, Richard's outlook was different from the younger nationalists of *Cymru Fydd*, like Tom Ellis, in the 1880s. He endorsed nationality, not nationalism. Thus to them he was cautious, behind the times. After his death it was noticeable that the Welsh MPs immediately formed a 'Welsh Parliamentary Party' (chaired by Stuart Rendel), an idea which Richard had always resisted as unofficial chairman. But in his own time he was an essential bridge between the British-wide radicalism of the sixties and the more pluralistic, more socially aware Liberalism of the late Victorian period. On issue after issue he proclaimed the needs and identity of Wales. He used debates on the appointment of Welsh-speaking judges in 1872 and 1874 to spell out the validity of the culture and its language, no mere patois as he eloquently demonstrated.²² This Nonconformist non-nationalist, therefore, was clearly a godfather of the growing sense of Welsh nationhood that evolved in the decades down to the First World War. In that sense he is also a godfather of devolution.

Secondly, Richard was a great democrat. His *Letters* passionately attacked political landlordism in Wales. He declared that Welsh politics were servile and dependent. Wales was 'feudal', not a democracy at all but a land where 'clansmen battled for their chieftains'.²³ Thus he campaigned vigorously in the Reform League for manhood suffrage and the secret ballot. He regarded the 1867 Reform Act as a first instalment of a wider enfranchisement. In time, he became an eloquent advocate of women's suffrage as well. His own election in Merthyr and Aberdare had an inspirational, revivalist quality.

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He told the electors in Aberdare that they tell the landlords that: 'We are the Welsh people, not you. This country is ours, not yours.'²⁴ He went on to battle for the reform of the franchise in the county constituencies, which duly happened in the Reform and Redistribution Acts of 1884–85, and this served to make the Liberals' strength in Wales all the more impregnable.

Richard's first major speech in the House in 1869 was on a major democratic theme. He and other Liberals declared that there had been much evidence of intimidation by landlords at the polls, with the eviction of many tenant farmers for voting Liberal.²⁵ He raised the issue in a debate on 6 July 1869, when in a highly personal way he referred to forty-three cases of political eviction in Cardiganshire and many others in Carmarthenshire and Caernarfonshire. Colonel Powell, the former Conservative MP for Cardiganshire, was identified as one egregious case of a bullying landlord. A recent account of this episode is somewhat grudging and perhaps influenced by an inability to read the Welsh-language press. There is no doubt in fact that Richard's motion brought a serious political scandal to public attention. A Liberal colleague noted the particular delight with which Gladstone listened to his speech. A nationwide fund organised by the radical journalist, John Griffith, *Y Gohebydd*, raised around £4,000 to compensate some of the victimised farmers.²⁷ More important, a Select Committee was appointed under the chairmanship of Lord Hartington which received powerful evidence from the Rev. Michael Daniel Jones and other leading Liberals about the nature of rural intimidation. Jones had written to Richard on the extent of rural persecution – 'in the next election we shall lose ground if the farmers have no protection'.²⁸ Its findings were a major factor in the passing of the secret ballot in 1872. It was a great democratic triumph for Richard. Perhaps in grim retaliation, Welsh Conservatives recaptured, in the 1874 general election, seats in Carmarthenshire, Cardiganshire and Caernarfonshire, those counties where rumours of landlord coercion in 1868 had been most vivid. Landowners such as Viscount Emlyn of Golden Grove, heir to the

70,000 acres of the Cawdor estate, and the Hon. George Douglas-Pennant, the son of Lord Penrhyn in his castle, now represented the Welsh-speaking farmers and labourers in those rural communities. As yet, the novelty of the secret ballot had had little impact. After 1880, however, democratic Liberalism prevailed.

In the longer term, the memory of political pressure and intimidation became a major *lieu de memoire* for Welsh Liberals, as Taff Vale and Tonypandy were to become for the Welsh Labour movement. Welsh Liberals had acquired the popular martyrology without which no popular movement can thrive. It was Wales' Amritsar or Sharpeville. Lloyd George gave it imperishable prominence in his speech at the Queen's Hall in London on 23 March 1910 on behalf of his People's Budget. Referring to the evictions in 1868, he declared that 'they woke the spirit of the mountains, the genius of freedom that fought the might of the Normans for two centuries. There was such a feeling aroused amongst the people, that, ere it was done, the political power of landlordism in Wales was shattered as effectually as the power of the Druids.'²⁹ Lloyd George's language was florid and overdrawn, perhaps, but it was in broad terms an accurate testimony of the democratic upsurge which Henry Richard had generated then.

As a democrat, Richard was no socialist. However, he was able to identify with the working-class movement of the day. He was thus a bridge between the worlds of Cobden and Bright and of Keir Hardie. He recognised, of course, that Merthyr and Aberdare were working-class communities, composed largely of miners and ironworkers, and Richard's campaign acknowledged the fact. The Reform League in 1868 deliberately placed working-class representatives, including several survivors of the last Chartist upsurge in 1848, on Richard's platforms. He proclaimed him as the poor man's candidate, without the resources to buy his way into a constituency, and contrasted his own relative poverty with the affluence of the bourgeois industrialist Henry Austen Bruce. He was also skilful in taking up such issues as pit safety and the imposition of the 'northern' or double-shift system

of working in the mines. John Beynon, secretary of the local Double Shift Committee, campaigned for him. Recent wage reductions in the pits also helped Richard's cause. He claimed that his election victory was a triumph for the propertyless, disinherited working-class man.³⁰ In the 1874 election, Richard shrewdly declared his sympathy for much of the programme of the Amalgamated Association of Miners which had grown rapidly in the Welsh coalfield, and whose secretary, Thomas Halliday, ran against him in the election. Halliday polled remarkably well, obtaining 4,912 votes (25.3 per cent), and Richard's vote fell on a much smaller turnout of voters than in 1868. Even so, his established credentials as a working-class candidate and a proven champion of labour legislation still made him impregnable and he easily headed the poll. Following another comfortable victory in 1880, in 1885 and 1886 he and his Liberal running-mate, C. H. James James, were returned unopposed. Richard, then, was not an inappropriate hero for the social democracy, as well as the political democracy, of a later era. As noted, he was an inspiration for the socialist Keir Hardie in the 'khaki election' of 1900. Over a century later, in March 2010, his name was mentioned (by Monsignor Bruce Kent) in the roll-call of left-wing heroes at the funeral service of another great Welsh democratic representative, Michael Foot, which I attended. In the long line of democratic dissenters, Alan Taylor's 'trouble-makers', Richard takes his honoured place.

Thirdly, Richard was a considerable educationalist. At first, his concern seemed largely an outgrowth of his religious views. He was a leading figure amongst the Nonconformists within the Liberal Party who attacked the Forster Education Act of 1870 for its subsidies to church schools from public funds. Thus he led a public outcry against the Cowper-Temple clause in the 1870 Act, since it would have led to increased rate aid to denominational schools. There was, he wryly observed, 'no conscience clause for ratepayers'. However, his amendment in committee obtained only sixty-two votes, with Nonconformist MPs divided.³¹ His own stance was a minority one within

the world of Protestant dissent, since, unlike most of his brethren, he was a passionate advocate of a purely secular education.³² This was wholly consistent, of course, with his support for disestablishment and the general broad principle of the separation of church and state. However, his educational views are often misrepresented.³³ He did not object to the state being involved in education as such, but simply to its being used to promote denominational instruction and clerical special interests. His views were far more progressive than simply a rehearsal of the anti-clericalism that coloured debates on education in Britain, France and many other countries at the time. He wanted a new, national system of education, primary and secondary, sustained by central government. It would be uniform and universal; also it would be compulsory and free of charge. He saw it as a particular key to progressive change within Wales where educational provision was recognised as being weak. A secular system of primary education, via the Board schools without religious involvement, and a new network of non-denominational secondary or 'intermediate' schools were essential to his objectives, and they form a major part of his legacy. Even though his amendment to the Forster Act failed badly in 1870, he had the satisfaction of seeing Clause 25 of the Act, which allowed School Boards to finance the school fees of voluntary denominational schools from the rates, repealed by Lord Sandon's Education Act of 1876, passed by Disraeli's Conservative government.

He thus became a major pioneer of Welsh education. On higher education, he played a major part, with the energetic if controversial Sir Hugh Owen, in building up the new 'college by the sea', the college at Aberystwyth first established in 1872. He battled hard with Gladstone for a public subsidy in 1870 and 1871, but at first without success. In 1870 the Prime Minister took the line that he had already refused grants to various English colleges and would hardly be able to make an exception in the case of Aberystwyth. Significantly, though, he did concede that 'it was impossible to place Wales, with its clearly marked nationality and its inhabitants divided from by strong

line of demarcation, both of race and language, upon the same footing as an English town or district'.³⁴ The following year, Gladstone took the different line that it would raise a religious issue and would commit the state to a new principle in aiding colleges from the Exchequer on the basis of teaching only 'an undenominational education'. After failing to help Owen's College, Manchester, the government could hardly help Aberystwyth.³⁵ The 'college by the sea' on the seafront opened in October 1872 with most of the £10,000 purchase money still owing, and only twenty-five initial students. But Richard's campaign went on and in 1882 Aberystwyth did receive an annual grant of £4,000 a year.

He served in 1881 on a committee of immense importance for Welsh education, the Select Committee on Higher Education chaired by his old election adversary, Henry Bruce, now Lord Aberdare.³⁶ Richard himself, now an elderly man, proved to be a most effective member of it, full of energy and attested facts. The Committee advocated the setting

Statue of Henry Richard at Tregaron, Ceredigion



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up of two new colleges in Wales, one in the north and one in the south. Gladstone, now strongly committed to Welsh causes, lent his authoritative support, and the Aberdare Committee's proposals went ahead. In time, after much public campaigning, these institutions turned out to be located in Bangor and Cardiff respectively. It was also proposed that a new state-supported structure of 'intermediate schools' be created throughout Wales to provide students for them as well as to promote professional opportunities more generally. It was an issue on which Richard had spoken in the Commons. This was a progressive, forward-looking agenda for Welsh education. But it also left Aberystwyth high and dry, with the prospect that it would lose its annual grant and see it transferred to Bangor. Richard now redoubled his efforts on behalf of Aberystwyth, applying particular pressure on the minister in charge of education, A. J. Mundella. Here his efforts finally bore fruit. Mundella wrote, in somewhat panicky fashion, to Richard in 1884: 'I wish you would come and see me about Aberystwyth. We had better settle this question before you turn us out, as the Tories will not help you. If we subsidise a third College, we must do it on the same conditions as the other two.'³⁷ In the event, Mundella managed to prise only £2,500 out of the Exchequer for Aberystwyth, but in August 1885 the incoming Salisbury government, for somewhat unexplained reasons,³⁸ generously raised the Aberystwyth grant to £4,000 as well. All three of the new Welsh university colleges, therefore, could regard Richard as a highly important ally.

In his old age, in 1886–88 Richard served on the Cross Commission on elementary education, on which he was again an effective member.³⁹ Some of his time was taken in fending off bombardments from the Welsh language movement about whose activities Richard was less than enthusiastic, like many senior Liberals of the day. He found pressure from Beriah Gwynfe Evans, the energetic secretary of the 'Society for the Utilisation of the Welsh Language', to be 'rather embarrassing'.⁴⁰ In general, however, his educational activities were valuable and creative. He

was undoubtedly a major figure in the social revolution that transformed Welsh education, and indirectly social mobility, in the last decades of the century. A year after Richard's death, the 1889 Welsh Intermediate Education Act, passed by the Salisbury government, saw another of his dreams come into effect, the new intermediate schools. For decades to come, the 'county schools', free and unsectarian, were a decisive instrument of social change. The Welsh could even pride themselves in having a state-run educational system in advance of England, and without its paralysing social divide created by the private schools. In 1893 there followed another landmark for which Richard had campaigned, a federal national University of Wales, created to crown the edifice of Welsh higher education, and destined to last for the next hundred years.

Fourthly and finally, there is Richard the great internationalist and crusader, perhaps the area in which his reputation was most generally created. He always operated within other reformist movement across the world, notably with the anti-slavery movement in the United States. A committed pacifist, in 1848 he was appointed Secretary of the Peace Society and he retained this position when he retired, on grounds of age, in 1885. He played a prominent part at the peace congresses at Brussels and Paris in the year of revolutions, 1848; the latter thrilled to an inspirational address from Victor Hugo: 'France, England, Germany, Italy, Europe, America, let us proclaim to all nations: "You are brothers!"' Richard campaigned inexhaustibly against war. He vehemently condemned the Crimean War, along with his close friends Richard Cobden and John Bright, and crusaded against the wars variously waged by Britain against the Boer Republics, the Zulus and the Afghans in the late 1870s, that era of aggressive imperialist militancy. He also condemned Gladstone's invasion of Egypt in 1882, declared by the Prime Minister to be a temporary policy but in fact inaugurating a lengthy British occupation that endured until 1954. Richard's major demands were forward-looking in the extreme. He called for an international tribunal to be set up, for

the arbitration of disputes between nations. He visualised beyond that a kind of league of nations to administer such a system and to provide an effective and workable regime of international law.

Even in the warlike atmosphere of the mid and later Victorian period, Richard and his associates in the Peace Society were not without success. They managed to have a protocol inserted in the Treaty of Paris of 1856 that wound up the Crimean War in favour of international arbitration, and, more surprisingly, another included in the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 when it was rumoured, however improbably, that Bismarck himself showed some interest in the notion.⁴¹ These were no more than paper successes. But Richard found great encouragement in Gladstone's decision to go to arbitration with the United States to adjudicate on the American claims against Britain following the activities of the British-built *Alabama*, operated by the Confederate navy, during the American Civil War. In the event, despite some domestic disgruntlement, the British accepted the tribunal's claims and paid damages of three and a quarter million pounds, a significant sum but much less than the Americans had asked for. This episode could, perhaps, only have taken place in the context of the particular relationships between Britain and the United States at the time, but it did offer Richard's proposals some practical encouragement.

Richard took several opportunities to bring the cause of peace before the House of Commons. The first, on 8 July 1873, was a motion on behalf of a general and permanent system of international arbitration.⁴² He deplored the horrors of war and 'the bottomless pit of military expenditure' and called for an effective system of international law. Gladstone replied in amiable and respectful terms, and spoke warmly of the arbitration between Britain and the United States at Geneva, but called for 'a step by step' approach. Richard's motion was lost ninety-eight to eighty-eight.

On 15 June 1880, Richard tried again, calling for international disarmament, but now adding a new theme, namely that foreign wars and the concluding of foreign

Fourthly and finally, there is Richard the great internationalist and crusader, perhaps the area in which his reputation was most generally created.

treaties should always require the consent of parliament.⁴³ This again made no headway. His most important effort came in an amendment to the Address on 19 March 1886. He urged that no wars should be embarked upon, no treaties concluded, and no territories annexed to the Empire without 'the knowledge and consent of Parliament'. He pointed out that the royal prerogative in these matters was a total fiction. A war was already in being before parliament was asked to vote supplies. He contrasted the totally different system of control exercised in the French Republic and by the Congressional House of Representatives. 'We never get the information before war breaks out', Richard declared, with total accuracy. 'Is it not a monstrous thing that the blood and treasure and moral responsibility of a great nation like ours should be pledged for all time behind our backs?' 'The British governments had, all of them, a mania for annexation', Henry Richard concluded in moving fashion: 'My hope is in the Democracy. I have lost faith in Governments. They seem to have delivered themselves up, bound hand and foot, to the power of rampant militarism which is the curse of Europe.'⁴⁴ Gladstone's reply reads weakly and evasively now. He argued the difficulty in distinguishing between war and 'war-like operations'. James Bryce, who wound up for the government, was even worse. Absurdly for so great a scholar of American issues, he replied to Richard's point about the US House of Representatives by claiming that the American system was very different since 'it had no foreign policy this side of the Atlantic anyway'. Richard's motion was lost 115 – 109 but it is difficult not to believe that he won the argument, even against the combined learning of Gladstone and Bryce.

At times, Richard's uninhibited pacifism could lead him into difficulty. Nineteenth-century Britain had a warm sympathy for the efforts of 'nations rightly struggling to be free', such as the Greeks and Italians, who appealed to those of classical bent. Garibaldi, leader of the famous red-shirted 'thousand' during the battles for Italian unification, had been a great popular hero on reformist platforms during the campaign for a Reform Bill in

His most important effort came in an amendment to the Address on 19 March 1886. He urged that no wars should be embarked upon, no treaties concluded, and no territories annexed to the Empire without 'the knowledge and consent of Parliament'.

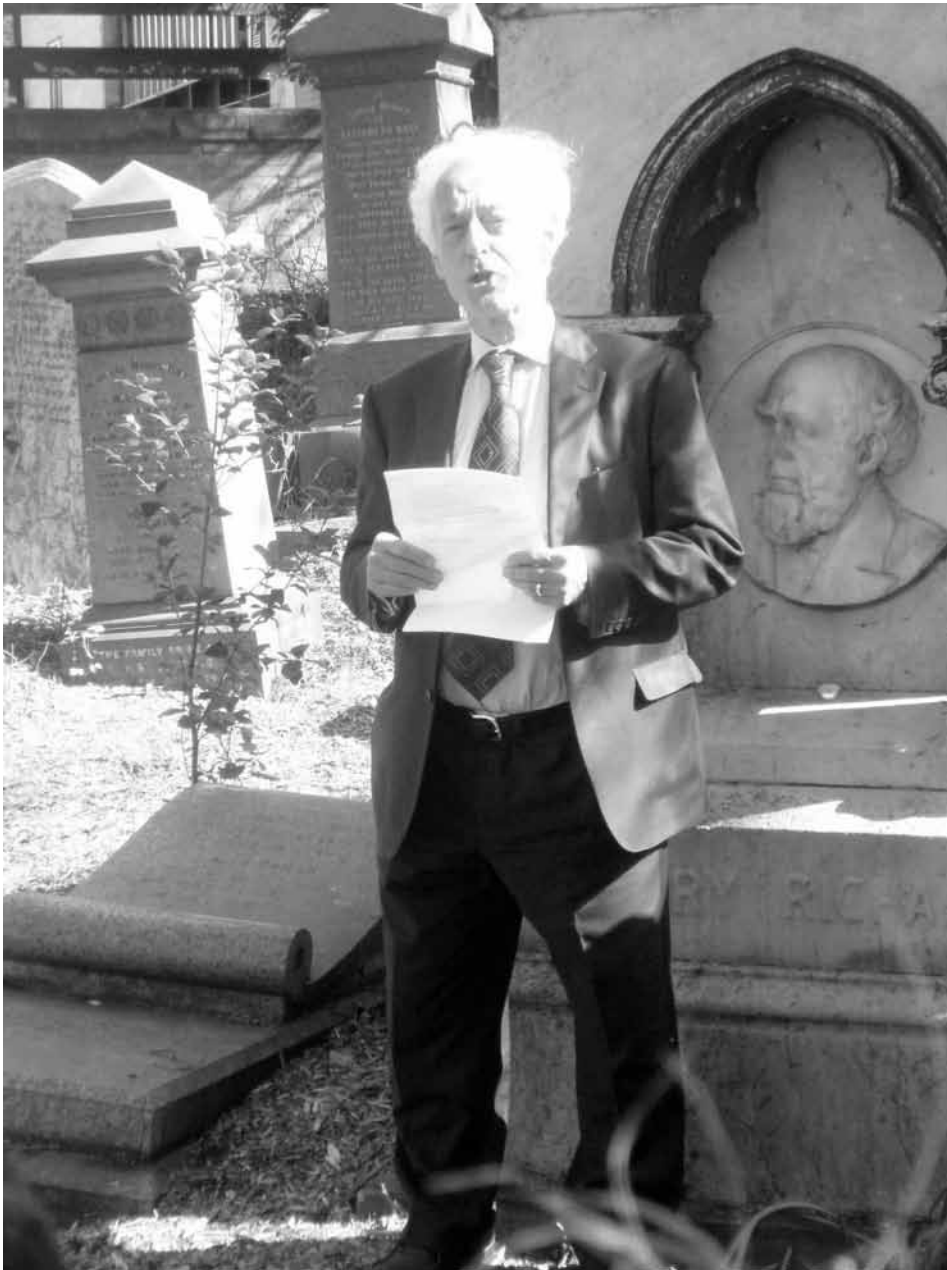
the 1860s. Richard himself got into trouble during the American Civil War when, unlike most Welshmen, he rebelled against the cult of Lincoln and defended the South, since he claimed it was a victim of Northern aggression. When asked about slavery, this pillar of the anti-slavery movement responded that it would die out in time through peaceful means. What is interesting, however, is that this is much the same line of argument adopted at the time by another pacifist and radical, Samuel Roberts, 'S.R.' of Llanbrynmair, who actually set up a Welsh settlement in the slave state of Tennessee, intended to escape landlord persecution in Wales. That decision virtually ruined Roberts' reputation and career and he was a much diminished figure when he returned to Wales after the war.⁴⁵ Richard, by contrast, endured no such fate. It was testimony to how uniquely robust his reputation had become.

What remained of Henry Richard's campaigns after his death? It is striking in the early twenty-first century that all his causes have a powerful contemporary resonance. With regard to his commitment to the advancement of Wales, there has been an ongoing process of evolution. Despite the apparent tone of more emphatic nationalism in the *Cymru Fydd* movements of the 1890s, associated with Ellis and Lloyd George, Welsh political ambitions down to 1914 remained within the parameters of the age of Henry Richard. While progress was made on disestablishment, education, land reform and temperance, there was only limited concern with anything resembling separation, or even devolution. E. T. John's efforts prior to the First World War to promote a movement for Welsh home rule led nowhere.⁴⁶ There was only limited administrative devolution – in education in 1907 and in agriculture after the war in 1919. The emphasis was still on extending equality for Wales within the United Kingdom – and also the Empire, which the Welsh warmly endorsed during the First World War, under the leadership of a Welsh Prime Minister. The old national movement of post-1868 had clearly run its course; when Welsh disestablishment and disendowment, Richard's old dream, was finally achieved in 1919, there

was an atmosphere of relative indifference, even of impatience that such an ancient cause could still take up parliamentary and political energy.

After the First World War, politics in Wales drifted away from the priorities of Henry Richard. It was an era of unionism in which all parties, fortified by the Second World War, participated. The Labour Party, especially in the case of such figures as Aneurin Bevan and Ness Edwards, mirrored Henry Richard in seeing the problems of Wales as part of a wider theme, in Labour's case that of class, as for Richard it had been of Nonconformist unity. Only with the creation of a Secretary of State for Wales in 1964 did there seem to be a change of direction, though the new Welsh Office was significantly limited in its powers. The real advance from the Henry Richard legacy came with the pressure for devolution in Scotland, and to a lesser degree Wales, in the 1970s. That followed, variously, the unexpected upsurge of Plaid Cymru, the campaign for the Welsh language (only a relatively minor theme in Henry Richard's day), and especially the introduction of Scottish and Welsh devolution bills in the Commons by the Callaghan government following the Kilbrandon Commission. Devolution eventually followed in 1999, winning support by the tiniest of majorities, but it gradually gained in popular support. In 2009 the Jones Parry report called for the law-making powers and financial authority of the Welsh assembly to be put to a popular referendum. Henry Richard was not a forgotten figure here – the present writer had an interesting exchange about Richard when giving evidence to the Richard Commission and being interrogated by Ted (now Lord) Rowlands, the former member for Merthyr Tydfil, as it happened. The priorities today clearly see the role of the Assembly to be the key to the future of Wales in British and European politics, and we have moved on far from Henry Richard. Even so, he played a significant role earlier on, in pressing for Welsh legislation, for Welsh parliamentary priorities distinct from those of England, and a firm Welsh presence in the political agenda. Richard, and abiding memories of the triumphs and suffering of 1868, still

THE RELEVANCE OF HENRY RICHARD



remain important in the making of modern Wales.

Richard's concern with democracy is, even more, a work in progress. The constitutional and political system in which he operated, based on parliament and strong centralist governance, are now transformed. All the textbooks which described the democratic fabric of Richard's day, works by Bagehot, Dicey, Anson and later Jennings, are now scarcely relevant. There were significant reforms introduced by the Blair government after 1997, including reform of the Lords, human rights legislation, freedom of information legislation, and of course devolution for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Further reforms, some though not all in a democratic direction,

The author, Lord Morgan, speaking at Abney Park cemetery, North London, at the grave of Henry Richard; 1 April 2012

were proposed by the Conservative – Liberal Democrat coalition after its creation in May 2010. But Henry Richard would note the sluggish progress made towards some of his objectives. In 2010 there was still an unelected House of Lords; it still contained bishops as a symbol of the Church establishment. The authority of the Commons was still inadequate in relation to the executive, and its prestige as a reputable assembly had recently declined. Above all, Richard, who liked to cite the written constitutional arrangements of the Americans and the French, would not accept that British citizenship was still constrained. With a largely unwritten constitution, the British remained subjects, not full citizens. They remained subjects of the Queen.

Richard felt that power should flow from below and independent free citizens should be empowered as he saw them being in Wales after 1868. A committee (including the present writer) is now at work on the prospects for a written constitution. The agenda for democracy that Henry Richard proposed is still to be pursued.

Richard's work as an educationalist has taken a very different form. The denominational conflicts of his day have largely been superseded, although the debate about faith schools and their encouragement may revive his priorities as regards the value of secular education. His vision of a secular, comprehensive free system of primary and secondary education is still hampered by the existence of a dual system of education, public and private, based on private funding and on class. His ideas still resonate. Perhaps it is in successful campaigns for access and for the pursuit of life-long learning that Richard's objectives have made most progress.

Finally, and crucially, there is Richard the apostle of peace. As noted, his campaigns for the Peace Society were not wholly fruitless. The idea of international arbitration gained more support after the Anglo-US settlement of the *Alabama* claims. By 1914 there were arbitral agreements between twenty governments, and over a hundred arbitral agreements in force. The United States was especially active through such figures as Secretary of State Elihu Root, President Woodrow Wilson and through the steel capitalist, Andrew Carnegie, who set up his Endowment for International Peace, and in 1910 called for a League of Nations. The Hague peace congress of 1899 set up a Permanent Court of Arbitration at the Hague, and another, larger, peace congress followed there in 1907. But these yielded very little. It was indeed ironic that they honoured a strongly militaristic US President, Theodore Roosevelt, champion of 'the big stick' in foreign affairs, the voice of gunboat diplomacy in Latin America and the advocate of a strong navy. Roosevelt himself celebrated a 'peace of righteousness', achieved by fighting the good fight in a just war.⁴⁷ It was symbolic of the hypocrisy of the times that Roosevelt in 1910 became a recipient of the

Nobel Peace Prize – though he has been followed by even more improbable people since.

The ending of the First World War encouraged brave new world hopes of the creation of a new world order, something approaching the peaceable ideals of Henry Richard. In fact, the Treaty of Versailles was met with much disillusionment. The League of Nations set up to promote the peaceful resolution of disputes and world disarmament soon proved to be a disappointment. Welsh internationalists and advocates of peace moved on smartly beyond Richard's pacifism now, as when David Davies, an idealistic champion of the League, called for an international peace force to impose order. The Woodrow Wilson Chair of International Politics Davies had set up at Aberystwyth to promote the idea of the League was in 1936 occupied by E. H. Carr, whose *Twenty Years Crisis* (1939) poured massive scorn on 'utopians' who wanted international arbitration.⁴⁸ Carr cheered Hitler on in his demolition unilaterally of the peace settlement of Versailles. In both world wars, the Welsh were as belligerent as any and recruited heavily both times. They endorsed a Welsh Prime Minister (a youthful associate of Henry Richard) who called for 'a knock-out blow' and 'unconditional surrender'. There was a brief flourish of Richard's legacy in the 1923 general election when the Christian pacifist, George Maitland Lloyd Davies, who had spent time in Wormwood Scrubs and Winston Green prisons as a conscientious objector during the war, was elected MP for the University of Wales.⁴⁹ But this was a strictly temporary phenomenon. Davies upset some of his supporters by unexpectedly taking the Labour whip, and lost his seat in 1924 to Ernest Evans, one of Lloyd George's former (male) private secretaries.

Yet despite all this, and the war-like episodes that have chequered the history of the postwar world in Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East and many other places, the issues ventilated by Henry Richard retain their validity. Richard would have surely approved of those in Britain in 2003 who protested against the invasion of Iraq as he protested against that of Egypt. He would have joined them in deploring the

bypassing of the United Nations, and war being planned in order to impose 'regime change' far away without the sanction of the international community. He would have campaigned against war in Afghanistan in 2010 as he did in 1880, even when the British army was commanded by the Welshman Lord Robert. Gladstone's response to Richard in the Commons over Egypt is paralleled by the 'liberal internationalism' governing Tony Blair's responses over Iraq and Afghanistan. The same questions arise over the status of an international organisation and the nature of its authority.

Richard's approach was essentially one of pure and simple pacifism. That has had no impact since his death any more than Gandhi's doctrine of non-resistance was decisive in winning India its independence. George Lansbury's Christian appeals in the thirties to both Hitler and Mussolini to desist from force now appear tragic and pathetic. But Henry Richard's call for international arbitration is still far from redundant. The Permanent Court of International Justice set up under the League of Nations in 1922 gave way to the more authoritative International Court of Justice, also at The Hague, in 1946. There was also the International Criminal Court set up in the 1990s. The World Court has not been very active, since it sees only two or three cases a year. In key cases it has had much difficulty in making its decisions effective, notably when it vainly ordered the Israeli government to destroy the wall it had created in Palestine in 2004. The Criminal Court has been undermined by some of the great powers including the United States and China. Even so, the writings of authorities such as Philippe Sands and Lord Bingham have served to show that, especially since the Pinochet case in the 1990s, international law is now a more coherent entity, and that the United Nations is a more credible instrument in enforcing it. Bingham has even seen the Iraq invasion as leading to aggressor nations being more readily 'arraigned at the bar of world opinion, and judged unfavourably, with resulting damage to their standing and influence'.⁵⁰ Compared with Henry Richard's day, it is perhaps less of a lawless world.

Henry Richard's crusades, then, limited or perhaps confused as some of them may have been, were certainly not a failure. They retain their validity in a still undemocratic, violent age.

One of Richard's practical themes still is very attainable. He called for parliamentary sanction to be required both for conducting treaties and for going to war. The Brown government did respond and seemed prepared to advocate what would have been a clear diminution of the royal (i.e. the prime ministerial) prerogative. Its Constitutional Renewal Act passed just before the general election, in April 2010, would have pleased Henry Richard in one respect, since it did require parliamentary sanction for treaties to be approved. This met an old demand, not only from Richard's generation but also from those in the Union of Democratic Control in 1914 who opposed 'secret treaties'. The old Ponsonby rules dating from MacDonald's first government in 1924 were recognised as inadequate. However, the previous draft bill of 2008 had also included a proposal that the war-making power be determined by affirmative resolution of parliament. The Joint Select Committee, on which the present writer sat, decided by one vote in private session not to support a statutory sanction.⁵¹ Many problems remain in resolving the war-making power – the precise meaning of the term 'war', the problem of 'mission creep' (as demonstrated in Afghanistan since 2001), the problem of revealing the legal justification and the role of the Attorney-General, the government's source of supposedly independent legal authority who is himself or herself a member of that government. All this means that Richard's agenda is still very relevant. He would have been as surprised as others were that the Royal Air Force should be flattening Baghdad or Basra in the name of a wholly innocent resident of Windsor.

Henry Richard's crusades, then, limited or perhaps confused as some of them may have been, were certainly not a failure. They retain their validity in a still undemocratic, violent age. Reformers may still regard him as a prophetic figure. They may still honour the red flame of radicalism that inspired him as it has inspired internationalists and idealists in later generations. The apostle of peace may lie a-mouldering in the Abney Park cemetery, but his truths perhaps go marching on.

THE RELEVANCE OF HENRY RICHARD

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- 4 *Labour Leader*, 13 October, 1900; Kenneth O. Morgan, 'The Merthyr of Keir Hardie' in Glanmor Williams (ed.), *Merthyr Politics: the making of a Working-class Tradition* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1966), p. 80, and idem, *Keir Hardie, Radical and Socialist* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975), pp. 116–17.
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- 6 D. J. V. Jones, *Crime in Nineteenth-Century Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992), p. 45.
- 7 Ieuan Gwynedd Jones, 'The Election of 1868 in Merthyr Tydfil', in *Explorations and Explanations* (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 1981), p. 201. This is much the best analysis of the 1868 election in Merthyr.
- 8 Kenneth O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics 1868–1922* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1963), p. 25.
- 9 Henry Richard to Thomas Gee, 17 August 1869 (National Library of Wales [NLW] Aberystwyth, Thomas Gee papers, 8308D, 297); 'Gohebydd' (John Griffith) to Gee, 9 August, 11 August 1869 (ibid., 8310D, 506, 507).
- 10 'Gohebydd' to Gee, 11 August 1869 (ibid., 8310D, 507). In fact, Sartoris did lose his Carmarthenshire seat in the 1874 general election.
- 11 *Parl. Deb.*, 3rd ser., CCI, 1295.
- 12 *Parl. Deb.*, 3rd ser., CCXVII, 73 (8 July 1873).
- 13 J. Carvell Williams to Thomas Gee, 25 September 1869 (NLW, Gee papers, 8311D. 583), citing Henry Richard's view. Williams was secretary of the Liberation Society. Also George Osborne Morgan to Richard, 20 August 1869 (NLW, Richard Papers, 5505C).
- 14 Sidney Buxton to Henry Richard, 17 January ? (NLW, Richard Papers, 5503C); George Osborne Morgan to Richard, 20 August 1869 (ibid., 5505C).
- 15 *Parl. Deb.*, 3rd ser., CCCIII, 305 ff. (9 March 1886).
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- 17 Henry Richard to Gladstone, 8 March 1870 (British Library, Gladstone papers, Add.MSS 44424, ff. 226–30). Richard pressed the case of John Griffiths, rector of Neath, a Liberal. Dean H. T. Edwards to Richard, 6 March 1879 (NLW, Richard papers, 5503B).
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- 19 Lord Aberdare to Richard, 22 March 1880 (NLW, Richard papers, 5503C).
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- 21 Rev. R. W. Dale to Richard, 20 July 1886 (NLW, Richard Papers, 5503C).
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- 24 *Aberdare Times*, 14 November 1868.
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- 29 David Lloyd George, *Better Times* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910), p. 296.
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- 31 Speech on second reading, *Parl. Deb.*, 3rd ser., CC, 269, and amendment in Committee, 20 June 1870. He urged that the state confine itself to providing only literary and scientific education, with even the Bible excluded from state schools. See also Rev. R. W. Dale to Rev. J. B. Paton, June 1870, in A. W. W. Dale, *The Life of R. W. Dale* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1905), pp. 278–80.
- 32 Rev. John Thomas to Richard, 9 August 1886 (NLW, Richard Papers, 5505C).
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- 34 Minutes of Richard's interview with Gladstone, 28 May 1870 (NLW Richard Papers, 5509C).
- 35 Gladstone to Richard, 14 April 1871 (NLW Richard Papers, 5504B).
- 36 *Report of the Committee appointed to inquire into the condition of Intermediate and Higher Education in Wales* (C.3047, 1881).
- 37 A. J. Mundella to Richard, 17 March 1884 (NLW, Richard Papers, 5505C).
- 38 E. L. Ellis, *The University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, 1872–1972* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1972), p. 83.
- 39 cf. *Third Report of the Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Elementary Education Acts* (C 5158).
- 40 Richard to Gee, 1 November 1886 (NLW. Gee Papers, 8308C, 304).
- 41 Goronwy J. Jones, *Wales and the Quest for Peace* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1969), pp. 81–82.
- 42 *Parl. Deb.*, 3rd ser., CCVII, 52ff. (8 July 1873).
- 43 *Parl. Deb.*, 3rd ser. (15 June 1880).
- 44 *Parl. Deb.*, 3rd ser., CCCIII, 1395 (19 March 1886).
- 45 See Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Lincoln and Wales' in Richard Cardwardine and Jay Sexton (eds.), *The Global Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).
- 46 Kenneth O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1963), pp. 255–59, and entry on E. T. John in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
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- 48 See Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Alfred Zimmermann's Brave New World: Aberystwyth in 1919 and after', *International Relations* (forthcoming).
- 49 Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Peace Movements in Wales, 1899–1945', in *Modern Wales, Politics, Places and People* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995), pp. 98, 103.
- 50 Tom Bingham, *The Rule of Law* (London: Allen Lane, 2010), p. 129; Philippe Sands, *Lawless World* (London: Allen Lane, 2005), *passim*.
- 51 The present writer voted in the minority on this motion by Martin Linton MP.

REVIEWS

The Orange Book revisited

'Eight Years Since *The Orange Book*: Have the Liberal Democrats 'reclaimed' Liberalism?' (*Economic Affairs* 32:2, June 2012)

Review by **Duncan Brack**

SINCE MOST PEOPLE who comment on *The Orange Book* tend never to have read it, it's refreshing to read this selection of seven short articles examining the book's impact and legacy. However, since *Economic Affairs* is the journal of the Institute of Economic Affairs, home of economic liberalism since its establishment in 1955, and since two of the articles' authors are *The Orange Book*'s editors, it's not too difficult to work out where these particular articles are coming from.

Indeed, the main complaint of article author Thomas Papworth is the Orange Bookers' disappointing record in government. This is attributed partly to Liberal Democrats' 'failure to understand the need to reform public services, and the supply-side of the economy more generally' (p. 22), their 'benign, if not positive, view of regulation' (p. 23), their concern with market failure (for example in the disparity of bargaining power between a worker and their employer), and a focus on the immediate effects of policy at the expense of the cumulative impacts of successive layers of regulation. Papworth argues that, as a result, Lib Dem policy-making through conference 'has a built-in tendency to load regulatory burdens and spending promises on the leadership'. This is a fair point, though it entirely ignores the fact that Lib Dem election manifestos are not drawn up by conference but by the Federal Policy Committee, which takes a much more holistic view, across all areas of policy, and also works within a costings framework drawn up almost entirely by the party's Treasury team.

Even the *Orange Book* authors themselves come in for a share of the blame. Vince Cable has at best a mixed record on deregulation,

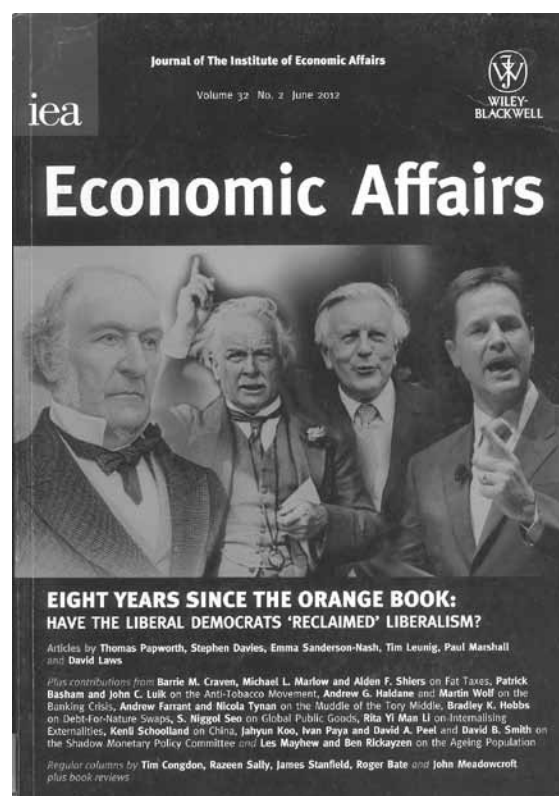
Chris Huhne 'loudly made anti-reform statements', and Nick Clegg, in telling small business leaders that 'supply-side liberalisation is not the be-all and end-all for growth ... is simply wrong' (p. 24) – which Papworth, and Tim Leunig, author of another article, put down to the fact that he's not an economist by training. Liberal Democrat ministers also come in for criticism for failing to reduce high marginal rates of income tax, for increasing capital gains tax and for failing to reduce sufficiently levels of public expenditure.

Leunig identifies supply-side reform as the core of the economic-liberal agenda, citing the repeal of the Corn Laws as the best historical example. His article is primarily a paean to *Orange Book* contributor Ed Davey, in his role as a junior minister at the Department of Business, for starting to privatise the Royal Mail, reducing burdens on sub-post offices (thereby helping smaller ones to remain viable), doubling the period before employees enjoy protection against unfair dismissal and abolishing the default retirement age. In contrast, Chris Huhne's proposals for electricity market reform, aimed at establishing a predictable long-term support framework for low-carbon sources of energy, are sniffily dismissed as not really supply-side reforms at all – which perhaps comes as a surprise to Leunig, since Huhne has, as he helpfully points out, a first-class degree in economics.

Stephen Davies' article offers a brief summary of classical Liberalism in the party since 1886. It's pretty good, through it mostly ignores the 1950s battles between the 'radical individualists' and the Radical Reform Group and, partly as a consequence, claims Jo Grimond as being 'clearly in the classical Liberal tradition' (p. 10). This

is only true if you look at his later writings; his approach before and during his leadership was far more Keynesian and demand-management-oriented. *Orange Book* co-editor Paul Marshall's article focuses on education, a topic that was notably absent from *The Orange Book*; predictably, he supports academies, free schools, profit-making schools and the pupil premium as an aid to social mobility.

David Laws' contribution recalls the rationale for *The Orange Book* in its attack on the Liberal Democrats' "nanny-state liberalism", in which an excessive weight was being given to state interference with too little of the traditional liberal scepticism of big government solutions' (p. 32) and 'the party's entrenched conservatism towards the reform of public services' (p. 33). Laws calls on the party to keep faith with economic liberalism, including raising the personal income tax allowance threshold and reducing the state's direct role in the economy (he accepts that public expenditure cuts will have to end at some point, but wants to see a rate of growth of public spending below the overall rate of growth of the economy). He accepts that the economic-liberal approach has often been associated with 'gross inequalities of wealth, income and opportunity' (p. 34) though fails to propose any



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measures to deal with them other than improving education.

For me the most interesting article was Emma Sanderson-Nash's, which considers whether *The Orange Book* should be seen as an element in a strategic shift towards greater professionalism and centralisation in the party. She does a good job of tracing the story of organisational change within the Liberal Democrats since its formation in 1988, but whether a move to the right is an inevitable concomitant of increasing professionalisation – as she implies – is not discussed, and neither is the argument that any shift to the right in Liberal Democrat economic policy after 2007 was primarily a response to changing circumstances post-credit crunch rather than a wholesale revision of ideology. One interesting point highlighted by the article is the change in the composition of the parliamentary party, with a higher proportion of Lib Dem MPs now deriving from business backgrounds than in either of the other two main parties.

One would not expect short articles of this kind and in this journal to be self-critical, and mostly they aren't. Deregulation is the unquestioned – and only – solution

to problems of growth and prosperity; Papworth attacks the fact that the British state now accounts for 50 per cent of GDP while entirely ignoring the fact that this is largely the result of the implosion of a banking system that was not over-but under-regulated. (And actually, it doesn't account for 50 per cent – it's now about 43 per cent, the same as it has been, on average, for the last fifty years, though it was slightly higher when his article was written.) Problems of market failure, rather than government failure, are simply ignored, as is the impossibility of meeting rapidly more serious environmental constraints through deregulation, as are the social (and economic) consequences of growing inequalities of income and wealth – with

the exception of David Laws, who does at least recognise this last as a challenge.

Despite all this, the articles are worth reading as a contribution to the debate around the future direction of the party and the historical antecedents of the economic-liberal case. And despite its failings and limitations, *The Orange Book* did at least, as several of these authors point out, spark off a lively ideological debate within the party – which is unquestionably a healthy development.

Duncan Brack is the Editor of the Journal of Liberal History. In 2007 he co-edited, with Richard Grayson and David Howarth, Reinventing the State: Social Liberalism for the 21st Century, a riposte to The Orange Book.

2010 analysed

Robert Worcester and Roger Mortimore, *Explaining Cameron's Coalition* (Biteback Publishing, 2011)

Reviewed by **Mark Pack**

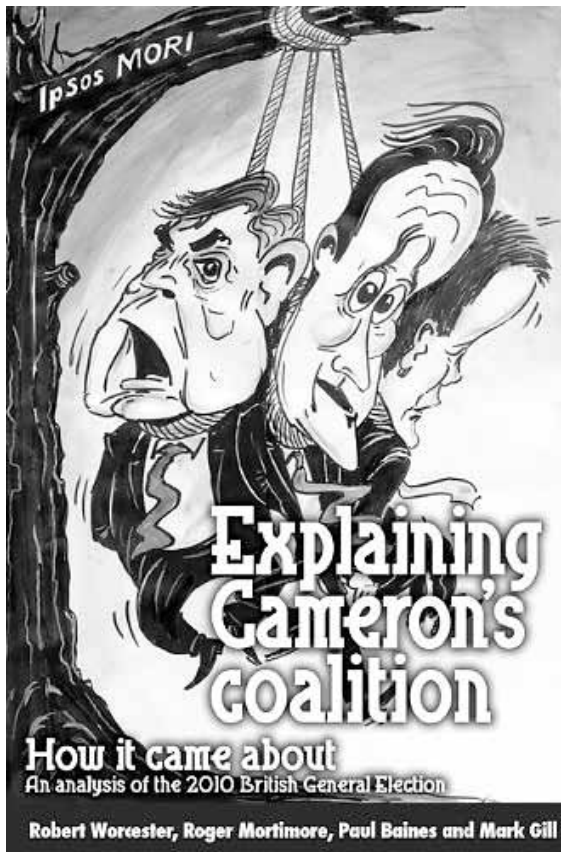
EXPLAINING CAMERON'S COALITION is the latest in the series of general election analyses by MORI's Robert Worcester and Roger Mortimore, this time joined by two other authors. The book is therefore very much the tale of the 2005–2010 parliament and subsequent general election seen through the eyes of MORI's opinion polling, with an often pungent analysis which allows Robert Worcester to point out happily where he got predictions right and others got them wrong.

Though there is a smattering of references to polling results from other firms, the great strength of the MORI data is that many of the questions have been asked regularly for decades, allowing the story of 2005–10 to be put into a consistent historical context, and polling results judged against previous ones that led up to victory or defeat. It also means that (as with Deborah Mattinson's excellent book, *Talking to a Brick Wall*, based on focus groups rather than polls) it is an account of politics in which the views of the public dominate rather

than the machinations and words of politicians, who usually take centre stage in post-election accounts.

The book is bulging with facts that make it hard to summarise them beyond 'go read the book', though a few do particularly stand out. The authors conclude that 'the nature of electoral support in Britain has changed, probably permanently ... the culmination of years of steady change ... British voters are ... less tribal ... and less polarised'. Yet geographic division, especially the decline of the Conservative Party in Scotland, has hardened even as other divisions have softened.

Somewhat paradoxically, the authors also very successfully model vote share in individual seats based on seventeen different characteristics drawn from the 2001 census. Factors such as the number of two- or more-car households are very influential in explaining the Conservative vote share, whilst factors such as the proportion of single-parent families do the same for Labour. Some factors do seem to divide, even if the old patterns no longer have the same power.



In addition:

... the old habit, whereby a predominant belief among voters that the economy was moving in the right direction was enough to ensure a government's re-election, no longer holds. So, despite having convinced an extraordinarily high proportion of the public that the economy was on the upturn ... Gordon Brown could not muster the votes he needed.

The authors also point out that Gordon Brown's ratings as Prime Minister, whilst very low, followed a simple extrapolation of Tony Blair's declining figures through his time as Prime Minister. The problem wasn't that Brown worsened the long-term trend; it was more that the decline had set in from the moment Blair became Prime Minister. At the same time, Blair was lucky enough to fight elections against unpopular Conservative leaders, while Brown was up against David Cameron, far more popular than his three predecessors. Indeed, the book points out that on their overall bundle of measures of leader image, Gordon Brown was in a slightly better position in May 2010 than Tony Blair had been, even pre-Iraq War in April 2001. But William Hague was no David Cameron.

At times the authors skirt with over-playing the determinism of Labour's long-time decline in popularity during its term in office. After all, John Major – a Chancellor succeeding a three-times

winning Prime Minister too – did pull off a slim victory against the odds. However, the authors also point out that the final result in 2010 was by such a fine margin (not many extra Labour seats would have transformed the possibilities of a non-Conservative coalition) that small events might have tipped the final outcome one way or the other. As it was, Labour went down to defeat with, as the book points out, 'more middle-class voters than working-class voters', for the first time in its history.

The book includes a useful introduction to how polls are conducted and how they are often misreported, with the warning to:

... think of polls as being like a barometer – barometers don't predict the weather; they measure something that is helpful to know if you want to predict the weather. But for that purpose, rather than relying purely on voting intentions the many other measurements that the polls regularly provide may be far more useful in developing an impression of what the future may bring.

Wise words from a good book that ends with a very welcome appendix – a survey of political cartoons during the 2010 election, an often overlooked form of commentary.

Dr Mark Pack is co-author of 101 Ways To Win An Election and ran the Liberal Democrats' online campaign for the 2001 and 2005 general elections

Liberal Sutton

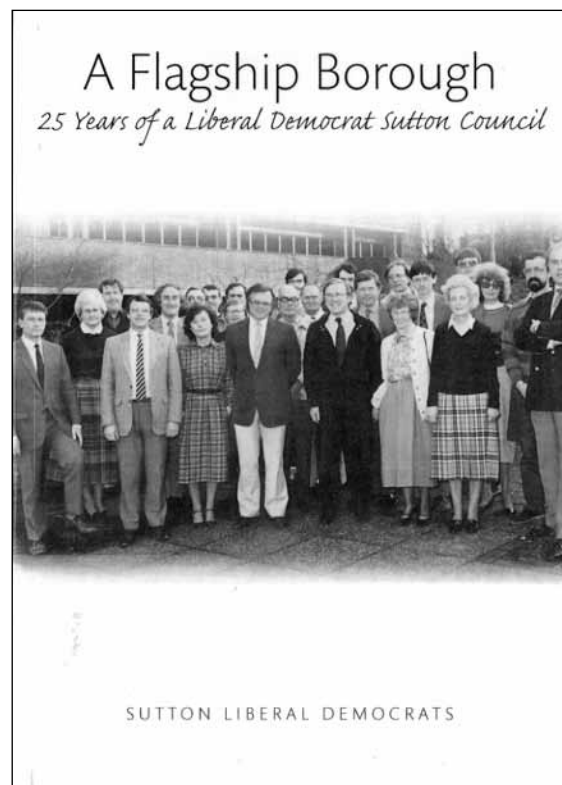
A Flagship Borough: 25 years of a Liberal Democrat Sutton Council (Sutton Liberal Democrats, 2012)

Review by **Mark Pack**

LOOK ROUND THE ROOM at the next Liberal Democrat event you attend and ask yourself how many people will have their names recorded in places that future political historians can find. A few, certainly, especially if they have been elected to public office. For most, however, their

contribution to a political party slips away through the cracks of the historical record, disappearing as the direct personal memories people have of them fade and then end with death.

Yet many of those whose fate is to dissipate into nothingness are crucial to a party's success, playing



roles as important – or even more important – than the few who have some fragments of information about them preserved. That is what makes the recently published history of Sutton Liberal Democrats – *A Flagship Borough: 25 Years of a Liberal Democrat Sutton Council* – so very welcome. Here, in this 317-page book, are remembered and preserved the names and deeds of numerous vital volunteers from over the decades.

Many people have contributed to the awesome electoral and political record of success that is Sutton Liberal Democrats: winning election after election, and being at the cutting edge of both green policies and local campaign tactics. Thanks to the book, many of them are now rightly honoured in print. Recorded too are the sorts of stories that entertain many a political reminiscence, such as the vomiting doll dressed as a superhero which a Conservative councillor brought to one meeting (see page 77 to find the full story!).

The book takes a fairly conventional narrative approach from the 1970s through to the current day, emphasising recording events over analysis. That makes it a comprehensive work, if at times a little bit of a dry read as one issue after another is briskly recounted. It also means that by the end of it the

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reader has some clues as to how Sutton has been so successful for so long, yet little in the way of direct analysis to tease out the lessons that could be applied elsewhere. Having a talented and successful team clearly helped. How much was that luck and how much was it due to measures which could be copied elsewhere?

Moreover, having taken over from a very low-spending Conservative regime, even the increases in spending introduced by the Liberal Democrats left overall spending levels low in many areas compared to other councils. Yet the Liberal Democrat council managed to win widespread public support for the quality of its public services. High-quality popular services despite relatively low spending levels is a combination many Liberal Democrats would like to be able to copy in all sorts of places – including Whitehall! Again there

is a hint of an answer – consult, consult, consult – though I suspect many readers will be left wanting to know more about quite how this combination was pulled off.

Those, however, are topics that can be picked up in training sessions and talks. What the book does, which neither of those can, is to preserve the memories of Sutton Liberal Democrats and many of the thousands of helpers who in their own ways were crucial to it – from running the printing machine through the night through to regularly delivering leaflets in the apparently most unpromising of territory. It makes it a great book to have produced and a very enjoyable one to read.

Dr Mark Pack is co-author of 101 Ways To Win An Election and ran the Liberal Democrats' online campaign for the 2001 and 2005 general elections

red thread which runs through all the chapters. At the time, there was nothing unusual or exceptional about this: very much the same would have been true for liberalism in Britain or indeed anywhere else in Europe or America. However, the challenge which defeated Ulster liberals was that of creating an inclusive notion of the common good which bypassed the philosophical divide and historical animosity between the people belonging to the two Christian confessions. Further tensions within the Protestant camp between Anglicans and Nonconformists (mainly the Presbyterians) compounded the problem.

Although the noun and adjective 'liberal' began to circulate in Ulster from 1809 – significantly, in an appeal for the Protestants to respect the religious feelings of the Catholics – the concepts associated with it were already well-established in late eighteenth-century political debates, particularly in the search for a common ground between the elites of the two communities. At the turn of the century Ulster liberalism was linked to the United Irishmen until the latter started to recruit, besides 'the respectable', also 'the lower orders', in a movement which looked increasingly

Liberals in Ulster

Gerald R. Hall, *Ulster Liberalism 1778–1876* (Four Courts Press, 2011)

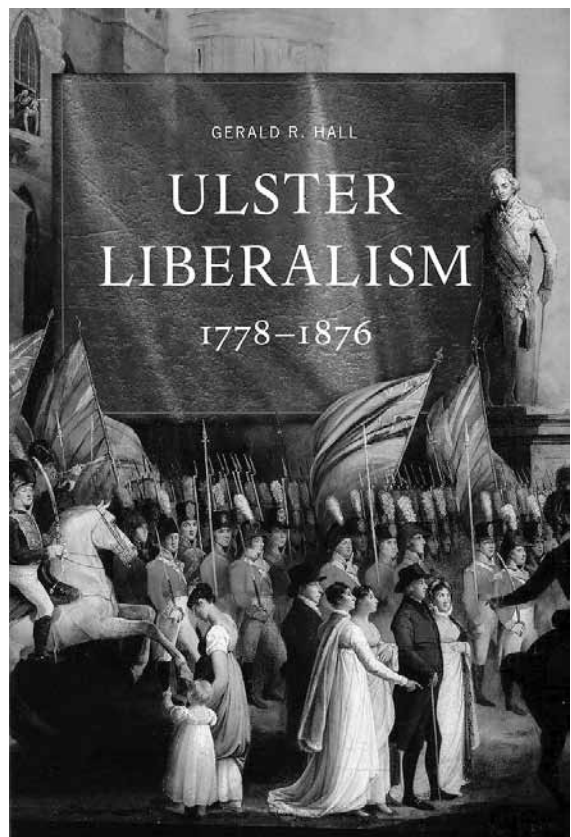
Reviewed by **Eugenio F Biagini**

THE CIVIL STRIFE and social polarisation which characterised the 'Troubles' from 1968 to 1998 and beyond – and indeed the whole of the past century since the Solemn League and Covenant to resist home rule in 1912 – have for a long time obscured the extent to which, during the previous one hundred years Ulster had been the hub of reform politics and various shades of liberalism. Only recently has there been a rediscovery of this dimension, which was first examined in John Bew's ground-breaking *The Glory of Being Britons: Civic Unionism in 19th Century Belfast* (Dublin, 2008) and the important volume reviewed here.

Like Bew (whom, surprisingly, he does not cite), Hall aims at recovering an Ulster political tradition in which neither nationalism nor unionism were of primary importance, and which sought to relegate religious differences to a self-contained private sphere

outside politics. This tradition was rooted in the Enlightenment and its legacy. When the latter began to be undermined – by Romanticism and its concomitants, religious and nationalist revivalism – Ulster liberalism started to wither, but its defenders did not give up. As the author notes, '[m]uch of the tension and the drama of this story derives from the struggle of men and women to maintain their principles despite changing circumstances' (p. 11).

Hall examines the causes which led to the rise and fall of Ulster liberalism in four substantial chapters with a broadly chronological structure. The first deals with the 'forging' of Ulster liberalism. The second and third examine its growth and consolidation, focusing on the concept of public opinion and economic affairs, and finally (chapter 4) its crisis and decline from 1868. Religion – as a source of inspiration but also of sectarian division – represents a



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.

Eugenio F. Biagini is Reader in Modern History at Cambridge and a Fellow of Sidney Sussex College; he is also the Reviews Editor of the Journal of Liberal History. He has published extensively on the history of Liberalism in Britain, Ireland and Italy.

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.

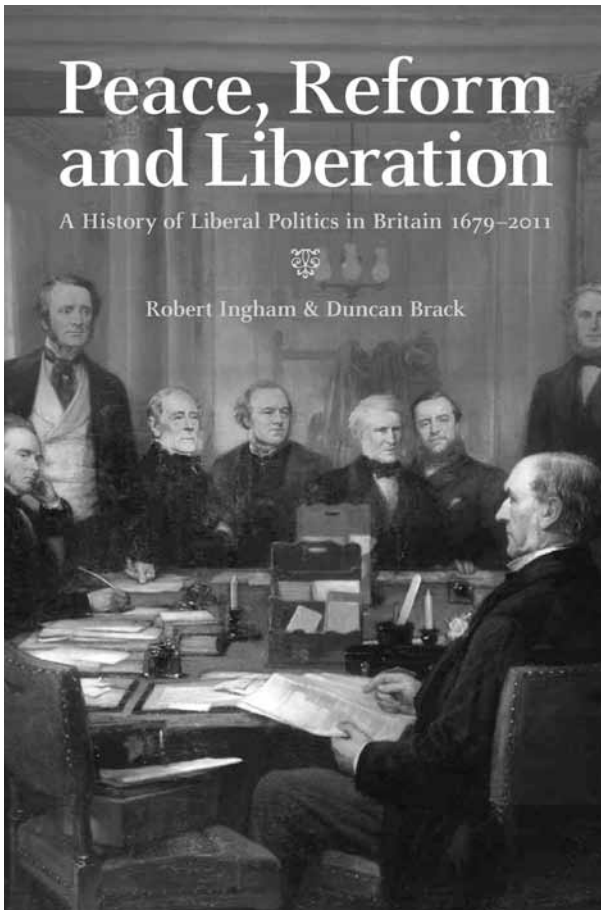
Although the scope of *Reviews* is wide, there is, reflecting publishing trends, a great deal of material that may appeal to students of British Liberal history, and political history in general. The website features a fully-faceted search function, so it is possible very quickly to limit the reviews 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.

Danny Millum is deputy editor of Reviews in History at the Institute of Historical Research