

LIBERAL HISTORY NEWS

AUTUMN 2013

Jo Grimond centenary: Orkney weekend, 18–19 May 2013

Mike Falchikov reports on a weekend several months in the planning. In the autumn of 2012 some members of the Scottish Liberal Club in Edinburgh (mostly veterans of the Grimond generation) wondered how the Club might contribute to commemorating the centenary of Jo's birth (29 July 2013). Our suggestion was for a lecture or short conference to be held in Orkney the following summer. Contact was made with the three Northern Isles parliamentarians, all of whom welcomed the initiative, whilst advising that the busy schedule of events on the islands made a May date preferable to that of the actual centenary. The next contact was the local party who were delighted with the suggestion and their constituency organiser, Ruth Williams, got things moving very rapidly.

Both the organisation of the events and the welcome to a horde of visitors from the mainland could not have been bettered. The weekend had been well publicised in party circles and an indication of the success of the venture was the attendance at the Saturday evening

dinner, when fifty locals sat down with seventy from the rest of the UK, including twenty from Edinburgh. Amongst those making the long journey was Catherine Fisher, Jo's long-serving secretary at Westminster, who, at 93, took part in all the weekend's activities.

The official part of the weekend began in Finstown, close to the Grimond family home, on the Saturday afternoon. Lord Steel of Aikwood delivered a superb address (reproduced on pages 8–14), outlining Jo's life and career in politics and his significance for our party today. David suggested five legacies which Jo Grimond left us – his devotion to his constituency, his success in dragging the Liberal Party back from the brink of oblivion, his rejection of post-war British imperialism in favour of a more modern form of politics, his unwavering support for Scottish home rule and, finally, his own engaging personality. The address – often moving, sometimes humorous in recalling anecdotes about Jo – reminded many participants of why they had come together in Orkney, and reinforced their beliefs. This

was followed by a lively panel discussion, chaired by Liam McArthur MSP and involving David Steel, (Lord) Jim Wallace, Willie Rennie MSP and Baroness Jane Bonham Carter, with plenty of contributions from the floor.

The evening dinner was in Kirkwall, followed by speeches from Alistair Carmichael MP and the principal guest, Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg. In his speech, Nick stressed the continuity of the party from Grimond to the present day and also powerfully reminded us that the Lib Dems are and will remain a European party. The dinner was also attended by Jo's three surviving children, Johnny, Magnus and Gelda.

For the Sunday – a second day of sunshine and blue skies – there was a coach tour of the Orkney Mainland, including a stop at Skara Brae, followed by a visit to the Grimond house, the Old Manse above Finstown, where we were entertained to drinks and snacks and a tour of the house and garden by the Grimond family. The weekend came to an official close with a lunch at another Old Manse – at Evie, the

Guests outside the Old Manse (Nick Clegg second from window; David Steel second from right) (photo: Nigel Lindsay)





home of Alistair Carmichael, the piece de resistance being a gigantic fish pie, cooked by the MP himself.

David Steel delivering the lecture (photo: Nigel Lindsay)

Viscount Bryce blue plaque unveiled In Belfast

It is not every day that notable Liberals are commemorated in Belfast, but 10 May 2013 was an exception, as **Berkley Farr** reports. It was the 175th anniversary of the birth, in 40 Arthur Street, Belfast, of James Bryce in 1838. An Ulster History Circle plaque was unveiled by Ian Crozier, CEO of the Ulster Scots Agency.

Bryce might well be described as a great polymath – author, classicist, historian, jurist, politician, diplomat, traveller and mountaineer. He attended Glasgow High School and Belfast Academy before going to Glasgow University and Trinity College, Oxford, where he graduated in 1862. He was called to the bar but soon returned to Oxford as Regius Professor of Civil Law, in 1870. His reputation as an historian had been made as early as 1864 by his work on the Holy Roman Empire. Along with Lord Acton, he founded the *English Historical Review* in 1885.

In 1880 Bryce was elected Liberal MP for Tower Hamlets and from 1885 to 1907 represented South Aberdeen. He served as Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (1886), Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1892), President of the Board of Trade (1894–95) and Chief Secretary for Ireland from 1905 to 1907.

In 1897, after a visit to South Africa, Bryce published a volume of impressions of that country, which had considerable weight in Liberal circles when the Second Boer War was being discussed. He was one of

the harshest critics of British repressive policy against Boer civilians in the South African War, condemning the systematic burning of farms and the imprisonment of old people, women and children in British concentration camps.

In 1907 Bryce was appointed British Ambassador to the United States of America, where he served until 1913, successfully strengthening the Anglo-American friendship. As an author, Bryce became well known in America for his 1888 work, *The American Commonwealth*. The book thoroughly examined the institutions of the United States from the point of view of a historian and constitutional lawyer, and it became a classic.

On his return to Great Britain he was raised to the peerage as Viscount Bryce, of Dechmont in 1914. Following the outbreak of the First World War, he was commissioned by Prime Minister, H.H. Asquith, to prepare the official Bryce Report on alleged German atrocities in Belgium. The report was published in 1915, and was damning of German behaviour against civilians. Bryce also strongly condemned the Armenian genocide that took place in the Ottoman Empire and later, with the assistance of the historian Arnold J. Toynbee, produced a documentary record of the massacres, published by the British government in 1916 as the Blue Book.

During the last years of his life, Bryce served at the International Court at The Hague. He supported the establishment of the League

of Nations and in 1921 published a book that was critical of post-war democracy; specifically, he strongly opposed the new right of women to vote.

In earlier life he was a notable mountain climber, ascending Mount Ararat in 1876. 'Mount Bryce' in the Canadian Rockies was named in his honour in 1898 and he was president of the Alpine Club in 1899–1901.

In 1907, King Edward VII made Bryce a Member of the Order of Merit. He became a fellow of the Royal Society in 1894 and was also President of the British Academy from 1913 to 1917. Bryce died on 22 January 1922 in Sidmouth, Devon and was cremated at Golders Green Crematorium. The viscountcy died with him.

A fuller account of Bryce and the unveiling ceremony of the blue plaque appears on the Ulster History Circle website: www.ulster-history.co.uk

On Liberties: Victorian Liberals and their legacies

The first weekend of July (3–5 July 2013) saw an eclectic mix of doctoral students, early career scholars, and permanent postholders, from a range of institutions across the UK and the USA, converge on Gladstone's Library in Hawarden, North Wales to discuss 'Victorian Liberals and their Legacies'. Report by **Alex Middleton**.

The conference sought to bridge literature and history, and

The James Bryce plaque in Upper Arthur Street, Belfast (photo: Berkley Farr)



the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, so as to arrive at a better understanding of what 'Liberalism' might have been, how it might have originated, how it might have been transmitted, and what consequences it might have had. This was, clearly, an ambitious agenda for three days. Luckily the sun shone throughout, and if we cannot now claim to have all the answers to these questions, all the attendees at least came away with important new questions to ask.

The conference began with a panel on the grand theme of 'Liberalism: Definitions and Mechanisms'. In the event this was composed of three political historians, who usefully opened up some key themes in nineteenth-century Liberalism. David Craig's paper on the emergence of the languages of 'liberalism' and 'liberality' around the turn of the nineteenth century, in particular, set the conference on its feet with a vigorous and compelling dissection of what people actually *meant* by the term 'liberal' before it began to be understood in a primarily political sense. Emily Jones, discussing Liberal attitudes towards Edmund Burke around the time of the home rule crisis of the 1880s, took the discussion of these important issues of chronology a stage further, suggesting that the search after political 'isms' and abstract political ideology was an innovation of the later nineteenth century. The first question period, moreover, established the tone of inquisitiveness, openness, and engagement which was to characterise post-panel discussions throughout the conference. The first dinner, and the subsequent trip to the impressively well-appointed village pub, only cemented this

atmosphere of intellectual openness and general conviviality.

The number of papers delivered over the next two days, combined with the fact that many of them were arranged in parallel sessions, makes it impossible here to do anything but pick out certain themes and highlights. The panel on 'Liberals, Slaves, and Aliens' offered a fascinating set of papers on how liberalism dealt (or failed to deal) with problems of race, exclusion, and unfree labour, approaching these issues through the very different lenses of the high political debate over the forcible suppression of the slave trade in early-Victorian Britain, literary responses to the Aliens Act of 1905, and South African imperial romance novels. Liberals, it emerged, found it extremely difficult to agree on where the boundaries of the political community ought to be drawn. The methodological tensions evident in this panel between the historian and the students of literature were even more pronounced in the panel on 'Commons Ground', where two highly theoretical close readings of Anthony Trollope's political novels ran up against a much more straightforwardly historical analysis of the same, alongside a thorough biographical treatment of James Stansfeld MP, one of the leading lights in the late-Victorian campaigns against the Contagious Diseases Acts. The discussion that emerged, of the relationship between liberal politics and 'liberalism' as an approach to literary style, was a particularly stimulating one. The final panels focused more narrowly on literature: that on 'Literary Liberalism' threw together the Brownings, Thomas Arnold, and Ralph Waldo Emerson; that

on 'Legacies' considered how far E.M. Forster was responding and/or contributing to debates over the 'New Liberal' (i.e. proto-collectivist) politics of the Edwardian era, while the final paper of the conference looked at the representation of the Victorian eccentric Henry Ashbee in two novels published in the last eleven years. In these panels we were confronted with a huge variety of approaches to 'liberalism' and 'liberty', from the 'liberties' taken with the representation of Ashbee, to Arnold's contextually specific arguments about the extent to which religious liberalism could be allowed to run, to the (implied) relationship between the Brownings' liberal social contract and Robert Browning's political poetry. Nobody could have come away from these diverse panels and papers without being forced to confront and reconsider their assumptions about what makes a 'liberal', or about the unity and historicity of the attached 'ism'. In this respect the juxtaposition of historians and literary scholars, while often challenging for at least some representatives of the former group, was one of the most intellectually productive aspects of the conference.

Each of the keynote lectures added important ingredients to this pleasantly simmering broth. Michael Wheeler's opening address on 'Religion and Science in the 1830s and 1860s' offered an orientating conspectus of some of the major intellectual contexts from which nineteenth-century Liberalism took its shape; one-time deputy leader of the Liberal Democrats Alan Beith provided an insider's view of the 'legacies' of political Liberalism, discussing the costs and benefits of possessing a 'creed' for political parties in general (and for the Liberal Democrats in particular), while providing a range of incidental insights into the contemporary politics of coalition; and Regenia Gagnier, in what must be seen as a high point of the conference, spoke compellingly on 'The Global Circulation of the Literatures of Liberalization', fusing philosophy, psychology, history, and literature, in a compelling demonstration of interdisciplinarity done right.

For all the intellectual stimulation on offer from the conference proper, however, this attendee

David Lloyd George – a one-day conference

The Birmingham and Midland Institute (BMI), together with The Lloyd George Society, are organising a one-day conference to mark the 150th anniversary of the birth of David Lloyd George (1863–1945). The event will be held at the BMI, 9 Margaret Street, Birmingham, B3 3BS on Saturday 23 November 2013 between 10am and 4pm.

The speakers will be **Professor Russell Deacon**, Chairman of the Lloyd George Society, on Lloyd George and Welsh Liberalism; **Professor Emeritus Roger Ward**, Birmingham City University, on Lloyd George and Austen Chamberlain; **Professor Richard Toye**, University of Exeter, comparing Lloyd George and Winston Churchill as war leaders; and **Professor Lord Kenneth Morgan**, concluding with an overview of LG's career and his legacy.

The cost of the day will be £28, to include lunch and refreshments at registration and in the afternoon. Bookings may be made to Philip Fisher, Administrator, Birmingham & Midland Institute, 9 Margaret Street, Birmingham, B3 3BS by post; or email: Philip@bmi.org.uk; or telephone: 0121 236 3591.

drew most of all from the opportunities it presented to leaf through Gladstone's personal library. It was extraordinary, after so many years of reading about the man, to be confronted with the massed physical evidence of his voracity; and, in particular, to pull down a volume of Mill from the shelves, only to find it

inscribed to the statesman 'from the author'. Here was confirmation, perhaps, of the wisdom – and the necessity – of the conference's efforts to bridge the gap between literature and politics. Many thanks are due to Matthew Bradley and Louisa Yates for organising such a splendid conference in such exceptional surroundings,

and to the Library staff for their unfailing friendliness and efficiency.

Liberal Democrat History Group website

The History Group is beginning the process of overhauling our website (www.liberal-history.org.uk), revising and

updating its content and in due course – finances allowing! – its design.

Any *Journal* readers with views on the existing content, structure, navigation and look of the website are very welcome to let us have them. Please email our web coordinator, Chris Millington, at chris-milli@aol.com.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

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

Letters of Richard Cobden (1804–65)

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

Dadabhai Naoroji

Dadabhai Naoroji (1825–1917) was an Indian nationalist and Liberal member for Central Finsbury, 1892–95 – the first Asian to be elected to the House of Commons. This research for a PhD at Harvard aims to produce both a biography of Naoroji and a volume of his selected correspondence, to be published by OUP India in 2013. The current phase concentrates on Naoroji's links with a range of British progressive organisations and individuals, particularly in his later career. Suggestions for archival sources very welcome. *Dinyar Patel; dinyar.patel@gmail.com or 07775 753 724.*

The political career of Edward Strutt, 1st Baron Belper

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

The emergence of the 'public service ethos'

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

The life of Professor Reginald W Revans, 1907–2003

Any information anyone has on Revans' Liberal Party involvement would be most welcome. We are particularly keen to know when he joined the party and any involvement he may have had in campaigning issues. We know he was very interested in pacifism. Any information, oral history submissions, location of papers or references most welcome. *Dr Yury Boshky, yury@gel-net.com; or Dr Cheryl Brook, cheryl.brook@port.ac.uk.*

Recruitment of Liberals into the Conservative Party, 1906–1935

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

Four nations history of the Irish Home Rule crisis

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

Beyond Westminster: Grassroots Liberalism 1910–1929

A study of the Liberal Party at its grassroots during the period in which it went from being the party of government to the third party of politics. This research will use a wide range of sources, including surviving Liberal Party constituency minute books and local press to contextualise the national decline of the party with the reality of the situation on the ground. The thesis will focus on three geographic regions (Home Counties, Midlands and the North West) in order to explore the situation the Liberals found themselves in nationally. Research for University of Leicester. Supervisor: Dr Stuart Ball. *Gavin Freeman; gjf6@le.ac.uk.*

The Liberal Party's political communication, 1945–2002

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

The Liberal Party in Wales, 1966–1988

Aims to follow the development of the party from the general election of 1966 to the time of the merger with the SDP. PhD research at Cardiff University. *Nick Alderton; nickalito@hotmail.com.*

Policy position and leadership strategy within the Liberal Democrats

This thesis will be a study of the political positioning and leadership strategy of the Liberal Democrats. Consideration of the role of equidistance; development of policy from the point of merger; the influence and leadership strategies of each leader from Ashdown to Clegg; and electoral strategy from 1988 to 2015 will form the basis of the work. Any material relating to leadership election campaigns, election campaigns, internal party groups (for example the Social Liberal Forum) or policy documents from 1987 and merger talks onwards would be greatly welcomed. Personal insights and recollections also sought. *Samuel Barratt; pt10seb@leeds.ac.uk.*