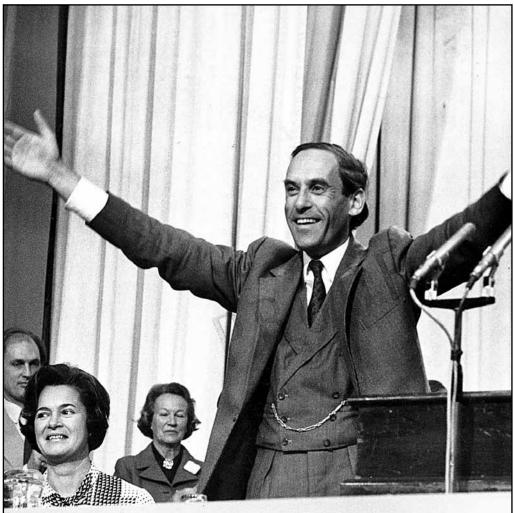
For the study of Liberal, SDP and Liberal Democrat history

# Journal of Liberal



## **Remembering Jeremy Thorpe**

Robert Ingham and Ronald Porter Jeremy Thorpe's Liberal legacy

lan Cawood

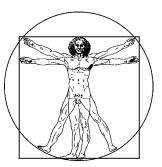
'True to his principles'? John Bright, Liberalism and Irish home rule 1886–1889

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The man who made the weather Joseph Chamberlain conference report

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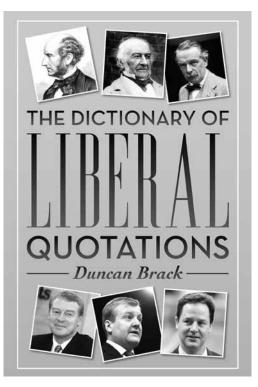
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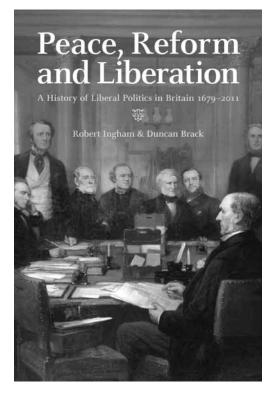
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#### Liberal Democrat History Group

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.

Chair: Tony Little Honorary President: Lord Wallace of Saltaire

## LIBERAL HISTORY NEWS WINTER 2014–15

#### Huddersfield West 1964: A review note for the Journal of Liberal History

Fifty years ago last October, Donald Wade, deputy leader of the Liberal Party, lost his Huddersfield West seat at the October 1964 general election. A fascinating account of that event has just been published in a magazine not obviously high on a list of sources for political history, *Third Age Matters*.'

TAM circulates to just over two hundred thousand members of the University of the Third Age; its pages reflect activities and interests of older people committed to keeping their minds active. That includes reminiscing, and under the editorship of the politically attuned Francis Beckett, that has included some interesting political memories. Beckett himself has written of his own key role as a Labour official in the Darlington by-election<sup>2</sup> - the by-election which set the Social Democratic Party (and so the Alliance) back so badly in the run-up to the 1983 general election.

In 2010, it published a chatty reminiscence from Beth Butler, then vice-chairman of the U3A nationally, who had been a fulltime Liberal agent in the early 1960s. She was employed from April 1962 by Aubrey Herbert, the former Chief Agent who was

Donald Wade (1904–88), MP for Huddersfield West 1950–64



by then an active Liberal in Suffolk,<sup>3</sup> and was involved in the Central Norfolk by-election later that year. This article gave some background and colour to how someone became and functioned as a professional Liberal constituency agent at the time. She included a telling snapshot of tension between Jeremy Thorpe and Pratap Chitnis over Thorpe's behaviour as a visiting MP, a foretaste of their relationship, in due course, as leader and head of the party organisation respectively.<sup>4</sup>

In April 1964, Beth Butler was sent to Huddersfield to save one of the party's most vulnerable seats, threatened by the end of the local Con-Lib Pact.5 Her 1,500-word account of that experience paints a compelling picture of the maledominated, social-club based world of Huddersfield Liberalism that she, a young, smoking, woman encountered.<sup>6</sup> This alone is valuable source material for any historian interested in the role of Liberal Clubs or in the particular character of midtwentieth century Liberal strength in a significantly Nonconformist Pennine textile town.

It is also a tale of how the local, very traditional, form of political organisation (which had kept Huddersfield County Borough in Liberal hands for years, as well as sending Wade to Westminster) was at odds with what had been modern electioneering techniques elsewhere for many years. And again, Jeremy Thorpe's role and style played a part. It was more than a clash of styles (though that clash was to bedevil Thorpe's 1967–76 leadership of the party); Wade and Thorpe were a clash of values.

As someone myself who was in his final postgraduate year in Oxford in 1964 and was to move north in 1965, ultimately to live for two decades in the Pennine textile belt, I can vouch for Butler's picture of local Liberal politics at that period. The vividness of her portraiture (such as the loveable Wade) more than makes up for a few minor unreliabilities, e.g. the date of the March 1966 election.

Donald Wade nearly held Huddersfield West with 32.7 per cent in his first three-cornered fight, an impressive result in the light of what had already happened to the once so strong municipal Liberal vote. This had started to crumble before Beth Butler arrived, with only 11 Liberals (out of 60) after May 1964. By the last Huddersfield County Borough election of 1972, only six Liberals seats were left, and significantly more National Front candidates (nine) than Liberal ones (four, two in three-party fights and two facing Labour) stood.7 The Liberal traditional vote totally failed to carry through in 1973 when the town was submerged into the new Kirklees metropolitan borough, though a fresh generation of activists was later to recover some of it.

After Wade, the Westminster Liberal vote fell away as the 1970-83 Huddersfield West became a Labour-Tory marginal. The Liberal candidate in 1970 recalls that 'Huddersfield Liberals in the late 1960s were an elderly group of "respectable" Nonconformists, who had very little idea of political campaigning post-1950s. The ladies made good teas in the committee rooms, but didn't think they needed to chase up voters very actively.'8 The constituency disappeared in 1983, the larger part going into a simple Huddersfield. But a significant part of Wade's old seat transferred into neighbouring Colne Valley, where it once again acquired a Liberal MP in Richard Wainwright.

Wainwright had first fought Colne Valley in 1959, reinvigorating a similar traditional social-club based, largely Nonconformist, form of Liberal support, and gone on to win that seat eighteen months after Wade lost his. Richard Wainwright shared Donald Wade's values, but also shared Pratap Chitnis's and Beth Butler's commitment to proper,

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effective organisation. It was that synthesis which gave Pennine Liberalism another lease of life, its local strength continuing to produce Liberal representation at Westminster into the twenty-first century.

Butler's personal experience throws sharp light on why the Wainwright synthesis was so necessary.

In 1964 Michael Steed was a psephologist at Oxford University; he moved to Manchester in 1965 and a Pennine textile town (Todmorden) in 1970, becoming active in Liberal politics in the region. He was President of the Liberal Party in 1978–79 and is now honorary lecturer in politics at the University of Kent.

- Third Age Matters (formerly U3A News), published by the Third Age Trust, The Old Municipal Buildings, 19 East St, Bromley, BR 1 IQE, from which back issues may be obtained.
- 2 TAM June 2013. Francis Beckett has published other recollections about the key Darlington by-election – see New Statesman 13 June 2013; Total Politics April 2010.
- 3 See letter re Aubrey Herbert, *Journal of Liberal History* 79, summer 2013, p. 15.
- 4 *U3A News*, autumn 2010, p. 39.
- 5 Except for a brief period following a by-election in February 1893 (won by the Conservatives by just 35 votes), the

single-member borough constituency of Huddersfield was Liberal-held from its formation in 1832 until Labour unseated the sitting Liberal MP in a three-cornered fight, by just 26 votes, in 1923. Its distinctive local Liberal strength and character had been emphasised in 1906, when the national Lib-Lab pact did not include the seat. In four three-cornered contests before 1914, the Liberals won each with an average of 37.9 per cent (Labour 32.4 per cent; Conservative 29.7 per cent). Apart from the 1893 by-election, no straight Conservative had ever won the seat, though right-wing Liberals won in 1918, 1931 and 1935 with Conservative support. That, along with a long-standing partial Con-Lib municipal pact, was the background to a local decision in Huddersfield in 1950, when the borough was divided into an East and a West division, that these two seats should be fought respectively by a Conservative and a Liberal.

- 6 'Of mice and mills', *TAM*, summer 2014, pp. 46–48.
- 7 I am indebted to John Smithson for these figures.
- 8 Communication (August 2014) from Lord Wallace of Saltaire.

#### 2015 Orpington Dinner

On 24 March 2015 it will be fifty years since the young David Steel

was elected in a by-election for Roxburgh, Selkirk & Peebles, with a majority of over 4,500 votes. This was the beginning of fifty years of service as a distinguished parliamentarian and one of the most popular politicians in the United Kingdom.

This Golden Jubilee will be the focus of the 2015 Orpington Dinner at the National Liberal Club on Tuesday, 10 March (6.45 p.m. for 7.30 p.m.). Speakers will include Lord Steel, Baroness Williams, Lord Wallace of Tankerness, Lord Avebury and Peter Soal, former MP for Johannesburg North. Places are  $\pounds 60$  each and this covers predinner drinks and a three course meal with wine and a donation to the Orpington Fund.

The Orpington Circle was founded in 2008 with the purpose of raising money to support Liberal Democrat candidates at Westminster by-elections. Over £30,000 has been raised, which has covered the deposit at every by-election since then and additional financial support has been given in selected seats.

Non-NLC members will be made very welcome but early booking is advised. Please contact Louisa Pooley at the Club (tel. 020 7930 9871 or louisa@nlc.org.uk). Paul Hunt

#### On This Day ...

Every day the Liberal Democrat History Group's website, Facebook page and Twitter feed carry an item of Liberal history news from the past. Below we reprint three of them. To see them regularly, look at **www.liberalhistory.org.uk** or **www.facebook.com/LibDemHistoryGroup** or follow us at: **LibHistoryToday**.

#### December

5 December 1916: H. H. Asquith resigns as Prime Minister. The crisis that led to the Prime Minister's resignation had been building for over a month. Concern at the military weakness in the British army at the Battle of the Somme had led Lloyd George to call for a restructuring of the War Council with himself as chairman. Although not completely opposed to Lloyd George's proposals, Asquith could not accept that the Prime Minister would not chair the Council nor continue to be a member of it. Protracted negotiations ensued until Lloyd George forced the issue by tendering his resignation. The Unionist ministers sided with Lloyd George and indicated their preparedness to serve in a government headed by him. This was the last straw for Asquith and at 7pm he saw the King to offer his resignation.

#### January

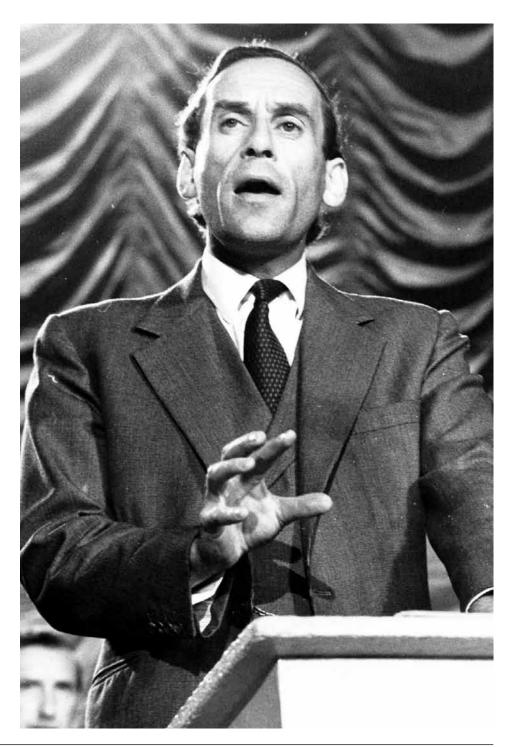
*3 January 1802*: Birth of Charles Pelham Villiers, Whig/Liberal/Liberal Unionist MP for Wolverhampton 1835–85 and Wolverhampton South 1885–98. A strong and early advocate of free trade, Villiers initiated debates on the abolition of the Corn Laws before Richard Cobden and John Bright were elected to parliament. *The Times* observed in 1853 that 'it was Mr Charles Villiers who practically originated the Free Trade Movement'. Villiers achieved ministerial office under Lord Aberdeen and served in the cabinets of Palmerston and Russell as President of the Poor Law Board. He left the Liberal Party over Irish Home Rule and joined the Liberal Unionists. He was Father of the House from 1890 and when he died, aged 96, in 1898 he was still an MP and the last MP to have served during the reign of King William IV.

#### February

*9 February 2006*: Liberal Democrat candidate Willie Rennie wins the Dunfermline & West Fife by-election, turning a Labour majority of over 11,000 into a Lib Dem majority of 1,800. The by-election was caused by the death of the sitting Labour MP, Rachel Squire, after a long illness. Despite poor opinion poll ratings at the start of the campaign, and reports that Liberal Democrat ambitions were confined to holding off the SNP to retain second place, Rennie and his team pulled off the first by-election defeat for Labour in Scotland since they lost the Govan seat to the SNP in 1988. Dunfermline & West Fife is the last gain recorded by the Liberal Democrats at a by-election to date.

# **REMEMBERING**

Jeremy Thorpe, leader of the Liberal Party from 1967 to 1976, died three weeks before Christmas 2014. The infamy of his political downfall in the late 1970s unfairly colours all else in his life. Thorpe was a stylish, progressive and popular politician, and under his leadership the Liberal Party won more votes than ever before at a general election and helped drive legislation taking Britain into the European Community through a divided Parliament. To commemorate his life for the Journal of Liberal History, Robert Ingham analyses Thorpe's political legacy, while Ronald **Porter** takes a look at his life and times.



# JEREMY THORPE

#### Jeremy Thorpe's Liberal legacy

Coverage of Jeremy Thorpe's death inevitably dwelt on the sensational end to his political career. Questions had been raised before Thorpe's resignation as Liberal leader in 1976 about his judgement, his finances, his choice of friends and his sexual orientation, in an era when homosexuality had only recently been legalised. All of these issues swirled around Thorpe's trial for conspiring to murder Norman Scott. It hardly mattered that Thorpe was acquitted. The trial destroyed his reputation. He lost his seat in Parliament and was unable to rebuild his career. Tragically, he was afflicted by Parkinson's Disease for his last thirty years.

These issues have tended to eclipse Thorpe's political career, which is worthy of reappraisal. Thorpe is sometimes characterised as a showman, all style but no substance, an unworthy successor to the intellectual rigour and undoubted integrity of his predecessor, Jo Grimond. This is unfair. If Thorpe lacked an intellectual commitment to Liberalism he would surely have joined the Conservatives, given his family background, where he may well have ended up as a cabinet minister under Ted Heath. That he chose to plough the stony ground of the post-war Liberal Party demonstrates that Thorpe had more political depth than is often appreciated.

Thorpe first became prominent in Liberal circles at the 1953 Assembly. The party was at that time in the midst of a lively debate between strident free-marketeers – some of whom later resurfaced as Margaret Thatcher's most ardent supporters – and social liberals, grappling with the implications for Liberalism of nationalised industries and the mixed economy. The Liberal Assembly witnessed an annual battle between the two factions; whichever side was better organised came out on top. The Liberal leadership, such as it was, did not intervene. The free-marketeers were making the running in 1953 until Thorpe, still in his early twenties, intervened to say that Liberal candidates in the southwest would resign if the party disclaimed agricultural subsidies on doctrinal grounds. Thorpe swung the vote and helped change the climate of opinion within the party against the economic liberals. In speaking out he demonstrated the pragmatism which was at the heart of his political outlook. He wanted to advance Liberal politics by winning elections, not by running a debating club.

Thorpe's pragmatism was evident in the early 1960s when he developed the party's first scheme for targeting resources into winnable seats. He pored over details of election results, party membership and the activities of local associations to decide where money should be focused – money he often raised himself rather than via official party channels. Local associations were surprised, and appalled, to be told that funding depended on dropping a candidate they had selected or on increasing membership by a certain amount. At first, targeting was Thorpe's initiative and he kept the party's governing committees in the dark. When they found out what was happening they were unimpressed but his view prevailed. A number of the Liberal gains of the mid 1960s owed a debt to Thorpe. More importantly, he

established the principle of targeting and the concomitant responsibility on local associations to do what they were told, in the overall interests of the party, in order to

receive money. As leader, Thorpe initially seemed out of his depth. He inherited a party whose electoral fortunes were in reverse and which contained numerous divergent strands of opinion. Just six Liberals were elected to the Commons at the 1970 election, a result which seemed to show that the 1960s revival had been a temporary blip in the party's long-term decline. After Thorpe's first wife died in June 1970 he appeared to lose interest in politics. And yet, his party revived with a series of improbable by-election victories and Thorpe was reinvigorated. He recognised that the leader of the third party needed to stand out from the crowd in order to gain any media attention. Combining an old-fashioned, debonair style of dress with the newest campaigning techniques helicopters, hovercraft and the like - he got the coverage the Liberals needed. It was also significant that, under Thorpe's leadership, the Liberals stood in every constituency in Great Britain for the first time. In February 1974 the Liberals had their best general election result for over forty years (6,059,519 votes, a total not surpassed until 2010, and 19.3 per cent of the vote), although it still fell well short of the breakthrough the party hankered after. Later third-party leaders – mostly Paddy Ashdown – have followed Thorpe in combining their own personal characteristics with innovative and high-profile campaigning to good effect.

Jeremy Thorpe speaking at Liberal Assembly

#### **REMEMBERING JEREMY THORPE**

Thorpe was a pragmatist and a campaigner but his intellectual input into the Liberal Party should not be overlooked. Internationalism was the most prominent aspect of his Liberalism and he was a principled exponent of views which were not intended to garner popularity. He spoke out against apartheid in South Africa at a time when many British politicians preferred to remain silent. Although he was ridiculed for suggesting that the UK should bomb the railway line by which Ian Smith's renegade regime in Rhodesia was supplying itself with oil, it was at least a possible way of enforcing sanctions. With air strikes against dissident regimes now an established part of US and UK foreign policy, it can now be seen that Thorpe was ahead of his time. Thorpe also ensured that the Liberals maintained the pro-Common Market course first set by Jo Grimond, voting for British entry amid stormy scenes in the Commons, during which punches were thrown. Thorpe could have sought narrow partisan advantage by compromising on the Common Market issue to bring down the Heath Government, but he was not prepared to do so.

Thorpe was also the first Liberal leader for over twenty years to be offered a seat in government, after the inconclusive first election in 1974. Details of precisely what happened remain murky and it seems unlikely that Thorpe would have been offered the post of Home Secretary, as has been suggested, given the rumours already circulating about his private life. Crucially, Thorpe could not proceed without the consent of his party, which he did not have. The similarities and differences between the coalition discussions in 1974 and 2010 deserve further exploration, but Thorpe understood that the Liberals would not be bounced into coalition.

Thorpe's political legacy to the Liberal Party is complex but, looking beyond the obvious negatives, there are positive aspects which deserve recognition. Most significantly, it is difficult to see how any of his rivals for the leadership in 1967 would have done better in the 1974 elections, which put beyond debate the question of whether the party was declining or on the way up.

I will be developing these themes further in a chapter on Jeremy Thorpe's leadership in the History Group's forthcoming book on Liberal leaders, due for publication in autumn 2015.

Robert Ingham is a political writer and Biographies Editor of the Journal of Liberal History.

#### Sex, Jeremy and Me

The purpose of my piece is to concentrate on the private life of Jeremy Thorpe.

John Jeremy Thorpe was born on 29 April 1929, the son of John Thorpe KC OBE and Ursula Thorpe, nee Norton-Griffiths. His mother was the most the dominant force in his early - and formative years. Socially, Thorpe came from the world of the Forsytes, the upper middle classes; his father was a successful barrister and a Tory MP. He left the upbringing of Jeremy to his intimidating and interfering wife, a role she relished. The daughter of a baronet, Sir John Norton-Griffiths, she often wore a monocle, and dominated Jeremy's early years in the same way as E. M. Forster's mother dominated that author's sad childhood years. There are other parallels: both lacked strong father

figures, and other men came to play important roles in their lives – Bob Buckingham, a plump and jovial working-class policeman, in Forster's life, and the former stable lad and male model Norman Scott in Thorpe's life in the 1960s. And both were homosexual. However, while Buckingham was a calm and reassuring figure in Forster's life, Scott was a temperamental, hot-headed and fundamentally jealous lover who eventually destroyed Thorpe's political career.

Thorpe was educated first at Eton, but in 1940, because of wartime bombing in England, he was sent to the safety and security of the United States and educated at the Rectory School, Connecticut. His interest in Liberal politics began at the school; his interest in blokes became common knowledge, with Thorpe was a pragmatist and a campaigner but his intellectual input into the Liberal Party should not be overlooked.

family and friends, at about the same time. Before he returned to Eton in 1943, he was reputed to have had consenting sex with at least two young American truck drivers. After Eton, Thorpe went to Trinity College, Oxford, to read law. His aim was to get a law degree, then do the Bar Finals, be called to the Bar and use his career at the criminal bar as a stepping stone to adoption for a winnable Liberal parliamentary seat. He was never really interested in a legal career as such; a parliamentary career was always the ultimate goal, just as it was for graduates who followed after him such as Emlyn Hooson or Menzies Campbell.

At the age of 30, Thorpe won the seat of North Devon in the October 1959 general election. It was about this time that the Devon Constabulary opened a file on Thorpe and his 'weekend liaisons' with other young men, in their twenties and early thirties, in a hotel in his constituency, not far from the seaside town of Ilfracombe. Well before the liberating Sexual Offences Act of 1967, this was a period when homosexuality was still a crime, punishable by imprisonment.

Thorpe soon became a good, and very witty, debater in the House of Commons. He first came to the public's attention after Ian Smith's unilateral declaration of independence in Rhodesia. In 1966; he advocated bombing Rhodesia's railways in order to bring the country to its senses. This won him a following with the radical wing of the Liberal Party, and particularly the Young Liberals. He was also good at sucking-up to the aristocratic side of the party, getting on very well with the Grimonds and the Bonham Carters. He was keen to make it clear that he was a member of both the Reform and the National Liberal Clubs, had been to Eton and Oxford, that his grandfather was a baronet and his father a King's Counsel.

When Grimond resigned the Liberal leadership in 1967, Thorpe decided to become a contender. He was by no means certain of success, but he thought it was a useful way of getting known and be a good way of a putting up a marker for future contests. To his surprise, he won the contest, and served as leader from 1967 until 1976. Through the years, he steadily managed to increase the profile of the Liberals at general elections. His flamboyant personality, his wit and penchant for publicity, were useful assets. When the February general election of 1974 left the Commons with no overall majority, Prime Minister Heath invited Thorpe to Downing Street for talks on forming a coalition between the Conservatives and the Liberals. Thorpe was absolutely delighted and desperate to enter government; it was rumoured that Heath was going to make Thorpe Home Secretary, though this was later denied by Heath. The talks soon petered out, however, because most of Thorpe's MPs had no desire to sit in government with the discredited and divisive Tories, a party which after all, had just lost the election - a view shared by the party as a whole.

Thorpe's downfall began in January 1976 when Norman Scott, a former lover of Thorpe's, began a campaign of vilification against him, alleging that Thorpe had had an affair with him in the early 1960s and then had tried to silence him by trying to have him murdered. Soon the police got involved, leading to Thorpe's prosecution at the Old Bailey in 1979. Thorpe lost his seat in the general election of 1979, just before his trial, and he had already been forced to resign from the leadership of the Liberal Party in 1976. A few days before the resignation, a Sunday paper got hold of one of Thorpe's numerous love letters to Scott, which referred to a holiday the couple were planning and ended up with the words 'Bunnies [Thorpe's nickname for his lover] CAN and WILL go to France!'

Thorpe's trial at the Old Bailey garnered phenomenal press coverage. After Scott's first day of evidence in the witness box, one tabloid came out with the headline: 'SEX, JEREMY AND ME'. Later, after a ruthless cross-examination of Scott by Thorpe's counsel, George Carman QC, another tabloid used the headline: 'Scott : I'm not the Woman Scorned!'.

The prosecution case rested firstly on evidence from Peter Bessell, a former Liberal MP, chosen by Thorpe to buy Scott's silence with periodic cash payments. Bessell alleged that Thorpe became impatient and floated the idea of having Scott murdered. Carman, for the defence, found it easy to destroy Bessell's credibility, showing him to be an inveterate liar and fantasist. The other star prosecution witness was Norman Scott. Again, Carman destroyed his credibility by giving the impression that he was nothing but a vindictive sponger, a tearful whinger who was angry at being discarded by Thorpe. As the defence team did in the 2014 Shrien Dewani murder trial in South Africa, Carman, very early on, astutely conceded that Thorpe had homosexual 'tendencies', thus denying to the prosecution the chance to bring forward, day after day, damaging evidence to 'prove' those tendencies in detail.

The trial judge, Mr Justice Cantley, subsequently came in for much criticism. He was accused of repeated bias in favour of Thorpe throughout the lengthy trial. Peter Cook, for example, playing the judge for a satirical TV comedy, told the jury that 'the time has come for you to retire to consider your Not Guilty verdict.' But the Crown's case was always a weak one, resting on little real evidence and relying too heavily on the testimony of just two main witnesses, whom Carman was able, very quickly, to discredit. The acquittal, when it came, was an immense relief to Thorpe – but the damage it did to his political career was devastating and irreversible. It also contributed to a long and very cruel decline in his health which ultimately caused his sad death on 4 December 2014.

Although he had strong homosexual feelings throughout most of his life, Thorpe married twice, first in 1968 to Caroline Allpass. They had one son, Rupert, who was born in the same year, but Caroline died

#### **REMEMBERING JEREMY THORPE**

in 1970 as a result of a dreadful car accident. Thorpe married again in 1973, to Marion, Countess of Harewood, who had divorced the Queen's cousin, the Seventh Earl of Harewood, in 1967 on the grounds of his adultery. Humiliated by the publicity of Harewood's adultery and the subsequent divorce, Marion disliked the sense that she was 'on the shelf' and resolved to marry again if the chance arose. When Thorpe, with his taste in classical music, was first introduced to her by Moura Lympany, at a concert in 1972, it was only a matter of time before they married.

When Marion became Thorpe's second wife in 1973, she was a very rich woman as a result of a generous divorce settlement. She had a substantial income and some large capital sums, and Harewood also gave her a grand and spacious central London house in Orme Square, full of quality furniture, some of it of museum standard, along with some excellent pictures. In order to meet the defence costs of the trial, however, a large amount of her money went on Thorpe's legal bills, but they continued to live in Orme Square and in Devon. There were no children from this marriage, but it was a long and happy one, ending only with Marion's death on 6 March 2014.

Ronald Porter was a Good Food Spy for 'What's On' for over twenty years, and has written book reviews for Political Quarterly, articles for the Conservative History Journal and numerous obituaries for The Independent. He is currently researching the life and times of Jeremy and Marion Thorpe for a talk at the National Liberal Club.

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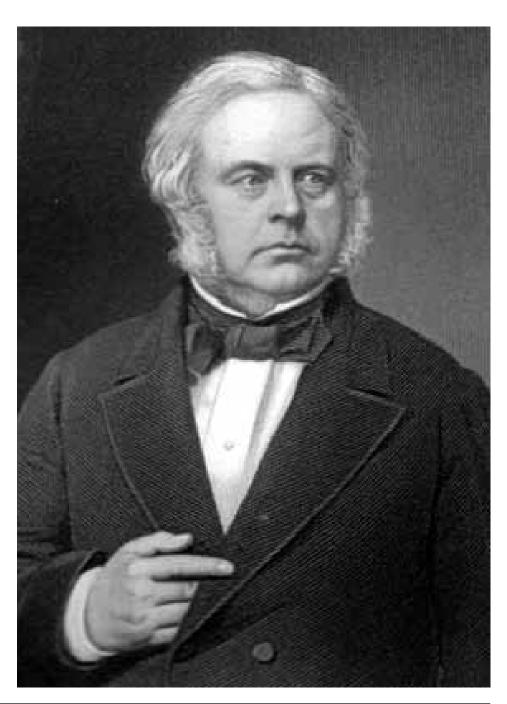
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# **TRUE TO HIS** JOHN BRIGHT, LIBERALISM AND

In his 2012 biography, Bill Cash suggests that John Bright's behaviour during the home rule crisis of 1886 revealed him to have become a Conservative by the end of his life. Cash's reasoning was that Bright had, by 1886, become more concerned with preserving the rule of law and the unity of Great Britain than with the abstract concepts of 'freedom and liberty' that had dominated his political philosophy in his earlier career.<sup>1</sup> Ian Cawood examines Cash's claims and concludes that, to the contrary, Bright remained the epitome of radical Victorian Liberalism to the end of his life.



## **PRINCIPLES'?** IRISH HOME RULE 1886 – 1889

F COURSE, BRIGHT Was famously poor at explaining his actions over the home rule debate, rarely speaking in public during these years and seldom visiting Birmingham, where his constituency was located. In this way, he allowed others, most notably Joseph Chamberlain and the nascent Liberal Unionist Association, to present his behaviour in ways that benefitted their agenda. Cash, in what is otherwise a very good biography, has, however, perhaps not placed Bright's opposition in the broadest possible context of contemporary Liberal attitudes towards the idea of home rule. Bright's position on Ireland was much the same as that of Millicent Fawcett, T. H. Huxley, Herbert Spencer, Leonard Courtney and Sir John Lubbock, none of whom, even after 1886, could be safely categorised as 'Conservative'. In contrast to Cash, who interprets Bright as shifting his position in 1886, Robert Walling, who edited Bright's diaries, regards him as 'a Unionist by absolute and lifelong conviction.'2

Bright had long taken an interest in Ireland and had visited the country in 1832, 1849 and again in 1852 in order to see for himself the condition of the country, finding there conditions that 'move the hardest heart'. As the Fenian disorders of the 1860s spread he returned to Ireland twice and reported to the House of Commons in 1866 that Ireland was the only part of the United Kingdom to have become poorer since becoming part of the United Kingdom. Perhaps unsurprisingly given his radical Quaker background, Bright blamed Ireland's condition on the power of the established Anglican church and the wealth of the absentee Irish landlords. Bright had contributed to the eradication of the first of these problems when the Irish Church was disestablished in 1869, but the land problem remained intractable. Bright personally believed that the landed estates should be broken up, stating that he 'would give Ireland to the Irish.' He was however, not sure that the landlords could or should be bought out, and favoured the idea of building up the Irish small landowners with the compulsory purchase of land from corporations or of private land capable of cultivation, but left to waste after the depopulation of Ireland in the 1860s. Bright, together with his political mentor, Richard Cobden, believed that Ireland needed such state intervention in order to create the crucial feature for a stable and workable political system, a strong middle class.<sup>3</sup> Even before 1886, Bright favoured policies that cannot be reconciled with either historical or with present-day Conservatism.

Bright had been disappointed by the 1870 Irish Land Act, as it had failed to create an Irish class of small landowners, but he had been increasingly concerned by the willingness of the Irish Nationalist leaders to endorse (or, at least, fail to condemn) the violence and intimidation of the Irish Land League. He endorsed the 1881 Land Act with its guarantees of fair rent, fixity of tenure and free sale, but as he did so, he lectured the

John Bright (1811-89) Nationalists in the Commons that they would win much greater support if they confined themselves to purely peaceful, constitutional lobbying, which Cobden and Bright had pioneered with the Anti-Corn Law League between 1838 and 1846. He persisted in referring to the Nationalists as 'rebels' and he attacked the Conservatives for flirting with Charles Stuart Parnell between 1883 and 1886. His dislike of Parnell's character and his impractical and foolish solutions to the Irish problem (in Bright's eyes) would be a decisive factor when the issue was forced to the front of the political agenda in 1886.

While Bright's position on land reform was crystal clear, his attitude towards Irish demands for political autonomy was far more opaque. In 1868 he condemned the means whereby 'the extinction of the Irish Parliament' in 1800 was achieved as 'force and fraud and corruption' but, in the same speech, he claimed that he much preferred to find the policies whereby Westminster could render 'Ireland content to be a portion of a greater nation.<sup>4</sup> In the same year, he described the political condition of Ireland as 'anarchy, which is subdued by force' but was noncommittal on the solution to this problem.5 When he was named as a supporter of home rule by nationalists in 1872, he actively demurred, issuing a public denial in which he condemned the idea of 'two legislative assemblies in the United Kingdom' as 'an intolerable mischief.' This was a rejection of the federal solution for the United Kingdom,

rather than mere anti-Irish prejudice, however. Although Bright shared Gladstone's desire to reform Westminster, where the Nationalists carried out a policy of obstruction which disrupted his second administration between 1880 and 1885, Bright preferred to retain the issue within the institution.<sup>6</sup> Although seriously tempted by the idea of excluding the Irish members from Westminster, in July 1886, he suggested that a special 'Committee For Ireland' should be formed of the Irish MPs, which would be given the role normally reserved for the whole house, of approving or rejecting the second reading of any Irish bill. For Bright, the advantage of such a scheme would be that:

You get the absolute control of the Irish members in their own chamber at Westminster to arrange the clauses of [a] bill ... would shape it exactly as they liked, and then it would be submitted to the whole Parliament ... [who] would be willing ... to defer to the opinions of the Irish Committee, and to accept the measures they had discussed and agreed upon.<sup>7</sup>

Like many Liberals, John Bright was therefore horrified when William Gladstone, after falling seventeen seats short of a majority in the December 1885 general election, announced his conversion to the principle of Irish home rule, without any consultation with his colleagues or party. Bright, in common with others in his party, favoured some limited measure of local government in Ireland, in much the same way that they wanted rural England to be controlled by elected councils. Bright had discussed a scheme of 'County Councils for Ireland' with Lord Dalhousie in autumn 1885, an idea not dissimilar to Joseph Chamberlain's 'Central Board' scheme.<sup>8</sup> Bright also regarded Gladstone's Land Law (Ireland) Act of 1881 as having provided suitable protection for the Irish tenant farmers and was reluctant to buy out the landlords as proposed in the Land Bill that would accompany the Government of Ireland Act. This would, he felt, compensate those Irish landlords who had ultimately caused the tensions in Ireland with the money of

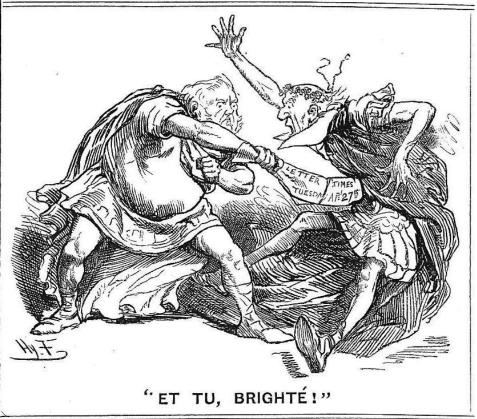
the struggling British taxpayer. When Gladstone announced precisely this on 16 June 1886, Bright noted in his diary, 'scheme, in my judgement, not a wise one.'9 He was, however, far more alarmed by the Irish Government Bill, which did exclude the Irish members, but insisted that Ireland should continue to pay  $\pounds 4.5$  million to cover customs, bureaucracy and defence. As the Irish would have no MPs in Westminster to scrutinise how this money was spent, this violated the Liberal commitment that there should never be 'taxation without representation.' Furthermore, the Irish were to have a parliament in Dublin, not merely a council, which, Bright told Gladstone to his face, was 'surrender all along the line' to what he termed 'the Rebel Party', who had used violence and intimidation to gain political representation.10

Although Bright disliked both Bills for consistently Liberal reasons, Gladstone's lack of consideration for the stated principles of his own party was probably crucial in provoking Bright to join the Unionist rebellion. As he wrote to William Caine, a fellow radical, 'what will be the value of a party when its whole power is laid at the

Fig 1. 'Et tu, Brighté!' *Punch*, 1 May 1886

disposal of a leader from whose authority no appeal is allowed?' This dislike of Gladstone's perceived dictatorial tendencies united the leader of the moderate Unionists, Lord Hartington, with the leader of the radical Unionists, Joseph Chamberlain. The authoritarian approach which Gladstone appeared to be taking to the Irish question was regarded by many, such as Bright, as contradicting the founding principle of the Liberal Party: to protect the right of individuals to hold firm to their principles.<sup>12</sup> A Liberal was distinguished, according to Andrew Reid, by his 'love of his own conscience more than the approval of the conscience of the people' and Gladstone's capitulation to the demands of Nationalist Ireland led many to reject their revered leader.13 Bright therefore opposed the Home Rule Bills, not merely for their content, but for the manner of their adoption.

At first Bright attempted to refrain from committing himself in the home rule debate. When contacted by the former Attorney General, Henry James, he refused to join the Liberal Unionist Committee being organised by George Goschen.<sup>14</sup> In his election address to his constituents in 1885, Bright had



I and interest





not mentioned the Irish Question at all. When asked to offer support for Hartington when he faced his own constituents at Rawtenstall, Bright did write a letter which was reprinted in *The Times* and which was subsequently widely quoted by opponents of the Home Rule Bills (see fig. 1). Bright described Hartington's opposition to the Home Rule Bills as 'consistent and courageous'. And further, he stated that the recent election had not been fought on the issue:

It would be a calamity for this country if measures of this transcendent magnitude were to be accepted on the authority of a leader of a party ... to accept this system would be to betray the value [of constituencies] in the working of representative institutions.<sup>15</sup>

Bright himself had not even mentioned the issue of Irish Home Rule in his election address in 1885.<sup>16</sup>

Although Bright played no direct role in the desperate lobbying that took place as the rival leaders of the Liberal Party fought to secure their preferred outcome for the Irish Home Rule Bills, he inadvertently influenced the final Fig. 2. 'Johnny and Joey: or, the friend in need' (*Punch*, 12 June 1886)

Fig. 3. Gladstone defeated on the first Home Rule Bill (*St Stephen's Review*, 12 June 1886) outcome. While most of the more moderate Liberals supported the Whig leader, Hartington, the position of the radical faction, who looked to Joseph Chamberlain for guidance, was the crucial factor in the result in the Commons lobby. Although many radicals regarded home rule as a distraction from the 'unauthorised programme' of social reform that they had endorsed in 1885, the idea of joining forces with the Whigs, the moderates and, worst of all, the Tories, had made many radicals waver in their opposition to the bills.

When a meeting of fifty-two radical Unionist MPs was held on 31 May at committee room 15 in the Palace of Westminster, Joseph Chamberlain resorted to a desperate stratagem in order to stem the haemorrhage of his supporters which had begun once Gladstone had announced his willingness to delay the third reading of the Home Rule Bills.<sup>17</sup> In order to retain his credibility with the radicals in the audience, Chamberlain implied that personally he would prefer to abstain on the vote and claimed that he would simply follow whatever choice the meeting made. But he had, on William Caine's advice, written to Bright, imploring him

to attend the meeting. Bright had refused, stating that 'I am not willing to take the responsibility of advising others as to their course' but he sent a letter stating his position.<sup>18</sup> As Chamberlain's lieutenant, Joseph Powell Williams commented, 'Old Bright's letter is queer but full of usefulness from what it implies.'19 Therefore although Bright clearly did not want the letter to be used in this fashion, Chamberlain then proceeded to read out Bright's letter, with its unequivocal decision to vote against the second reading, to the meeting.<sup>20</sup> Chamberlain suddenly announced he would vote against the bill and those at the meeting opposed to the bill then voted by forty-eight to four against merely abstaining.21 Caine made sure that the press received the version of the meeting that stressed Chamberlain's (and his) reluctance to take such a step: 'We did our best ... to induce them to abstain

... If we could have got thirty who would pledge themselves to abstain we were prepared to have recommended that course, but we could not.<sup>22</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Bright was alarmed that his letter had been used in a fashion that virtually guaranteed the defeat of the Home

#### 'TRUE TO HIS PRINCIPLES'? JOHN BRIGHT, LIBERALISM AND IRISH HOME RULE 1886 – 1889

Rule Bill. He wrote to Chamberlain the next day.

If I had thought I should do harm, I should have said something more or less. Even now, if it is not too late, I could join you in abstaining if we could save the House and country from a dissolution which may for the Liberal party turn out a catastrophe the magnitude of which cannot be measured.<sup>23</sup>

Of course, Chamberlain had managed to hang onto his radical credentials through his misuse of Bright's letter and so had no intention of meeting with the old radical at this stage (fig. 2). Parnell, for one, was not however fooled by Chamberlain's public protestations and careful management of his opposition. On seeing Chamberlain after the bill's defeat by thirty votes, Parnell remarked, 'there goes the man who killed Home Rule.<sup>24</sup> Gladstone, too, realised that the events in committee room 15 had condemned his bill,<sup>25</sup> but the press saw it rather differently (fig. 3).

If Bright was actually far less sure of his opposition to the Home Rule Bill, his mind was made up by the decision of Gladstone to dissolve the House after the defeat on the second reading on 8 June. Bright knew that the split over the issue of home rule would become unbridgeable once Gladstonians and Liberal Unionists were forced to compete against one another on the hustings. When the opportunity to state his opinions to his electors came on 24 June 1886, Bright gave an address in central Birmingham, in which he stated that 'the experience of the past three months does not increase my confidence in the wisdom of [Gladstone's] Administration or of their policy with respect to the future government of Ireland.' He went on to stress that he opposed home rule on strictly Liberal lines, quoting the famous letter he had written in 1872. He concluded:

I cannot trust the peace and interests of Ireland, north and south, to the Irish Parliamentary Party.

And he stressed the position of the Protestants of Ireland in a devolved Irish state:

#### Right:

Fig 4. [Signs above the figures read: 'Dixon: very easy-natured, so anything for a quiet life'; 'Bright: aged, grumpy!'; 'J.C.: uncertain temper, just divorced!'] (The Dart, 2 July 1886)

Fig 5. 'A dumb dog (Mr BRIGHT has not addressed his constituents for more than twelve months.)' (*The Dart* 25 February 1887) At least 2 millions of [the Irish people] are as loyal as the population of your town, and I will be no party to a measure which will thrust them from the generosity and justice of the United and Imperial Parliament.<sup>26</sup>

In early July, Bright made a further contribution to the radical rebellion against Gladstone that was spreading across Lancashire, Cornwall, East Anglia, Scotland and the West Midlands. In a speech at Birmingham Town Hall, he claimed that the Irish lacked the political maturity which the northern English working class had demonstrated during the 'cotton famine' of the 1860s.

They [the Irish supporters of home rule] are less instructed, they are less politically informed, they are less wealthy, they are less industrious ... and they have the disadvantage of the sad, the melancholy and the wicked teaching of this conspiracy during the last six or seven years.<sup>27</sup>

Unlike the Conservatives, radical Unionists like Bright believed that a nuanced combination of coercion and reform (chiefly land purchase) could improve the Irish character so that some degree of selfgovernment would be possible in the distant future. But they shared a dislike of the Nationalists and their anti-English supporters in the United States.

Of course, many Liberal Unionists differentiated between the humble Irish cottager and the Fenian terrorist. Since 1882 and the murder of Cavendish and Burke in Phoenix Park and the Maamtrasna massacre, many Liberals had accepted that there must be no concessions to violence and threats of disorder, otherwise the rule of law itself might be in jeopardy. As George Trevelyan had put it in 1883, when Chief Secretary for Ireland, if British rule was abandoned in Ireland, 'we should have a mutual massacre.<sup>28</sup> There was also the belief that there was no strong popular support for the 'land war' despite Gladstone and the Nationalists' claims, as only 2–4% of the tenant farmers joined the 'Plan of Campaign.' It was also widely believed that intimidation and

corruption explained the massive Nationalist majorities in rural Ireland of 1885.<sup>29</sup>

Such was Bright's influence over the electorate, not least among Nonconformist voters in and around Birmingham, that Gladstone wrote a letter rebutting Bright's charges which was published in The Times the day after Bright's speech was reported.30 Bright replied more in sadness than in anger, describing Gladstone's behaviour as 'a puzzle' and protesting, rather disingenuously, that 'I have not urged any man in Parliament, or out of it, to vote against you.'31 His reply to a correspondent later in the month could hardly be misinterpreted, though:

The concessions to and the liberal and, I hope, the wise legislation for Ireland by the united Parliament since the year 1866 are enough to convince any reasonable man that the interests of the United Kingdom may be left to the Parliament of Westminster.<sup>32</sup>

In the general election, all the Liberal seats in Birmingham became Unionist and Bright's influence was recognised by George Dixon, when he was questioned by the philosopher Henry Sidgwick:

I asked for an explanation of the Unionist phalanx in Birmingham ... He [Dixon] thought it was half an accident, the party was really divided here as elsewhere, just below the top, but that Bright and Chamberlain and himself ... happened to coincide on this question; and they, I gathered were the three recognised leaders. Bright by being the old time-honoured, political chief; Chamberlain the established 'boss' in the industrial action of the municipality and Dixon the educational boss.'33 (fig. 4)

Unlike most other Liberal caucuses, the Birmingham Liberal Association endorsed the Unionists' position and they fought the general election with the full support of the local party apparatus. This meant that Chamberlain, Bright and the other Unionist radicals did not have to rely on the grudging assistance of the Conservatives, which was

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demanded after W. H. Smith and Lord Hartington verbally agreed an electoral 'compact'. Elsewhere in the election of 1886, at least 800,000 working class Liberal voters, faced with the choice between Bright and Gladstone, abstained and handed victory to the antithesis of both men, the Hotel Cecil.<sup>34</sup>

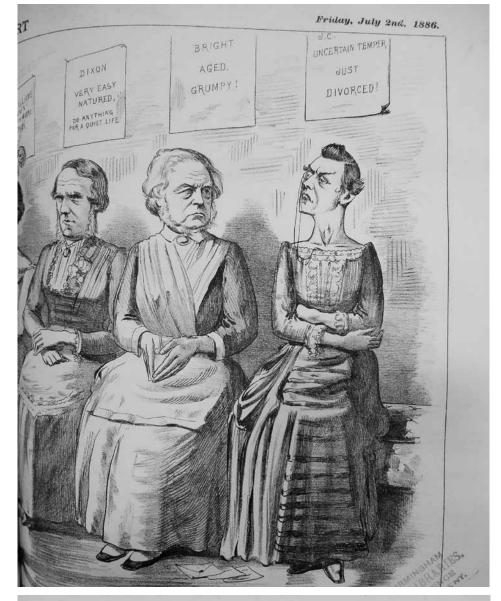
After the dust had settled, the Liberal Unionists took the decision not to sit with the Tory government, so Bright and Chamberlain sat alongside Gladstone and Morley on the opposition benches. This was a deliberate statement by the new party that they, not the 'separatists' (as The Times now called the Gladstonian Liberals), were the true inheritors of the legacy of Mill, Seeley and Green. Alexander Craig Sellar urged Hartington not to associate with W. H. Smith and Arthur Balfour, referring to the Liberal Unionists as 'the true church of Liberalism.'35 Colonel Hozier, the first secretary of the Liberal Unionist Association, expressed this attitude more fully when he addressed the West of Scotland Liberal Unionist Association in October 1886.

They were not dissenters, they were the True Church. He claimed that they held those noble Liberal principles that had been handed down from generation to generation of Liberals to all Liberal statesmen since the great Reform Act.<sup>36</sup>

As early as December 1885, Edward Watkin had claimed that home rule was a perversion of 'true Liberalism'.<sup>37</sup> William Cartwright, campaigning in Northamptonshire had denied being 'a seceder from my political principles'.<sup>38</sup> Edward Heneage had expressed the sentiment most fully, writing to his agent in January 1887:

I deny that we are Dissentient Liberals; we are consistent Liberals and Unionists; the others are Radicals and Home Rulers who dissent on every part of the Bills among themselves and include Unionists like Herschell and Rosebery and Separatists like Parnell and Labouchere in their ranks.<sup>39</sup>

Bright also offered his support at a crucial test for the new Liberal





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Unionist Party over the issue of the Arthur Balfour's Crimes Bill which reintroduced coercion to Ireland in 1887. He wrote to the party's chief whip, Lord Wolmer, that he did so on the grounds that 'Mr Gladstone ought to have suppressed the Land League five years ago.<sup>40</sup> For many radical Unionists, such as Arthur Winterbotham, coercion was too much to bear and they returned, reluctantly, to Gladstone's party. Bright's presence in the government lobby in 1887 was probably crucial in retaining the support of the bulk of the radicals and in keeping the Liberal Unionists united. For them, coercion was necessary, as it was 'paving the way for the introduction of remedial measures [including] very wide measure of self-government.<sup>41</sup> By clearing this hurdle, Bright had significantly assisted the Liberal Unionists in taking the first steps towards forming a formal party with central structures and local organisations which would survive until the Liberal Unionists eventually coalesced with the Conservatives in May 1912.

With the issue of coercion successfully resolved, and the Conservative minority government firmly backed by all branches of Liberal Unionism, Bright retreated back into 'sorrowful silence' at One Ash, Rochdale – his quietude remarked on by the Birmingham satirical journal, The Dart (fig. 5). Bright's main significance between 1886 and 1889 was as a symbol, shamelessly paraded by Unionists for propaganda purposes in the first age of mass visual political campaigning (fig. 6). That many Conservatives, including Lord Salisbury, personally opposed Bright's views, especially on free trade, was a frequent subject in Liberal periodicals in this period, as the two branches of Liberalism fought to claim his inheritance (fig. 7). The Nonconformist Unionist Association appointed Bright its honorary president, without even consulting him. Bright, reluctant to work with the party in any fashion, was unable to prevent his name being splashed across the party's literature (a party poster was made up with his face and that of the popular Baptist speaker Charles Spurgeon).42 Such was his status among Liberals, despite the caesura of 1886, that Gladstone made it clear that he sought no quarrel with Bright and stated in 1888 that the Liberals would not contest Central Birmingham in the event of a general

Fig. 6. Prominent Liberal Unionists (*The Graphic*, 15 January 1887)

Fig. 7. 'The New Flag. John Bright: "And that's the rag I'm obliged to fight under! Shade of Cobden, that I should have come to this!" (*The Dart*, 2 December 1887) election (fig. 8). When Bright died in 1889, the *Liberal Unionist* newspaper was printed with a black border on its front page.<sup>43</sup>

Apart from the propaganda value of his name, which continued to be exploited until the twentieth century, Bright's immediate legacy to the Liberal Unionist Party was the dispute which broke out over the vacancy in the seat of Central Birmingham. Joseph Chamberlain claimed that the seat should be given to another Liberal Unionist, under the terms of the electoral 'compact' between the Liberal Unionists and the Conservatives. The local Conservatives, bitter enemies of the radical Chamberlain in both local and national affairs, had long eyed the seat for themselves (fig. 9). When Bright died, they attempted to bring forward their own candidate by interesting the maverick Lord Randolph Churchill in the constituency (fig. 10). The leaders of the Conservative Party wanted, at all costs, to avoid rival candidates splitting the Unionist vote, so called the local Tories to heel and Albert Bright, John Bright's son was allowed to contest the seat, which he won with a comfortable majority.44 Hartington and Salisbury took this as

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a warning and finally committed the Conservative–Liberal Unionist 'compact' to paper, which probably contributed to the long-term survival of the Unionist alliance.45

Bright was a liberal in his economics, a radical in his religious views and a defender of democratic principles. For him, as for so many other Victorians, this was not, however, incompatible with a deep patriotism which was offended by what he saw as Gladstone's surrender to the forces of corruption, bigotry and violence in 1886. As he put it in a private letter to the GOM at the height of the home rule crisis:

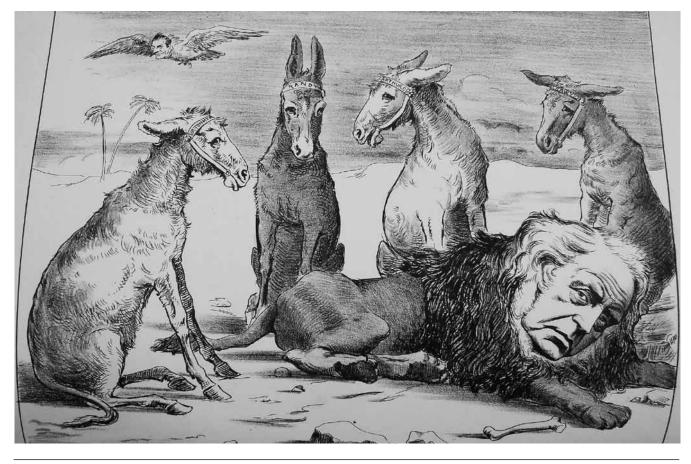
[A home rule parliament for Ireland] will be composed in effect of the men who for six years past have insulted the Queen, have torn down the national flag, have declared your lord lieutenant guilty of deliberate murder, and have made the imperial parliament totally unable to manage the legislative business.46

Although in hindsight, Bright's stance on Home Rule may look like the reactionary behaviour of an old man, I would argue that if examined in context, it remained entirely consistent with his

Fig. 8. 'A tough job. Trying to fell the tree of Birmingham Unionism (or Dis-Unionism?)' (The Dart, 9 November 1888

Fig. 9. 'Waiting for his skin!' (The Dart, 15 June 1888)





#### 'TRUE TO HIS PRINCIPLES'? JOHN BRIGHT, LIBERALISM AND IRISH HOME RULE 1886 - 1889



strong-held commitment to democratic principles. His obituary in the *Liberal Unionist* reveals the influence of his position on Liberals of all hues, from the Whiggest moderate to the committed radical:

The fact that the 'Tribune of the People' was utterly and unflinchingly opposed to the recent Irish policy of Mr Gladstone is in itself proof positive that such opposition was not the mere outcome of Tory prejudice. He was foremost amongst the advocates of full justice to Ireland, but on the question of the Union, he remained true to his principles.<sup>47</sup>

John Bright, along with the rest of the Liberal Unionist Party, remained a passionate champion of free trade, despite his association with the protectionist Tories. He remained committed, as did Chamberlain and the other radical Unionists, to the disestablishment of the state church, to the avoidance of unnecessary foreign entanglements and to financial retrenchment. He continued to champion the equal rights and opportunities of all denominations, classes and ethnic groups, whether those were Wesleyans in Cornwall, Presbyterians in Belfast or Catholics in Glasgow.48 In practice, as in political

manoeuvring, it was Bright's unique position as conscience of the nation that fatally undermined Gladstone's efforts to stir the liberals of Britain to support him in his attempt to settle the Irish question (fig. 11). That Bright's unforeseen legacy was that he taught the Conservatives how to successfully colonise the centre ground of British politics, while the Liberal Unionist leaders systematically betrayed all of his principles once he was dead, was not his fault. The unscrupulous and unprincipled actions of Joseph Chamberlain between 1895 and 1906 should not allow presentday commentators to claim Bright, even at the end of his life, as anything other than the epitome of radical Victorian Liberalism.

Ian Cawood is head of history at Newman University in Birmingham and author of The Liberal Unionist Party, 1886–1912: A History (I.B. Tauris, 2012), which was shortlisted for the Total Politics Political History Book of the Year and described by Vernon Bogdanor in the TLS as 'one of the most important works on the politics of the late Victorian era to have appeared in recent years'.

- B. Cash, John Bright: Statesman, Orator, Agitator (London, 2011), p. 280.
- R. A. J. Walling (ed.), The Diaries of

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Fig 10.'An exhibition match; between the Brummagem bruiser and the Paddington pet' (*Punch*, 4 May 1889)

Fig. 11. 'John Bright cutting down the Gladstonian oak' (*Moonshine*, c.June 1886, reproduced in *Review* of *Reviews*, September 1898) John Bright (London, 1930), p. 95.

- 3 D. Read, Cobden and Bright: A Victorian Political Partnership (London, 1967), pp. 191–5.
- 4 Bright speaking at Birmingham, 4 Feb. 1868. Quoted in W. Robertson, *The Life and Times of the Right Hon. John Bright*, vol. 3 (London, 1884), pp. 69–70.
- 5 Bright speaking in the House of Commons, I Apr. 1868. J. E. Thorold Rodgers (ed.), Speeches on Questions of Public Policy by John Bright MP, vol. I (London, 1868), p. 428.
- 6 Walling (ed.), *Diaries*, p. 535.
- 7 Bright speaking in Birmingham, 1 July 1886. *Birmingham Daily Post*, 2 July 1886.
- 8 Walling (ed.), Diaries, p. 96; C. H. D. Howard, 'Joseph Chamberlain, Parnell and the Irish "Central Board" Scheme, 1884–5', Irish Historical Studies, 32 (1953), pp. 324–361.
- 9 Ibid., p. 540.
- 10 Ibid., p. 536.
- II Bright to Caine, 22 June 1886; J. Newton, W. S. Caine, M.P. (London, 1907), p. 167.
- T. A. Jenkins, *The Liberal Ascendancy* 1830–1886 (Basingstoke, 1994), p. 215.
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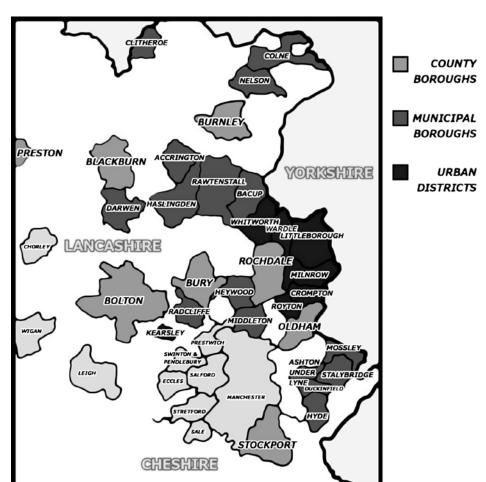
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# THE STRANG OF LIBERAL

The story of the decline of the Liberal Party after 1918 is well known. With the rise of class politics the Liberals were squeezed between the advance of Labour and the exodus of the middle classes to the Tories. Liberalism disintegrated in industrial and urban Britain and was pushed back to rural enclaves in the 'Celtic fringe', where it held on precariously until the 1960s when, reinvented by Jo Grimond as a radical alternative to Labour, the party spread back into the suburbs.

#### Jaime Reynolds

examines one exception to this story: the resilience of the Liberal Party in the Lancashire cotton districts between the 1920s and the 1970s.



The survival of the Liberals as a significant local force in the Lancashire and Yorkshire textile districts throughout this period is a striking exception to this general picture. The party's decline here was slower than in other parts of urban Britain with the result that by the mid-1950s over two-thirds of the Liberals' remaining local government representation came from the region.' The persistence of this Pennine outpost of Liberalism is conventionally attributed to the strength of Nonconformity and the Liberals' collusion with the Conservatives in anti-Labour pacts. Thus Peter Clarke has lamented that after 1914 the Liberals could win elections there only on the basis of 'a sort of Nonconformist bastard Toryism'.<sup>2</sup> This does not do justice to the continuing vigour of

# **E SURVIVAL ANCASHIRE**

Pennine Radicalism which, at least until 1945 and in some places later, amounted to a third force in the politics of the northern industrial heartland. It continued to play a prominent part in the political leadership of the region and remained deeply embedded in the local social and economic structure. It articulated a distinctive political outlook that influenced the development of all three major parties.

The academic literature on Lancashire Liberalism that is so rich for the period before 1914 - notably Clarke's seminal Lancashire and the New Liberalism<sup>3</sup> – is almost totally lacking for the period after the First World War. In the dominant class-based left-right interpretation, the Liberals are dismissed as an irrelevant and outmoded relic of the past. Far more has been written about tiny and electorally insignificant groups on the political extremes. Even Liberal historians have generally confined their interest to the intellectual influence on the national party of a few prominent northern intellectuals such as Ernest Simon, Ramsay Muir and Elliot Dodds, ignoring the significance of the resilient Liberal grassroots in the mill towns. But in order to understand properly the nature of the party in the years of decline it is essential to understand more about its social and economic underpinning and the story of the many hundreds of local activists who sustained it in its northern redoubt.

This article is intended as a corrective to this neglect. It makes use particularly of the increasing availability of digital sources<sup>4</sup> on local history to map the main contours and character of the Liberal stronghold in the Lancashire cotton districts. For reasons of space, other parts of Lancashire including most of the Manchester conurbation as well as the West Riding of Yorkshire are not covered in detail. Future articles will look at these areas in depth. The time span examined is from the end of the First World War until the reorganisation of local government in 1974.

#### **Electoral trends in Lancashire**

In parliamentary general elections – apart from a couple of blips in the 1920s – at national level the Liberals declined steadily from their landslide victory in 1906, through a series of crashes at the general elections of 1918, 1924, 1931, 1935 and 1950, down to a low point in 1957 when they held just five seats at Westminster.

The parliamentary election figures for Lancashire paint the same picture. In 1906 the Liberals and their allies won fifty-four seats in the region to the Conservatives' sixteen. By December 1910 they had thirty-nine seats to the Tories' thirty-two.5 At the 1918 general election only nine Coalition and one Asquithian Liberal were returned. The Liberals' high-point after the First World War was 1923 when they won twenty-six seats in the region, but by 1929 they were down to six, and in 1931 only Herbert Samuel in Darwen and Graham White in Birkenhead East remained. Darwen was lost in 1935

The persistence of this Pennine outpost of Liberalism is conventionally attributed to the strength of Nonconformity and the Liberals' collusion with the Conservatives in anti-Labour pacts.

and thereafter the Liberals secured only isolated victories. White held his seat until 1945; Arthur Holt sat for Bolton West from 1951 to 1964 thanks to a pact with the Tories; Michael Winstanley represented Cheadle from 1966 to 1970; and Cyril Smith gained Rochdale at a by-election in 1972. The steady national decline to the 1950s was mirrored in the pattern of Liberal candidatures in the region and the falling average of votes they received.

Labour advanced in Lancashire in the same period. In 1906 it held a dozen seats, all of them in alliance with the Liberals. In 1918 Labour won fourteen seats, but only one of these was in new territory; it had held all the others at some time before 1918. By 1923 – the year of the first minority Labour government-Labour reached twentythree seats, still behind the Liberals. Their gains were concentrated in unionised working-class constituencies in Manchester, Salford and the South Lancashire heavy industrial belt. In 1929 they broke into previously Liberal textile areas such as Accrington, Mossley, Rochdale, Rossendale and Stalybridge & Hyde winning forty seats. However in the 1931 crisis election Labour collapsed to just five seats and recovered only to fifteen in 1935. These were essentially the core seats they had won in 1918 and before. Labour had to wait until the 1945 landslide to repeat and go beyond the point they had achieved in 1929, winning fifty-two seats, including a number in middle-class suburbs where the Liberals had

previously been strong.<sup>6</sup> Thus, far from being a relentless advance, Labour expansion was largely confined to its working-class unionised strongholds apart from the leap forward of 1929 which was soon reversed, and that of 1945 which marked a more permanent shift.

The Conservatives were by far the dominant party in Lancashire parliamentary elections, apart from 1906–10 and 1945. Even in bad years such as 1923 or 1929 they won more seats than either the Liberals or Labour.<sup>7</sup> In their good years, such as 1924 or 1935, their lead was overwhelming.<sup>8</sup> It was only in the early 1950s that Labour replaced them as the leading party in Lancashire.

At local government level, the trends were broadly similar. In Lancashire, as nationally, Labour's progress fluctuated. Its advances were in 1919, in the second half of the 1920s, the mid-1930s, and especially in 1945–6 and 1952–4 when Labour established majorities in many boroughs, which it maintained through to the later 1960s. In the intervening years it lost ground. The Conservatives made sweeping gains in 1967–9 followed by almost as sharp a swing back to Labour in 1970–2 when the last elections were held before local government reorganisation in 1974. (See Table 1.)

The Liberals - ignoring those who stood as Independents - held more than 20 per cent of seats through the 1920s and still held a seventh of the total at the end of the 1930s. Their decline accelerated after 1945 and into the early 1950s. There were some signs of revival even before Jo Grimond became leader in 1956, followed by more wins in 1957–8 and a surge in 1962–3 when sweeping gains were made at the expense of the Conservatives. These successes were reversed almost everywhere in Lancashire in the mid-1960s. In a few boroughs the Liberals benefited from the swing against Labour in the late 1960s, but in most places the party was heading in reverse at the beginning of the 1970s. By 1972 it was in a weaker overall position than fifteen years before.

#### Electoral patterns in the cotton districts

The data above cover the whole of Lancashire and hide the extent to which – apart from pockets of

Table 1: Percentage of Lancashire county borough and municipal borough seats held by party <sup>9</sup>					
	Liberal	Conservative	Labour	Other	
1921	28.2	48.4	16.0	7.3	
1929	21.0	40.6	29.0	9.4	
1938	14.1	41.0	27.7	17.2	
1947	9.0	44.2	37.7	9.1	
1957	6.1	39.5	50.6	3.8	
1963	11.9	31.7	52.2	4.3	
1972	5.7	38.0	54.0	2.3	

Table 2: Percentage of county borough and municipal borough seats held by party in cotton districts

alstricts				
	Liberal	Conservative	Labour	Other
1921	39.3	46.5	11.3	2.8
1929	32.4	41.8	21.8	4.1
1938	27.2	45.7	23.7	3.4
1947	17.2	42.6	37.3	2.9
1957	9.4	37.5	52.6	0.5
1963	16.2	27.2	54.7	1.9
1972	6.5	35.5	56.6	1.4

support in the seaside resorts of Southport and Blackpool-Liberal strength was concentrated in the cotton-manufacturing boroughs in the east and south of the county. If we home in on the traditional weaving towns of Burnley, Darwen, Accrington, Haslingden, Rawtenstall and Bacup, together with the traditional spinning towns of Bolton, Bury, Rochdale, Oldham, Stockport, Heywood, Middleton, Ashton under Lyne, Dukinfield, Hyde, Stalybridge and Mossley, this pattern is clear. (See Table 2.)

In this area the Liberals held more seats than Labour during the interwar period and as late as 1947 they still held more than a sixth of the total, slightly more than they managed at the height of the 1960s Liberal revival. Until the early 1950s Labour was considerably weaker here than in Lancashire as a whole, but thereafter somewhat stronger than in the wider region. Conversely the Tories were somewhat stronger here than in wider Lancashire before the Second World War but weaker afterwards. There were many fewer Independents here than in other districts.

Before 1945 Labour seems to have had greater difficulty making headway against an entrenched Liberal Party with a strong sense of identity or at the very least a reluctance to stand under other labels or to fuse into electoral coalitions with the Tories. The Conservatives were also relatively strong in this industrial area. The pattern shifted after 1945, with the Liberal relative strength becoming less marked and indeed negligible by the end of the period, the Conservatives losing their local advantage and Labour performing better than elsewhere in Lancashire to become the clear majority party in these districts from the 1950s.<sup>10</sup>

#### An electoral tour of the East Lancashire textile belt

(The figures in brackets after the towns give the population in 1931.) In the north there were the cotton weaving towns of Preston, Blackburn and Burnley surrounded by a number of smaller centres: Darwen, Accrington and the towns in Rossendale and the Clitheroe-Pendle Hills area. Preston (119,000)11 and Blackburn (123,000)12 were both fortresses of working-class Toryism where the Liberals were traditionally weak and the Labour Party secured an early foothold. Clitheroe (12,000) leaned towards the Conservatives but until 1918 it formed a single large constituency with the Radical towns of Nelson (38,000) and Colne (24,000). This was one of the first Labour seats, taken in 1902. The constituency was split in 1918: Clitheroe soon

returned to the Tories, and Nelson & Colne was solidly Labour.13 As in some Yorkshire Pennine towns, Nelson's Radicalism evolved into ethical socialism. The Independent Labour Party (ILP) was particularly strong there and from the late 1920s the town was dubbed a 'little Moscow' due to the large and militant Labour majority on the council right up to 1974.<sup>14</sup> Colne was more evenly balanced between Labour and the Conservatives. As the Liberals were weak or absent in these towns throughout the period,15 they have been excluded from the analysis in Table 2.

The other towns in the cotton-weaving district were Liberal strongholds. Davies and Morley conclude that there was no 'strange death' of Liberalism in inter-war Burnley (98,000). The Liberals were the first or second party on Burnley council throughout the interwar period with between 25 and 45 per cent of the seats. 'Liberalism ... enjoyed a recrudescence and consolidation of its position after 1918. It had a continuing local vibrancy down to 1934, Labour's year of triumph.' Even in 1938 the Liberals had twelve councillors to Labour's fourteen.16

In the neighbouring cotton towns the Liberals were a major force until the Second World War. In Accrington (43,000) they were the controlling party until 1929 and the largest party until 1945. In Darwen (36,000) they had an overall majority on the council until 1945. In the three boroughs of Rossendale the Liberals were the largest party: in Bacup (21,000) they had periods of overall control; they were nearly always the largest party in Rawtenstall (29,000); and in Haslingden (17,000) they vied for control with the Tories, holding the advantage in the 1920s, while the Tories had the edge in the 1930s.

In parliamentary elections the Liberals were most successful in Darwen, the seat of Herbert Samuel – the Liberal leader from 1931 until his defeat in 1935. Accrington also elected a Liberal/Constitutionalist in the 1920s. In Rossendale they ran the Conservatives close. Burnley was held by Labour from 1918 to 1931 but was represented by a Liberal National from 1931 to 1935.

After 1945, Bacup and Darwen were the main Liberal strongholds in the district. In Bacup they were Morley conclude that there was no 'strange death' of Liberalism in inter-war **Burnley.** The Liberals were the first or second party on Burnley council throughout the interwar period with between 25 and 45 per cent of the

seats.

**Davies and** 

the largest party until 1951 and sporadically up to 1962, with an overall majority in 1960-2. Thereafter their representation dwindled and the Conservatives supplanted them as the dominant party in the town in the later '60s and early '70s. In Darwen the pattern was the reverse: between 1945 and 1955 the Liberals lost all their seats on the council as the Conservatives secured a controlling majority, however from 1956 the Liberals recovered at Tory expense and they were often the largest party from 1965. The trend in Haslingden was similar to Bacup. The Liberals were the largest party at times in the 1950s, but they were displaced by the Conservatives after 1964. In Rawtenstall, a three-party balance survived until 1949 but the Liberals were for a time eliminated from the council by 1953 and Labour became the usual majority party. Accrington was also Labour dominated for most of the 1950s and '60s with only a small Liberal group surviving on the council. That leaves Burnley, also dominated by Labour from 1945 to 1967, where the Liberals remained the second largest party until 1949 but then collapsed to just two seats in 1956-7. They recovered a little ground in the following years before a stronger revival in 1967–70 when they shared with the Tories the spoils of Labour's decline. In 1969 they briefly equalled Labour's total of twelve seats, but by 1972 had slumped to three.

Moving further south we come to the Oldham-Rochdale-Bury cotton-spinning district, which also included the municipal boroughs of Radcliffe, Heywood and Middleton. Rochdale, Heywood, Middleton and Radcliffe followed a pattern of long-term, stable collaboration between Liberals and Conservatives. In Rochdale (91,000) from 1924 onwards the Liberals were the leading party on the council including periods when they held an overall majority (1925-33, 1936-7, 1947-50). The two parties were fiercely competitive in parliamentary elections.17 In Heywood (26,000) and Middleton (29,000) party politics were muted with Liberal-Conservative oligarchies in control for decades. However the parties merged only in Radcliffe where a 'Municipal Party' was formed in 1935 and

#### THE STRANGE SURVIVAL OF LIBERAL LANCASHIRE

continued to dominate the scene until the 1960s.<sup>18</sup> There was also a history of Liberal–Conservative cooperation in parliamentary elections in the Heywood & Radcliffe constituency. From 1922 to 1931 the MP was Colonel Abraham England, a right-wing Liberal who joined the Liberal Nationals in 1931. In Middleton some of the local Liberal establishment were also aligned with the Liberal Nationals.<sup>19</sup>

Bury (56,000) was a Tory bastion both before and after 1945. Nevertheless the Liberals equalled the Conservatives as the largest party on the council during the 1920s and again in 1933. They only fell decisively behind in 1937–8. Labour was weak and at the end of the 1930s still had only four seats (of fortyfour) on the council. After 1920, Lib-Con electoral collaboration was the norm, with a candidate of each party standing in the twomember wards. However there were occasional clashes between the two parties including a spate of contests in 1938 and after the war when the Liberal representation on the council was rapidly reduced from thirteen in 1938 to three by 1950.

In Oldham (140,000) the Liberals fought elections and formed a council majority in alliance with the Conservatives and until 1928 were the largest party. However this pact broke down in the late 1920s enabling Labour to take control briefly in 1934 by when the Liberals had been reduced to six seats (of 48) on the council. Oldham Liberals were split between Liberal Nationals such as Lady Emmott<sup>20</sup> and J. S. Dodd<sup>21</sup> and independent Liberal stalwarts such as James T. Middleton.<sup>22</sup> In 1935 Dodd was elected for the two-member borough as a Liberal National MP in harness with a Conservative, opposed by a Samuelite Liberal.<sup>23</sup> At local level it was denied that there was a Lib-Con pact<sup>24</sup> and indeed three-way contests were fairly common, but there were also clear cases in the later 1930s of mutual support allowing straight fights against Labour.25

By the 1950s the Liberals had been eliminated from Oldham council with their last seats surrendered undefended in 1950 and 1951. The party, led by James Middleton, continued to function but it did not fight local elections for

a time. In Bury the Liberals maintained a residual presence on the council thanks to their strength in Elton ward. In Radcliffe the Liberals vanished into the Municipal Party-there was no trace of them left when it broke up in 1962-3 and was replaced by the Conservatives. Middleton politics were transformed in the mid-1950s by the building of a large Manchester overspill estate in the town and the emergence of a disciplined and assertive Labour Party which pushed aside the Con-Lib elite whose pact continued for a few more years.26

In Rochdale the Liberals did not collapse after Labour's breakthrough in the early 1950s. They remained the second party on the council until 1970. The electoral agreement with the Conservatives continued, but was strained when Ludovic Kennedy came close to winning the 1958 by-election and 1959 general election just behind Labour in what had previously been a Conservative-held seat. In the 1960s, Liberal-versus-Conservative contests became increasingly common. At the end of the decade the Tories were the major beneficiary of the swing against Labour, and in the last years of the county borough's existence, as Labour recovered, the Liberals lost more than half of their council seats. At parliamentary level, however, Cyril Smith<sup>27</sup> recruited from Labour and gained the seat for the Liberals at a by-election in 1972. In Heywood the Liberal presence on the council was static in the late 1950s and early '60s and there was no weakening of the Lib-Con electoral understanding. The Liberals shared the benefit of the anti-Labour swing in the later 1960s, increasing from seven to twelve seats (of thirty-six), but falling back again as the pendulum swung to Labour at the beginning of the 1970s.

It is worth flagging that the Liberals also did well in some of the Urban Districts around Rochdale and Oldham, notably Royton (17,000) where they held control several times between 1946 and 1965, Saddleworth (13,000)<sup>28</sup> which they controlled in the early 1960s, and Crompton (15,000), Milnrow (9,000), Littleborough (12,000), Wardle (5,000) and Whitworth (8,000) where they frequently held a sizeable minority of the seats. In Rochdale the Liberals did not collapse after Labour's breakthrough in the early 1950s. They remained the second party on the council until 1970. Lib–Con competition was often keen in these districts.

Throughout the interwar period the Conservatives were the leading party in Bolton (177,000)29 and had an overall majority except in the years 1933-6. The Liberals generally had between 15 and 20 per cent of council members. Labour overtook the Liberals in 1925 and peaked in 1929. However it failed to get much beyond this point and indeed at the end of the 1930s fell back sharply with both the Tories and the Liberals gaining. Elections were frequently competitive but there was also cooperation between the Liberals and both the other parties. The Liberals were assertive in defending their position in their stronger wards and in the second half of the 1930s captured several Tory seats. The Labour breakthrough came in 1946 when they won control of the council for the first time. Many of the early postwar contests were three-way fights in which the Liberals were squeezed from nineteen seats down to six (of ninety-two) by 1947. Their only wins were in harness with Tories or by Thomas Connor,<sup>30</sup> a former Labour councillor who defected to the Liberals in 1938 and was to remain on the council until 1967. He managed to defend his Smithills seat against all comers. By the early 1950s the Liberals were down to two seats and local elections had become an almost exclusively Tory-Labour contest with control of the council changing hands frequently. This was in stark contrast with the parliamentary situation in Bolton where from 1951 the Conservatives entered a pact with the Liberals to share representation at Westminster. As a result Arthur Holt, a Liberal, was returned as MP for Bolton West from 1951 to 1964.<sup>31</sup> The Liberals began to make gains from both other parties from 1956 and by 1963 had eighteen council members. However the Liberal vote collapsed in the mid-1960s and by the end of the decade they had been eliminated from the council. Moving further south to the Lancashire-Cheshire border east of Manchester we come to the

Lancashire—Cheshire border east of Manchester we come to the county borough of Stockport, and the municipal boroughs of Ashton-under-Lyne, Dukinfield, Stalybridge, Hyde and Mossley. Until 1945 the Conservatives were strong in these boroughs with the Liberals in second place and Labour mostly a weak third. In Stockport (126,000)<sup>32</sup> the Liberals held about a quarter of the seats until 1929 and still held eleven (of seventy-two) in 1938 – one more than Labour. In the 1920s the Liberals were split between factions led by Henry Fildes (MP 1920-3), who inclined to cooperation with the Tories, and Charles Royle (MP 1923-4), closer to Labour. Royle joined the Labour Party in 1929 but the complex pattern of Con–Lib collaboration in some years and in some wards and competition in others, continued. From 1945 the Liberals were squeezed as elections became very polarised between Labour and Conservative. They surrendered their last seat in 1954 and ceased to fight local elections for a time. Labour dominated the borough for most of the 1950s and '60s. Ashtonunder-Lyne (52,000) was also strongly Conservative until 1945. Lib-Con collaboration broke down in the late 1920s and the Liberals were crushed in the ensuing hostilities. However the Liberals revived somewhat in the late 1930s in tacit alliance with Labour. This collaboration seems to have continued into the 1950s as Labour established control, enabling the Liberals to retain a foothold on the council.

In Dukinfield (46,000) the Liberals were the largest party as late as 1949, controlling the council in alliance with the Conservatives. After the Second World War, Labour gradually displaced the Liberals as the leading party and had a comfortable majority on the council from 1952 to 1966 during which time the Tories were almost always in third place. The Liberals dwindled from eight to ten seats (of twenty-four) in the 1940s down to four or five by the mid-1950s. Politics in Hyde (32,000) were more competitive. The Liberals and Conservatives continued to vie for control of the council until the mid-1930s with Labour as a very weak third party. The Liberals held an overall majority as late as 1928. In the second half of the 1930s the Conservatives established a firm grip and Labour gained ground at the expense of the Liberals, but there was little evidence of Liberal collaboration with the Tories. The Liberals lost their last council member in 1953. The last Liberals were opposed by both other parties. From 1949 to 1957 the Liberals ceased contesting local elections in Hyde, which swung over to Labour control as Conservative support steadily collapsed. Neighbouring Stalybridge (35,000) also leaned to the Conservatives, with the Liberals as the second party comfortably ahead of Labour. A Lib-Con deal was abandoned in 1928 though sporadic cooperation continued. The Liberals lost some ground but nevertheless on the eve of the Second World War still held ten (of thirtytwo) seats on the council. Post-1945 Stalybridge became a tight Con-Lab battleground and the Liberals were eradicated from the council by 1947.

The small borough of Mossley (12,000), tucked in the upper Tame valley in the foothills of the Pennines where Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire met. survived as a unique Liberal enclave as if untouched by modern two-party politics right up to the 1970s. There was fierce and evenly balanced rivalry between the Liberals and Conservatives with control of the council swinging between the two. Mossley remained more faithful to Liberalism than anywhere else in the UK with periods of Liberal control for most of the interwar years and in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, in some years as the only Liberal-controlled authority in the country. In 1953 the Manchester Guardian described the town 'the last stronghold of municipal Liberalism ... this uniquely wayward place - an industrial area with no Labour councillors where local elections are fought in terms of sewage works and secondary schools ...'.<sup>33</sup> Mossley's eccentricity extended to parliamentary politics too. The Mossley division (which extended well beyond the borough) was represented in the Commons for most of the interwar period by an Independent MP, Austin Hopkinson.

Within the boroughs there were some areas of extraordinary Liberal resilience and other districts where the party was eradicated for long periods. In Rochdale Spotland ward returned Liberals consistently at every election from the 1930s to the 1970s, while Central ward was very rarely contested during the same period and won only once in 1969. Future research – beyond the scope of this article – to analyse the socio-economic and other factors present in localities of Liberal strength – would be of great interest.

#### Why did Lancashire Liberalism persist?

The common reasons given for the survival of Pennine Radicalism – electoral pacts and religion – provide at most a partial explanation. They must be seen in the broader context of the political culture and community ties of the cotton towns as well as the ideological outlook of northern Liberalism which facilitated alliances with the Conservatives while remaining fiercely independent.

#### Pacts

Cooperation between the Liberals and Conservatives against Labour was widespread in the region and in some boroughs was clearly an important factor keeping Labour at bay and sustaining the Liberal presence on local councils.

Such pacts were common throughout Britain from the 1920s until the late 1950s when the national leadership of the party for the first time took decisive though not totally successful-steps to stamp them out.<sup>34</sup> In many areas they seem to have had the effect of hastening the disappearance of the Liberals rather than preserving them. In Merseyside, the South Lancashire industrial district and Manchester/Salford pacts did not prevent the near-complete elimination of Liberal councillors by 1945 if not earlier.

However in East Lancashire pacts seem to have reflected continuing Liberal strength rather than being the cause of it. In Burnley when pacts broke down it was the Tories who came off worse that the Liberals.<sup>35</sup> Some of the pacts were very advantageous to the Liberals in Rochdale for decades the Tories accepted third-party status on the council and in Bolton the Tories conceded one of the parliamentary seats to the Liberals. This apparent generosity reflected the widespread perception that Liberalism remained a potent if subdued force that the Conservatives needed to enlist in order to meet the Labour challenge. At election time commentators habitually noted the 'strong Liberal tradition' in such

Cooperation between the Liberals and **Conserva**tives against Labour was widespread in the region and in some boroughs was clearly an important factor keeping Labour at bay and sustaining the Liberal presence on local councils.

areas.<sup>36</sup> This may have involved bluffing or wishful thinking but no doubt it also indicated that in many communities what might be called the 'Liberal infrastructure' – including Liberal public figures, employers and opinion-leaders, clubs, friendly societies, Sunday schools, chapels and newspapers – remained intact. Pacts tended to collapse where Liberalism was broken and was ceasing to count. In much of East Lancashire this happened late or not at all.

Many of the pacts had the flavour of an armed truce between combatants with episodes of tension when one or other party tested the boundaries of the deal.<sup>37</sup> Deeper Lib-Con convergence was uncommon. Only in Radcliffe was a fused coalition, the Municipal Party, formed. The Liberal Nationals were not strong in the region and they took over the local party only in Burnley.<sup>38</sup> In Oldham, Bolton and Stockport, however, some prominent Liberals backed the Simonites, but they were in a minority. More often until the mid-1940s the situation was unclear: local associations seem to have remained affiliated to the Samuelite party while working closely with the Conservatives. Lib-Con competition occurred in many boroughs and in some, such as Ashton-under-Lyne, the Liberals even cooperated with Labour against the Tories. There are few examples of the Liberals being reduced to captives allowed to retain their seats only by 'grace and favour' of the Tories.39

It should be recalled that neither Liberals nor Conservatives could guarantee to deliver their vote to their partner in a pact. Evidence from the 1951 general election suggests that where a Liberal withdrew in the Lancashire textile constituencies the Liberal vote split about 60:40 in favour of the Conservatives, but in Rossendale, one of the most traditional Radical seats, the split was 50:50.<sup>40</sup>

#### Religion

The 'Radical belt' of East Lancashire and the area where Nonconformity was strongest in the region coincided and Nonconformity has long been regarded as a factor in the persistence of Liberalism in these districts. The powerful nineteenthcentury association of Liberalism and Dissent lived on here to some





extent in the first half of the twentieth century. Many of the Liberal elite were also active Nonconformists, whilst active Anglicans, Catholics, Jews and non-believers were less common. For example Arthur Worsley, who maintained an active regional Liberal organisation in the north-west for many years, was a Methodist lay preacher.<sup>41</sup> Nonconformity was clearly an important marker of Liberal support, but it was not the determinant of Liberal survival in the area.

The chapel was declining both as a religious force and Liberal prop in the interwar years. The decline was apparent well before 1914. Peter Clarke considers that by 1914 'Nonconformity ... was clearly no longer the dominant element in the [Liberal] party'.42 Although it occasionally surfaced in political controversy in the 1920s - over such issues as Sunday opening of cinemas for example – religion fell into the background as a party issue except in some parts of Liverpool, Bootle and Preston where sectarian (Catholic-Protestant) divisions still counted.

Nonconformists were a relatively small minority even in the hotspots of Liberalism in East Lancashire. In 1922 they accounted for less than 5 per cent in Stalybridge & Hyde and Mossley, less than 10 per cent in Rochdale and Heywood & Radcliffe and only just over 10 per cent in strongholds such as Darwen and Burnley. By far the highest proportion was in Rossendale, but even there it was less than 20 per cent.<sup>43</sup>

The Liberals no longer monopolised the Nonconformist vote. Many amongst the largest group, the Wesleyan Methodists, were inclining towards the Conservatives, while Labour was making inroads into the Baptists.44 Similarly, the Liberals were losing the support of Congregationalists both to the Tories and Labour. The limited evidence on voting behaviour indicates that only about one-third of Nonconformists who could vote in 1918 were Liberals and of those coming of age in 1918-35, not much more than a quarter were Liberals. This contrasted with 50–60 per cent allegiance to the Liberals among their fathers. Amongst Nonconformists coming of age in 1935-50, only 16 per cent were Liberals.45

These data may of course understate the wider social influence of the chapels and their role in mobilising the Liberal vote, but they show that Nonconformity lacked Left: Dame Sarah Lees (1842–1935): mill-owner, philanthropist, suffragist, Congregationalist, Liberal Mayor of Oldham 1910–11.

Right: John Percy Taylor (1868– 1945): mill-owner, Liberal leader in Bolton between the wars, Mayor 1934–35, Unitarian. the numbers to account for continuing mass support for the Liberals.

Rather Nonconformity should be viewed as an important reinforcing element in the local community culture and the broader ideological outlook that sustained Liberalism in many districts. This may well have been true in the nineteenth century too. Peter Joyce has argued that 'religion was part of a ritualised politics that had little to do with either politics or religion', stressing that it was essentially a badge representing allegiances to communities closely connected with places of work. In his view 'the conflict of church and chapel was itself an expression of allegiances formed at the level of the factory and its environment'. According to Joyce this 'culture of the factory' was the underlying determinant of party support and religious sectarianism (bearing in mind the low levels of working-class attendance at church and chapel) was more a matter of display.46

In towns such as Nelson where other community factors supporting Liberalism were relatively weak, the presence of strong local Nonconformist roots was insufficient to compensate.<sup>47</sup>





#### Community

Long before the 1970s' Young Liberals invented community politics, the Liberal Party in places like East Lancashire was sustained by extensive and deeply embedded roots in the local community. Alongside the chapel and the Sunday School, a range of structures tied voters of all classes to the party and its view of the world. Foremost amongst these was the place of work. In the cotton industry most firms were small with close contact between workers and management. In 1959 after many mergers and rationalisations the average size of firm was still only 244 employees.48 Mills were commonly surrounded by housing provided by the employers for the skilled and unskilled operatives, the overlookers, clerks and managers. Even as the industry declined, the influence of paternalistic owners diminished (a process visible from the late nineteenth century), and some of the workforce moved to the suburbs, the role of the cotton industry in people's lives remained central. It also played a major role in the life of many boroughs. As late as 1955, in Bolton 29,000 people were employed in textiles - 35 per cent of the labour force.49 Other local industries such as engineering

Left: James Alfred Bottomley (1874–1957): mill-owner and seven times Liberal mayor of Mossley.

Right: Jeremiah Lord (1877–1947): weaver, Baptist, Liberal mayor of Haslingden 1926–27. were often linked with the textile industry. A large class of whitecollar workers was employed in the commercial and mercantile businesses that grew up and depended on textiles. Manchester was still the largest commodities market in the world in 1929. Locally, small businesses, shopkeepers and professionals of all kinds were dependent on the fortunes of the cotton trade.

Not all mill owners were Liberals of course. Many were Tories or unaligned politically. There was even the occasional Labour mill owner. Nevertheless there were extremely strong ties between cotton and the Liberal Party. In virtually all the towns examined in this article, mill-owning families provided the party's elite. A good example is J. P. Taylor, owner of a family cotton mill in Bolton and a leading figure in the Liberal Party and local government until his death in 1945.50 The workforces in the mills also provided a large proportion of the activists including many councillors. When a youthful Cyril Smith lost his civil service job in 1945 because of his campaigning for the Liberal candidate for Rochdale, he was re-employed by a local textile mill where the Liberal candidate was a director. Although

Smith claimed in his memoirs that there was 'no Old Boys influence', this seems like an example of the interweaving of politics and employment.<sup>51</sup> Many other activists were drawn from the small business and professional classes that relied on the industry for their prosperity.

The prominence of Liberals in civic leadership in the North, seen for example in the high proportion of council committee chairmanships held by Liberals in some boroughs, was, according to at least one study, attributable to the party's close links with local business and the professions and its reputation for civic activism and good administration.<sup>52</sup>

The Liberal electoral coalition included many working-class voters. Davies and Morley writing of Burnley note that the firm ties before 1914 between local Liberalism and 'the respectable and politically and socially aware groups within the working class survived to some degree in inter-war local politics.' Working-class Liberalism, alongside the still powerful tradition of working-class Toryism, remained important in many parts of the region, aided by the moderate, verging on apolitical, character of much of the Lancashire textile

trades union movement. In some instances such loyalty was sustained by paternalistic and philanthropic owners, who had by no means entirely died out, such as Oscar Hall in Bury,<sup>53</sup> James Bottomley in Mossley,<sup>54</sup> the Holts in Bolton,<sup>55</sup> or Dame Sarah Lees in Oldham.<sup>56</sup>

It was also reinforced by a range of institutions in which Liberals often played a prominent part. Notable were the Friendly Societies,<sup>57</sup> several of the most important of which had originated in the region, including the Oddfellows and Rechabites (Manchester) and the Foresters (Rochdale). During the nineteenth century the Friendly Society movement had mostly aligned with the Liberals and some were identified closely with Liberal causes – for instance the Rechabites with the Temperance movement. The Societies had some eight million members at the end of the 1930s.58 They were part of a vast popular movement of mutualist institutions that included building societies, cooperatives and mutual improvement societies dedicated to education. Some writers identify such self-help ventures with the Labour Party and the left,59 but they were at least equally associated with Liberalism. A typical Liberal activist of the interwar period was a person of modest, often workingclass origins, who through education in the Mechanics Institute or other 'self-help' means had risen to occupy a supervisory or managerial role in a mill or had started a small business or shop. Frequently he (sometimes she) was an 'active citizen' involved in local social, religious, masonic, sporting and educational causes alongside political activity.60

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Liberal working-men's clubs provided another prop of this infrastructure. Davies and Morley note the importance of the clubs to both the Conservative and Liberal parties in Bury: 'These clubs served as a focal point of politics, entertainment and sometimes, moral instruction ... The Liberals, if anything, had a more vibrant club organisation [than the Tories]. Some of their clubs carried the great names of nineteenth century Liberalism: the Gladstone (East ward), the Cobden and the Trevelyan (Church ward). Also active were the Blackford Bridge, Philip's and the Fishpool Liberal Club.

These firmly entrenched organisations aided the strong performance of the Conservative and Liberal parties throughout the twenty years of elections. The Labour Party realised the advantage the other two parties had with their clubs and bemoaned their own lack of them.<sup>461</sup> Such social networking extended beyond the political clubs: in interwar Nelson, Labour complained about Liberal influence in the town's cricket club.<sup>62</sup>

Finally, the importance of the local Liberal press should be mentioned. Many towns had their own local newspapers, owned by Liberal families, which were supportive of the Liberal Party. As well as the *Manchester Guardian*, whose influence was felt throughout Lancashire and beyond, these included the *Bolton Evening News* (Tillotsons), the *Oldham Evening Chronicle* (Hirsts) and the *Rochdale Observer*. The party's leaders and activities were given detailed and sympathetic coverage in such papers.

This web of communal supports for Liberalism was gradually eroding as the cotton industry declined and urban areas changed, but it remained important throughout the interwar period and in some places was still significant after 1945. It constituted a powerful defence against the advances of the Labour Party, which despite its very moderate character in Lancashire, remained extremely weak in some boroughs and everywhere had difficulty breaking out of its unionised strongholds. Similarly the far left was strikingly feeble in Lancashire even at the height of the slump. The Independent Labour Party (ILP) and the Communist Party and its fronts such as the Unemployed Workers Movement fought local elections regularly but with conspicuous lack of success. As one Labour historian writing of Lancashire rather archly puts it 'the surviving peculiarities in the community forms of social relations worked against effective coordination of working-class unrest'.63

#### Radical ideology

Pennine Radicalism is routinely viewed as individualistic, economically liberal (indeed laissez-faire), anti-socialist and fixated with free trade and reducing public expenditure. In other words it is seen as an essentially passé Gladstonian creed which found increasing points of agreement with the Conservatives and many points of disagreement with the Labour Party. Some historians starting from a left-right class-based template deny that there was any significant ideological difference between the Liberals and Conservatives in this period. Describing Bury, Davies and Morley see:

... a minimum of ideological and political differences existing between the two parties. Both stood for the free market and private property. This was translated into a defence of the ratepayers 'true' interests by the advocating of 'small government'. Minimum government, ostensibly in the interest of the freedom of the individual, involved a resistance to any perceived unnecessary expenditure of ratepayers' money. The defence of public order in the face of another perceived threat: that of the unemployed was another area of mutual agreement.<sup>64</sup>

This leaves unanswered the question why so many so-called 'rightwing' Liberals declined to throw in their lot with the Tories, or why some progressives for so long refused to abandon the Liberal Party. In fact, the Liberals maintained a distinctive ideology which shared some common ground with each of the other parties but also major points of difference which could not easily be blurred.

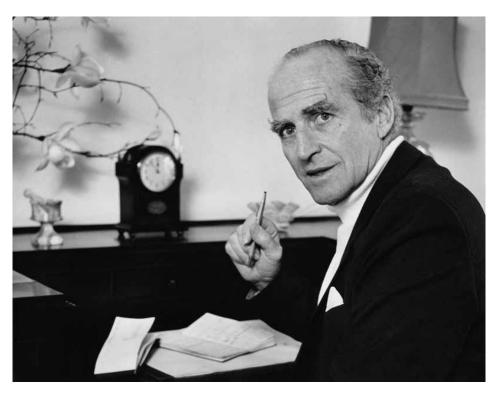
Their starting point was to reject class politics and to stress the importance of efficient and non-partisan management of local government. As Davies and Morley note, this time writing about Burnley, an important source of their strength was that 'the Liberals played down, and even attacked, the notion of class-based politics. Liberals emphasised the differences between Liberalism and Labour as well as stressing the far greater business and administrative experience of Liberal candidates." This not only reflected the party's moderation, but also its view that both Labour and the Conservatives represented sectional interests to the cost of the general public. Labour projected itself as the party

of the working class and the Conservatives were seen as the party of privileged 'rent-seeking' economic groups.66 Othello Whitehead,67 a prominent Bury Liberal in the 1920s saw the fundamental 'difference between Conservatives and Liberals was that the former represented the dividend seekers'.<sup>68</sup> This outlook was rooted in the ideological heritage of the 'Peers versus the People' battles before 1914, the influence of George-ist ideas on land taxation, but above all free trade doctrine which regarded protectionism as a Tory conspiracy against the public good.

There is some debate about the continued potency of the free trade issue. Peter Clarke plays it down claiming that it had been neutralised as a decisive partisan issue because many Lancashire Conservatives favoured free trade.<sup>69</sup> Frank Trentmann, on the other hand, insists that it still retained enormous power as a great popular cause coming 'close to a national ideology' right up to the First World War. He describes a more gradual disintegration of the intellectual, popular and business foundations of free trade which continued until Britain abandoned the policy in 1931–32.70

The mass popularity of free trade lasted longer in Lancashire - dependant on cotton exports, commerce and shipping - than elsewhere. As we have seen as late as the 1923 general election the Liberals were able to secure twenty-six Lancashire seats on an anti-protectionist platform. This scale of success was not repeated: almost everywhere free trade was ceasing to be a winning cause on its own, but it continued to be a badge of identity differentiating Liberals from Conservatives and enabled them to tap into a powerful current of Lancashire opinion. Liberals from the region were in the forefront as champions of free trade in the party right into the 1950s.71

It is important to remember that free trade was not just about tariff policy but focused a whole philosophy, as the sub-title of Trentmann's book suggests, of 'commerce, consumption and civil society'. It was associated with socially responsible trade and consumerism, equity, and social solidarity. It provided the Liberals with their own political mythology in which free trade had



expanded civil freedom, freed the state from group interests, and promoted peace amongst nations.

If free trade was for many Liberals an insurmountable barrier in the way of them joining the Tories, it was viewed as a national issue that had little relevance for local government. This contrasted with 'sound finance' which offered fertile ground for cooperation with the Conservatives at local level in order to keep the rates down and to ensure tight control over expenditure. This was a favourite theme of Liberal campaigns throughout the period. In Bury in the 1920s and 1930s the Liberals' parsimony sometimes exceeded even that of the Conservatives and they argued that the most effective way for the council to ease unemployment was by keeping the rates low.72 In Rochdale two decades later 'the most economy-minded members of the Council appeared to be the Liberals, not the Conservatives'.73

Those Liberals who stuck with the party were almost by definition 'anti-socialist'. This was true for those on the 'left' of the party as for those on the 'right'.<sup>74</sup> A Progressive like Ernest Simon, a leading Manchester Liberal and driving force of advanced interventionist policies to clear the slums and regenerate housing in the city, took years to overcome his aversion to joining the Labour Party.<sup>75</sup> Winifred Kirkham, an Oldham councillor Michael Winstanley (1918–93), Liberal MP for Cheadle 1966–70, for Hazel Grove February – October 1974. and Liberal parliamentary candidate in 1950 told the Manchester Guardian that 'she used to describe herself as "a Liberal with Labour leanings". She still calls herself a working woman and a democrat, but towards the Labour Party she has reservations. In her view the Labour creed implies excessive regimentation.<sup>76</sup> It is often suggested that this shared anti-socialism and economic and social connections made Liberals and Conservatives virtually indistinguishable politically. However this is to underestimate the differences in outlook and background that made many Liberals feel uncomfortable with the Tory Party. An example of this is Vera Bruce Chambers, a Stockport Liberal councillor who joined the Conservative Party in December 1947. Within less than a year she had defected back to the Liberals complaining that she was 'wrong in hoping to work with the Conservatives and is sure the Tory Party is no place for the Liberal-minded'.77

Progressive ideas remained important in the Liberal Party especially in Manchester which had a considerable influence on the surrounding boroughs. As late as 1930 the Liberal candidates there were described as 'nearly always of deepening shades of pink'.<sup>78</sup> The zeal for improvement in social conditions was evident amongst many other Liberals. Often this took the form of philanthropic

activity in support of educational and health causes. Wealthy women such as Dame Sarah Lees and her daughter Marjory in Oldham,79 Amy Jones in Rochdale<sup>80</sup> and Ada Summers in Stalybridge<sup>81</sup> were prominent in this field, but there were also others from more modest backgrounds such as Mary Ellen Wild in Ashton-under-Lyne who was a pawnbroker.82 Doctors such as Richard Mothersole<sup>83</sup> and Jean Marshall,<sup>84</sup> both councillors in Bolton in the interwar years were drawn into Liberal politics through medical practice in the mills and deprived areas. Where Liberals had power they pursued positive social reforms. In 1934 the Manchester Guardian reported that Liberal-controlled Rochdale was 'very enterprising', promoting several local public works projects that provided employment - a reservoir, a secondary school for girls, a maternity hospital and a sanatorium.'85

The Liberals' enthusiasm for such progressive measures was part and parcel of their broader ideological commitment to mutualism, active citizenship and equality of opportunity (seen in Bury for example in a tendency to argue for greater expenditure on education than the Tories<sup>86</sup>). The enthusiasm of Lancashire Liberals for the Beveridge national insurance plan in the mid-1940s was dimmed by the shift away from mutualism and voluntaryism that its implementation brought about, as well as the cost implications.

The Radical ideology allowed and indeed encouraged cooperation with both the other parties: with the Conservatives in the cause of efficient and economical local administration and with Labour on progressive issues such as education, slum clearance and municipal enterprise. At the same time it was a barrier in the way of full amalgamation with those parties. The differences with Labour were pertinent at local as well as national level because Labour consciously sought to spread its class-based, collectivist and redistributive policies into local government. With the Conservatives the Liberals' differences related more to national, or as it was described at the time, imperial policy - in other words, free trade and international affairs. Thus in local elections Liberal

candidates habitually insisted that 'politics' – meaning national politics – should be kept out of local government. This is an important reason why Liberals in a number of boroughs were prone to cooperate with Tories in local government while continuing to compete vigorously with them in parliamentary elections.<sup>87</sup>

#### The retreat of Lancashire Radicalism

In 1938 the Liberals controlled Darwen and were the largest party on Rochdale, Accrington, Bacup, and Heywood councils and in second place in Bury, Stockport, Dukinfield, Haslingden, Hyde, Middleton, Mossley, Rawtenstall, and Stalybridge. In Burnley and Bolton they were in a strong third place just behind Labour. Even in their weakest boroughs, Oldham and Ashton-under-Lyne they retained a strong foothold on the councils. Overall they held some 27 per cent of council seats: more than Labour.

By 1957 their representation had been seriously depleted. They had been eliminated from Oldham, Hyde, Rawtenstall and Stalybridge, and councils. In most other boroughs they held on tenuously with a councillor or two. In Darwen, Dukinfield, Haslingden, Heywood they could still claim a more sizeable representation but only in Rochdale, Bacup and Mossley did they remain a major force. Overall their strength had fallen to 9 per cent of council seats in the East Lancashire area. This was a big decline, but nevertheless the Liberal presence in local government remained significantly greater here than in any other part of the country except the West Riding.88

In part the Liberal decline was due to the stronger and more aggressive electoral challenge of the Labour and Conservative parties, which was a national phenomenon. As we have seen, Labour made a breakthrough in some areas in 1945–46 and there was a further shift in its favour in the early 1950s. Compared with before the war, Labour had everywhere broadened its appeal and improved its organisation so that there were no longer boroughs where it was a negligible factor. The Conservatives too improved their organisation, recruited a mass membership

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and were increasingly assertive in electoral contests. They were less willing to stand aside for Liberals or Independents. Especially in some of the larger boroughs, such as Burnley, Oldham and Stockport, the Liberals were squeezed out. Where this happened, typically the Liberals put up a fight in the late 1940s but then largely ceased activity for a time from 1950. This also reflected the wider demoralisation and pennilessness of the party after the collapse of its attempted revival at the 1950 general election.

In East Lancashire there were also important local factors at work, above all the economic and social changes that were taking place as the cotton industry declined. Cotton had been in retreat since the 1920s, with some 800 mills closing and 345,000 people leaving the industry between 1918 and 1939. Nevertheless the region still accounted for 28 per cent of world cotton trade at the end of the 1930s. There was a further 50 per cent decline in workforce and production during the Second World War, but this fall was largely reversed as the industry boomed after the war, and by 1951 production for the home market exceeded that of the mid-1930s. The 'Cotton Crisis' hit in 1951-2 due to inflation of textile prices and a shift in spending towards consumer durables. By 1958 production for the home market was down by 24 per cent and for export by 57 per cent compared with 1951. The government's efforts to rationalise and modernise the industry were unsuccessful and in the late 1960s and early 1970s cotton entered its final agony with mills closing at a rate of almost one a week across Lancashire.89

At the same time the community structure that had helped sustain Liberalism was dissolving. In part this was due to independent factors such as the continuing decline of Nonconformity, the provincial press and the mutual sector. The Friendly Societies lost their central role in the national insurance system in the 1948 National Assistance Act. The communal 'self-help' educational sector was also sagging after the war and by the late 1960s the tradition had collapsed in many mill districts to be replaced by new national initiatives such as the Open University.90

Population movements and urban regeneration unhinged established political patterns in many areas. In Middleton, for example, the building of a large Manchester overspill estate in the 1950s transformed local politics and propelled the previously docile local Labour Party into power.<sup>91</sup>

Other changes were more directly linked to the disintegration of the cotton industry. Much of the old Liberal elite drawn from the industry and its commercial and small business offshoots disappeared. Deference and the influence in tightly knit communities of employers, philanthropists and local notables faded away. The supply of active citizens in traditional fields – the foot soldiers of the party-dried up. Many Liberal clubs closed or lost their active connection with the party in the 1950s and early 1960s. The salience of free trade as rallying cry finally ceased as foreign competition in the domestic textile market became an increasing problem.

Where these processes developed more slowly, the Liberal political culture persisted longer. In Rochdale the Liberals held their position on the council up to the end of the 1960s, although they did not hold a majority after 1950. The town's official handbook of 1952, packed with adverts for local textile firms, gives special prominence to Rochdale's Liberal tradition and pictures of Cobden and Bright.92 In Mossley, traditional deference seems to have continued after the war. When the mill owner and former Liberal 'boss' of the town, James Bottomley, died in 1957 an obituary claimed that he 'was known affectionately throughout the town, particularly by the many cotton workers who had been employed at his mills, as "James Alfred" ... At his mills and at clubs and business premises all over the town flags were lowered to half-mast on Tuesday as news of his death spread'. Nevertheless, a few individuals, such as Alderman Jesse Crabtree (and his son John) in Bacup,93 Alderman Roberts in Mossley,94 Alderman Davidson in Darwen<sup>95</sup> and Alderman Fearn in Rochdale,96 kept the flag of a dogged and robust Liberalism flying.

Generally though, the Liberal decline was more marked as cotton

Table 3: Liberal council members in eighteen East Lancashire boroughs 1956–72							
	1956	1959	1961	1963	1966	1969	1972
Bolton, Bury, Stockport	7	8	18	39	12	3	1
Other boroughs	66	77	84	81	75	88	47
Total	73	85	102	120	87	91	48

retreated, and this was mirrored by a weakening of support for the Conservatives in the region, no doubt reflecting the same social changes. Labour gained ground as the balance of the economy shifted away from cotton.

These trends were not much affected by the Liberal revival under Jo Grimond. As Table 3 shows, only Bolton, Bury and Stockport followed the national pattern of a surge in the early 1960s followed by a rapid retreat and indeed collapse in the later 1960s. But even here the gains were on a more modest scale than in the newer suburbs of south-east England and the commuter fringe of Manchester around Cheadle and Sale. Elsewhere in the region the advance came early and then stalled with the Liberals actually suffering a slight loss of seats in the early 1960s. Here however the party held its position more firmly in the later 1960s and indeed made some gains at the end of the decade when to a limited extent it shared with the Tories the spoils of the big swing against the Wilson Labour government, which was particularly sharp in the textile area.97 (See Table 3.)

However, as the figures for 1972 show, this only concealed temporarily the collapse of Liberal strength in the region. The Liberals had by this stage been eliminated from six councils (Oldham, Bolton, Bury, Ashton-under-Lyne, Stalybridge and Middleton) and had only a handful of representatives (at most three) in eight others (Stockport, Burnley, Accrington, Dukinfield, Hyde, Haslingden, Bacup, Rawtenstall). In Rochdale and Heywood they had lost heavily and only in Mossley and Darwen was the party's position still relatively strong and stable. The Conservatives had supplanted the Liberals in several of their traditional strongholds. Bacup, a council which the Liberals had controlled in the early 1960s, had become solidly Conservative by the end of the decade. The Tories had also overtaken the Liberals in Rochdale and Heywood.

In the elections to the new county authorities in 1973 the best Liberal performances in the northwest were outside the region covered in this article, in the newer Manchester suburbs of Cheadle, Hazel Grove, Prestwich and Altrincham & Sale and in areas where they had previously been weak such as Liverpool and Colne, Pendle and Preston.<sup>98</sup> In their old heartlands they did well in Darwen and picked up seats in Royton, Saddleworth and Rochdale, but made little impact elsewhere.

The economic, social and community factors that had sustained a distinctive northern Liberalism in the textile towns of East Lancashire were severely weakened by the 1960s – a pattern also evident in Halifax, Huddersfield and other Liberal strongholds in the West Riding of Yorkshire.<sup>99</sup> The modernised Liberal Party of that period was also becoming less congenial to traditional economic liberals who increasingly found a home in the Conservative Party of Heath and Thatcher.

Traces of the region's old Liberal allegiance have survived and resurfaced especially where assisted by local factors and charismatic candidates. But the former textile districts have not been in the forefront of the expansion of the Liberal/ Liberal Democrat electoral base in recent decades. The strange survival of Liberal Lancashire in the first half of the twentieth century was followed by the curious collapse of its heartlands the 1960s and '70s. Future articles will examine this story in the Manchester area and the West Riding of Yorkshire as well as the contrasting developments on Merseyside and the West Lancashire coast.<sup>100</sup>

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- M. Egan, Coming Into Focus The Transformation of the Liberal Party 1945–64 (Saarbrucken, 2009), p. 168.
- 2 P. F. Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism* (Cambridge, 1971), p. 397.
- 3 Clarke, as above.
- 4 Especially the digital archives of *The (Manchester) Guardian* and *The Times*, UK Data Service, the British Newspaper Archive. The family history site Ancestry UK is also useful for biographical material.
- 5 Clarke, *Lancashire*, p. 10.
- 6 Such as Birkenhead East (from the Liberals) and Manchester Blackley, Rusholme and Moss Side.
- 7 Twenty-nine in 1923 and thirtyone in 1929.
- 8 Fifty-six in 1924 and fifty-nine in 1935.
- 9 Calculated by the author. The data covers the total of councillors and aldermen sitting on the councils in the years specified. For a small number of councils, mostly in 1921, estimates have been used because of lack of data. The total of seats in 1921 was some 1,650 and in 1972 some 2,140. The region covered is modern Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside, thus including some parts of pre-1974 Cheshire.
- 10 South-east Lancashire was one of only two regions in the country that swung to the Labour Party at the 1959 general election: D. E. Butler and R. Rose, *The British General Election of 1959* (London, 1960), p. 236.
- 11 M. Savage, The Dynamics of Working-Class Politics: the Labour Movement in Preston 1880–1940 (Cambridge, 1987) is useful.
- 12 S. Davies and B. Morley, County Borough Elections in England and Wales 1919–38: A Comparative Analysis, vol. 1 (Ashgate, 1999).
- 13 Clitheroe elected a Labour MP in 1918 and 1945 but otherwise has always been Tory. Nelson and Colne was always Labour from 1918 to 1970, except in 1931.
- 14 J. Hill, Nelson: Politics, Economy, Community (Keele, 1997) is an

excellent analysis of Nelson's economic and political culture. 'Little Moscow' was a misnomer as communist influence was limited and the local Labour tradition owed more to Radical and ILP influences. Hill suggests that 'Red Nelson' would be more apt. The large proportion of immigrants especially from nearby Pennine weaving districts, the absence of big employers to form a patriarchal political class, and the early development, large size and effective organisation of the Nelson Weavers' Association were key factors in the exceptional strength of Labour in Nelson.

- 15 The Liberals began to gain seats in Colne in the early 1970s and became the largest party in the new Pendle District in 1973.
- 16 S. Davies and B. Morley, County Borough Elections in England and Wales 1919–38: A Comparative Analysis, vol. 2 (Aldershot, 2000) pp. 316, 333. The Tories had ten. Labour had nine aldermen, the Liberals two and the Conservatives one.
- 17 The Liberals only stood aside at the 1951 and 1955 elections when the Conservatives gained Rochdale.
- 18 It was formed in August 1935 on the initiative of the local Rector in order 'to eliminate political passions from local government'. See Manchester Guardian, 22 Aug. 1935.
- 19 William Herbert Booth, a prominent councillor and mayor in 1938, was described in the press as a Liberal National. It was reported in 1937 that Middleton & Prestwich Liberal Association had recently been re-formed: *Manchester Guardian* 2 Sept. 1937.
- 20 Mary Gertrude Emmott (neé Lees) (1866–1954), daughter of cotton spinner, 1887 married Alfred Emmott (1858–1926), cotton manufacturer, Liberal MP for Oldham 1899–1911, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Emmott 1911. They were mayor and mayoress of Oldham 1891. She was Liberal candidate for Oldham 1922. Vice-president of the Liberal Council 1929–31. Prominent Liberal National in late 1930s.
- 21 John Samuel Dodd (1904–73), engineer, director of familyowned Sun Cotton Mill, one of largest in Oldham. Liberal councillor and parliamentary

candidate for Oldham 1929. Liberal National MP for Oldham 1935–45.

- 22 James Taylor Middleton (1887– 1957), solicitor, son of a Liberal mayor of Oldham. Councillor for Hollinwood ward 1936–48 and numerous times Liberal candidate. Three times parliamentary candidate. President Oldham Liberal Association. President of NW Liberal Federation in 1950s. On executive of Liberal Party Organisation.
- 23 See D. Dutton, Liberals in Schism – A History of the National Liberal Party (London, 2008), pp. 91, 99.
- 24 Manchester Guardian, 19 Oct. 1936.
- 25 Enabling J. T. Middleton to gain Hollinwood ward in 1936 for example.
- 26 J. G. Bulpitt, Party Politics in English Local Government (London, 1967), pp. 22–39.
- 27 Cyril Smith (1928–2010), active Liberal Rochdale, Stockport 1945–50, on executive NLYL. Councillor Rochdale Labour 1952–66, Independent 1966–70. Mayor. Rejoined Liberals 1970. MP for Rochdale 1972–92. Unitarian.
- 28 In West Riding of Yorkshire.
- 29 Davies and Morley, *County Bor*ough Elections, vol. 1, pp. 463–542.
- Thomas Connor (1896–1988), commercial traveller. Labour councillor Bolton 1929–38. Liberal councillor 1938–61. Alderman 1961–67. Mayor 1963–64. Leader Liberal group in 1960s. Secretary Bolton Liberal Association and chairman from 1944. Failed to regain Smithills 1967. Rejoined Labour Party 1967.
- 31 B. J. Evans and A. J. Taylor, 'Rise and Fall of Two-party Electoral Cooperation (Huddersfield and Bolton)', *Political Studies*, xxxii (1984), pp. 257–272.
- 32 In Cheshire, as were Dukinfield, Hyde and Stalybridge.
- 33 Manchester Guardian, 6 May 1953.
- 34 A resolution adopted at the 1958 Liberal Assembly declared that the party 'can, in no foreseeable circumstances, enter into pacts, with either the Conservative Party or the Labour Party on the national or local level; whilst in view of the undemocratic nature of the present electoral system, welcoming the opportunity of presenting the Liberal case in a straight fight against either

Conservatives or Socialists, should such opportunities afford themselves'.

- 35 E. D. Smithies, 'The Contrast Between North and South in England 1918–39: A Study of Economic, Social and Political Problems with particular reference to the Experience of Burnley, Halifax, Ipswich and Luton' (DPhil thesis, University of Leeds, 1974), p. 287.
- 36 For example in 1955 H. J. Hallam wrote of the very strong Liberal traditions in Radcliffe preserved by the Municipal Party, long after Liberals had ceased to contest local elections independently, see H. J. Hallam in D. Butler, *The British General Election of 1955* (London, 1956), p. 145.
- 37 Even in a town like Middleton where Lib–Con collaboration was close, the Liberals fiercely defended their independence. In 1951 a Liberal councillor publicly denounced what he claimed were Conservative attempts to force him to stand as a Tory and turn the council into a 'closed shop': Manchester Guardian, 2 Nov. 1951. For more on Middleton and on Rochdale, see Bulpitt, Party Politics, ch. 1 and 4.
- 38 Burnley Liberal Association affiliated to the Liberal Party Organisation in June 1946. It had previously aligned with the Liberal Nationals without formally affiliating to the Liberal National organisation. See Manchester Guardian, 24 Jun. 1946.
- 39 Unlike in Liverpool and Manchester for instance where a Liberal alderman survived in the 1950s only due to Conservative support.
- 40 E. J. Cleary and H. Pollins, 'Liberal Voting in the General Election of 1951', *The Sociological Review*, vol. 1, issue 2, Dec 1953, p. 39.
- 41 Arthur Douglas Worsley (1891– 1965), born Pendleton. Father was mayor of Salford. Organiser for NW Liberal Federation from 1927, secretary 1932–58.
- 42 Clarke, *Lancashire*, pp. 272–3.
  43 M. Kinnear, *The British Voter*
- An Atlas and Survey since 1885 (London, 1968), pp. 125–6. The detailed figures are: Rochdale
   6.4 per cent; Heywood & Radcliffe 6.2 per cent; Stalybridge & Hyde 4.4 per cent; Mossley 4.6 per cent; Darwen 10.0 per cent;

Burnley 10.1 per cent; Rossendale 18.7 per cent.

- 44 Prominent Labour Baptists included the Rev. Gordon Lang, Labour MP for Oldham 1929–31 and Stalybridge & Hyde 1945– 51, and Clifford Kenyon, Labour MP for Chorley 1945–70, a lay preacher and former mayor of Rawtenstall.
- 45 D. Butler and D. Stokes, Political Change in Britain – Forces Shaping Electoral Change (Penguin, 1971), p. 170.
- P. Joyce, Work, Society and Politics – the Culture of the Factory in Later Victorian England (Brighton, 1980), pp. 170, 241. Joyce also suggests that racism (i.e. anti-Irish feeling) was a secondary factor behind sectarian behaviour.
- 47 See further: Hill, Nelson.
- 48 C. Miles, Lancashire Textiles a Case Study of Industrial Change (Cambridge, 1968), p. 42.
- 49 Miles, Lancashire Textiles, pp. 114, 121. Overall 241,000 people were still employed in the industry in 1959 and 164,000 in 1964.
- 50 John Percy Taylor (1868–1945), cotton spinning mill owner. A leading figure in Bolton Liberalism for over forty years, President of Liberal Association for fifteen years, vice-chair Northwestern Liberal Federation. Parliamentary candidate 1924. Bolton council 1900–3, 1914–42. Mayor 1934. Freeman of Bolton 1938. Unitarian.
- 51 C. Smith, *Big Cyril* (London, 1977), pp. 48–9.
- 52 Smithies, 'Contrast Between North and South', p. 295.
- 53 Davies and Morley, *County Borough Elections*, vol. 2, p. 429. Oscar Standring Hall (1862– 1932). Power loom manufacturer. Bury Councillor to 1926.
- 54 James Alfred Bottomley (1874–1957), mill owner Mossley. Mossley council 1909–30s. Seven times mayor of Mossley.
- 55 Holt family: prominent Liberal Congregationalist mill-owning (Holt Hosiery) family in Bolton. A. E. Holt (1872–?) was a councillor from 1911, President of Bolton Liberal Association and parliamentary candidate for Bolton in 1924. Arthur Frederick Holt (1914–95) was Liberal MP for Bolton West from 1951–64. Chief Whip 1963–64. President of the Liberal Party 1974–75.

- 56 Sarah Lees (neé Buckley) (1842– 1935), born Mossley. Widow of wealthy Oldham cotton spinner. Co-opted to Oldham Education Committee 1902. Member of Oldham council 1907–19. Mayor 1910 (second female mayor in UK) and Freeman of Oldham. DBE 1917. Congregationalist.
- 57 Friendly societies clubbed together workers to offer basic health and unemployment benefits, savings banks, job referral services, and burial plans.
- 58 S. Cordery, British Friendly Societies, 1750–1914 (Houndmills and New York, 2003); T. Cutler, K. Williams and J. Williams, Keynes, Beveridge and Beyond (London, 1986), pp. 42–4; J. McNicol, The Politics of Retirement in Britain, 1878–1948 (Cambridge, 1998); D. Gladstone (ed.), Before Beveridge – Welfare before the Welfare State (Civitas, 1999), http://www.civitas.org.uk/pdf/ cw47.pdf
- 59 J. Rose, The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Yale, 2010), ch. 2.
- 60 See the biographies on the excellent Links in the Chain (Bolton) site for numerous examples: http://www.boltonsmayors.org. uk/
- 61 Davies and Morley, *County Borough Elections*, vol. 2, p. 425.
- Hill, Nelson, pp. 123–4.
  K. Burgess, The Challenge of Labour – Reshaping British Society 1850–1930 (London, 1980), p. 208.
- 64 Davies and Morley, *County Borough Elections*, vol. 2, pp. 426–47.
- 65 Ibid., pp. 216–7, quoting G. Trodd, 'Political Change and the Working Class in Blackburn and Burnley, 1880–1914' (PhD thesis, University of Lancaster, 1978).
- 66 The Conservatives were described as 'the party of vested interests' in *The Liberal Way* (National Liberal Federation, 1934), p. 114.
- 67 Othello Lord William Whitehead (1866–1953), headmaster. Liberal councillor Bury 1926– 1940s. Mayor 1937–38.
- 68 Davies and Morley, *County Borough Elections*, vol. 2, p. 427.
  69 Clarke, *Lancashire*, p. 398.
- 70 F. Trentmann, Free Trade Nation – Commerce, Consumption and Civil Society in Modern Britain (Oxford, 2008), pp. 5, 32.
- 71 James T. Middleton, president of the North-west Liberal

Federation, proposed the famous 'trumpet call for Free Trade' adopted at the 1953 Liberal Assembly in Ilfracombe.

- 72 Davies and Morley, County Borough Elections, vol. 2, pp. 434, 437–9.
- 73 Bulpitt, Party Politics, p. 91.
- 74 The terms left and right are used here for convenience only. Old radical Liberal thinking commonly dubbed 'right-wing' shares much in common with what today would be labelled as 'left libertarianism'.
- 75 E. D. Simon bowed out of Liberal politics in the 1930s. He stood as an Independent at the 1945 general election and shortly after joined the Labour Party. His wife Shena, also a leading Manchester housing reformer had joined the Labour Party in 1935.
- 76 Manchester Guardian, 25 Jan. 1950.
  77 Manchester Guardian, 13 Dec.
- 1947, 29 Oct. 1948.
- 78 The Times, 28 Oct. 1930.
- 79 Marjory Lees (1878–1970), daughter of Sarah Lees. Liberal councillor Oldham. Continued her mother's philanthropic work. Freedom of Oldham 1934.
- 80 Amy Jones (1883–?), daughter of Sir James E Jones, wealthy cotton merchant, philanthropist, leading Rochdale Liberal, mayor 1905–7 and pillar of the United Methodist Church. Amy was a Rochdale councillor for a short time.
- 81 Ada Jane Summers (neé Broome) (1861–1944), daughter of Oldham textile mill owner, wealthy widow of John Summers of family firm of ironmasters in Stalybridge which became one of largest steel producers in the UK. Active Liberal and suffragist. Stalybridge councillor from 1912. First woman mayor of Stalybridge 1919. Alderman. Freedom of Stalybridge 1939. Known as 'Lady Bountiful' for philanthropic work. Her brother-inlaw J. W. Summers was Liberal MP for Flint 1910–13.
- Mary Ellen Wild (1866–1945), born Rochdale, shop-assistant, later pawnbroker. Moved to Ashton under Lyne in 1898. Liberal councillor 1919–28 and subsequently several times candidate. Her husband James Albert was also an active Liberal and councillor in Ashton.
  Robert Deveraux Mothersole
  - Robert Deveraux Mothersole

(1865–1950), born Colchester, mill doctor. Liberal councillor Bolton 1925–405.

- 84 Jean Marion Farie Marshall (1876–1965), born Greenock, general practitioner working in Bolton from before 1914. Liberal councillor Bolton 1935–405.
- 85 Manchester Guardian, 17 Oct. 1934.
- 86 Davies and Morley, *County Borough Elections*, vol. 2, p. 427.
- 87 For example in Rochdale, Oldham, Bury and Rossendale Liberals opposed Conservatives in almost every parliamentary election from 1918–50.
- 88 The Liberals were also strong in Blackpool, and Southport.
- 89 Miles, *Lancashire Textiles*, pp. 25–6, 38–41.
- 90 See J. Rose, *Intellectual Life*, pp. 296–7, 463.
- 91 See Bulpitt, *Party Politics*, pp. 22–39.
- 92 The County Borough of Rochdale - the Official Handbook (3<sup>rd</sup> edn, 1952). It records that 26,000 people were employed in the textile industry, 46 per cent of the total workforce.
- 93 Successively councillors for Broadclough ward, Bacup in late 1950s and early '60s.
- 94 Nelson Roberts, Liberal councillor Mossley Cheshire ward during 1950s and early 1960s.
- 95 David Davidson, Liberal councillor Darwen South-west in early 1960s. Mayor of Darwen 1961–62.
- 96 Charles H. Fearn, Liberal councillor and alderman, Rochdale, 1945 to 1960s. Chair of Housing Committee.
- 97 The textile towns of Lancashire saw a swing of 7.4 per cent to the Conservatives at the 1970 general election, compared with the national average of 4.7 per cent: D. Butler and M. Pinto-Duschinsky, *The British General Election of* 1970 (London, 1971), p. 394–5.
- 98 The Liberals also captured control of Kearsley Urban District near Bolton in the late 1960s, a mining town with little Liberal tradition.
- 99 See J. Reynolds and P. Wrigley, 'Liberal Roots – The Liberal Party in a West Yorkshire constituency 1920s–1970s', *Journal of Liberal History* 80 (Autumn 2013).
- 100 Researchers interested in collaborating in further research on this topic are welcome to contact the author jcjeynolds@gmail.com

## LIBERAL PARTY ARCHIVES IN THE WELSH POLITICAL ARCHIVE AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF WALES

by **Rod Phillips** 



HE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF Wales was established by Royal Charter on 17 March 1907. This was the culmination of many decades of work and followed a commitment by the government in 1905 to provide funds for the library. Over the subsequent century a wide-ranging and varied collection of published material in the form of books, newspapers, periodicals and maps has been created as a result of the library's status as a legal deposit library, however the library also holds substantial collections of non-published material such as photographs, paintings, manuscripts and archives.

The papers of political figures and organisations were of course amongst those collected, but in 1983 the Welsh Political Archive was established to provide a focus for the collection and promotion of this material, along with an advisory committee comprised of representatives from the main political parties in Wales, civic society and academics. This committee meets annually to review the work of the archive and make arrangements for the annual lecture. The members also act as ambassadors for the archive and assist in attracting new material.

Much of the research behind this article was undertaken by Dr John Graham Jones, who was formerly the head of the Welsh Political Archive. It would be impossible to comprehensively cover all the material held in the Welsh Political Archive relating to the Liberal and Liberal Democrat parties, but I have highlighted the main collections and give the NRA Code where available to aid further research. Full details are available from the library's online catalogue, or from the finding aids noted below.

#### **David Lloyd George**

The Welsh Political Archive holds a significant collection of archival material relating to David Lloyd George, Liberal MP for the Caernarfon Boroughs, 1890-1945, Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1908–15, and Prime Minister, 1916–22. At the beginning of 1910, after Lloyd George, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, had agreed to a government grant of  $\pounds$ 4,000 to the National Library of Wales, his close political associate Sir John Herbert Lewis, Liberal MP for Flintshire wrote to thank him for this 'courageous act', adding, 'The Library will be at, I hope, a very distant date your literary mausoleum'.

The Lloyd George Manuscripts **GB 0210 MSLLOYD-GEORGE** contain the papers of the Lloyd George family. The collection is comprised mainly of correspondence, the bulk of which is addressed to David Lloyd George, mostly from contemporary political figures and from members of his family. The political correspondence relates largely to Welsh affairs, including disestablishment, the Welsh Church Commission, education and the investiture of the Prince of Wales in 1911, as well as to the Irish Question and the First World War.

David Lloyd George's family correspondence includes letters between David Lloyd George and his wife Margaret, from David Lloyd George to his uncle Richard Lloyd and to David Lloyd George from his brother William George. Other family correspondence includes letters to Margaret Lloyd George, from various correspondents, and from Margaret Lloyd George mainly to her daughter Olwen Carey-Evans.

Megan Lloyd George's correspondence and papers include letters to and from Labour politician Philip Noel-Baker and from other correspondents, including her parents, together with a tour journal, and diary, 1947. Gwilym Lloyd George's correspondence and papers include typescript draft of his (unpublished) autobiography.

David Lloyd George's speech notes, notebooks and miscellaneous papers, together with and correspondence and papers relating to Mair Eluned Lloyd George are also included.

The William George Papers **GB 0210 WILGEORGE** comprise 3,292 letters from Lloyd George to William and ten pocket diaries kept by the young Lloyd George from 1878 to 1888.

The Olwen Carey-Evans Papers GB 0210 CAREYEVANS mainly comprise her correspondence, notebooks, scrapbooks, other personal papers and papers, press cuttings, memorabilia, diaries, notes, essays and other items relating to members of her family but include a small group of papers relating to David Lloyd George.

Albert James Sylvester was Lloyd George's principal private secretary. The A. J. Sylvester Papers GB 0210 AJSYLTER include many files of correspondence and papers including shorthand diaries and notebooks, files relating to the First World War, the Paris Peace Conference, Germany and the Second World War, material relating to the Liberal Party, politics and elections, Lloyd George family letters and papers. There is also a long series of very detailed typescript diaries which include much important material beyond that published by Colin Cross in 1975.

The Frances Stevenson Family Papers **GB 0210 FRASON** are a more recent acquisition and were used by Ruth Longford used as the basis of her graphic and vivid study of her grandmother published in 1996. Ruth Longford loaned additional material – including letters, miscellaneous items and photographs – which has been digitised.

Also closely associated with Lloyd George was Thomas Jones (1870–1955), who was appointed Secretary to the National Health Insurance Commissioners in 1910, and, largely through Lloyd George's influence, became Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet in 1916. The Dr Thomas Jones CH papers consist of 295 bound volumes and twenty-six boxes of papers and volumes concerning many aspects of governmental activity and Welsh life.

The diaries of John William Morris, the Lord Morris of Borth-y-Gest, also include many revealing references to David Lloyd George. There is some material relating to Lloyd George among the papers of his early biographer W. Watkin Davies (1895–1973) and in the papers of T. J. Evans (1863– 1932), who corresponded with many prominent Liberal politicians of his generation. The papers of Sir Samuel T. Evans include correspondence with David Lloyd George.

#### **Clement Davies**

Lloyd George is not the only Liberal Party leader whose papers are held at the National Library of Wales: a substantial archive of the political and personal papers of E. Clement Davies GB 0210 CLEIES is also available to consult. Davies was the Liberal MP for Montgomeryshire, 1929–62, and party leader, 1945–56. The archive comprises Liberal Party papers, papers relating to Davies's political career, Welsh affairs, peace movements, foreign affairs, constituency work and home affairs. They also contain the papers and correspondence of Jano Clement-Davies, 1873–1969, and papers of Stanley Clement-Davies, 1920-1963.

Among the many prominent Liberals who feature in the list of correspondents are Lady Violet Bonham Carter, Jo Grimond, Gilbert Murray, Philip Rea, Sir Herbert Samuel, Sir John Simon and Sir Archibald Sinclair (Lord Thurso).

#### Personal papers of other MPs and prominent Liberals

The library holds papers from many prominent Liberals, including;

- David Davies, Llandinam (1880–1944). MP for Montgomeryshire, 1906–29; parliamentary private secretary to D. Lloyd George when he was Minister of Munitions and Prime Minister, 1916–17; founder of the New Commonwealth Association; created the first Baron Davies of Llandinam, 1932. **GB 0210 LLANNAM**
- Sir Owen M. Edwards (1858–1920). MP for Merionethshire, 1899–1900; first chief inspector of schools in Wales under the new Welsh Education

Department, 1907. GB 0210 OMELLYF

- Thomas Edward Ellis (1859–99). MP for Merionethshire, 1886–99; second Liberal whip under Gladstone, 1892; chief whip under Rosebery, 1894. There is also a substantial group of papers relating to T. E. Ellis among those of his close friend and confidant D. R. Daniel (1859– 1931), and among those of his son Dr T. I. Ellis (1899– 1970). **GB 0210 TELLIS**
- Sir Samuel T. Evans (1859–1918). MP for Mid-Glamorgan, 1890– 1910; Solicitor-General, 1908–10; president of the Divorce, Probate and Admiralty Court, 1910–18. **GB 0210 SAMANS**
- Thomas Gee (1815–98). Liberal journalist, author and publisher. Editor of the highly influential *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*. **GB 0210 MSTGEE**
- Sir John Herbert Lewis (1858–1933. MP for Flint Boroughs, 1892–1906, Flintshire, 1906–18, and the University of Wales, 1918–22; Junior Lord of the Treasury and a Liberal Party whip, 1905; parliamentary secretary to the Local Government Board, 1909–15; parliamentary secretary to the Board of Education, 1915–22. **GB** 0210 HERBLEW
- C. Humphreys-Owen (1836–1905). MP for Montgomeryshire, 1894–1906.
- Stuart Rendel (1834–1913). MP for Montgomeryshire, 1880–94, first chairman of the Welsh Parliamentary Party from 1888; close friend to W. E. Gladstone.
- J. Bryn Roberts (1847– 1931). MP for the Eifion division of Caernarfonshire, 1906–18. GB 0210 JBROBERTS
- D. A. Thomas (1856–1918). MP for Merthyr Tydfil, 1888 – January 1910, and for Cardiff, January– December 1910; Baron Rhondda, January 1916; Viscount Rhondda, June 1918; president of the Local

Government Board, 1916– 17; Food Controller, 1917– 18. **GB 0210 DATMAS** H. D. Acland (1847–1926). MP for Rotherham, 1885– 99, and for the Chiltern Hundreds, 1899–1919; created 13th Baronet in 1919. Sir Alfred T. Davies

- Sir Alfred T. Davies (1861–1949). Permanent Secretary to the Welsh Department of the Board of Education, 1907–25. GB 0210 ALFTDAVIES
- Sir Alun Talfan Davies (b. 1913). Independent candidate in the University of Wales by-election in 1943; stood as a Liberal in the Carmarthenshire division in the general elections of 1959 and 1964, and Denbighshire in 1966; an activist within the Welsh Liberal Party. **GB 0210 ALUIES**
- Ellis W. Davies (1871– 1939). MP for the Eifion division of Caernarfonshire, 1906–18; unsuccessfully contested Caernarfonshire in 1918; MP for the Denbigh division of Denbighshire, 1923–29. **GB 0210 EWDAVIES**
- Sir Joseph Davies. Commercial statistician; close associate of D. Lloyd George.
- Matthew L. Vaughan Davies (1840–1935). Unsuccessfully contested Cardiganshire as a Conservative in 1885; MP for Cardiganshire, 1895–1921; created Baron Ystwyth, 1921.
- Sir E. Vincent Evans (1851– 1934). Prominent London Welshman, notable eisteddfodwr, and president of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion. **GB 0210 VINANS**
- J. Victor Evans (1895–1957). Liberal candidate for Pontypridd, 1929, and Merthyr Tydfil in the 1934 by-election. **GB 0210 VICANS**
- Sir Ellis Jones Ellis-Griffith (1860–1926). Unsuccessfully contested the Toxteth division of Liverpool, 1892; MP for Anglesey, 1895–1918; chairman of

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the Welsh Parliamentary Liberal Party, 1912; parliamentary secretary to the Home Office, 1912–15; unsuccessfully contested the University of Wales, 1922; MP for the Carmarthen District, 1923–24. **GB 0210 ELLITH** 

- Professor W. J. Gruffydd (1881–1954). MP for the University of Wales, 1943–48; prominent Welsh poet and literary critic. **GB** 0210 WJGRUFFYD
- Emlyn Hooson (Lord Hooson). MP for Montgomeryshire, 1962–79. **GB** 0210 HOOSON
- Mrs Mary Garbett-Edwards (1893–1986). Local Liberal agent in Montgomeryshire to Clement Davies and Emlyn Hooson. **GB 0210 MARRDS**
- E. Morgan Humphreys (1882–1955). Prominent Liberal journalist and author; corresponded regularly with many Liberal politicians. GB 0210 EMHUMPH
- E. T. John (1857–1931). MP for East Denbighshire, 1910–18; introduced the Government of Wales Bill in the House of Commons in 1914; joined the Labour Party, 1918, and was defeated in East Denbighshire in the 'coupon' general election; stood in Brecon & Radnor in the general elections of 1922 and 1924 and in Anglesey at a by-election in April 1923. GB 0210 ETJOHN
- Dr Ben G. Jones (1914–89). Liberal candidate for Merionethshire, 1959. GB 0210 BENJONES
- Sir Henry Haydn Jones (1863–1950). MP for Merionethshire, 1910–45. **GB** 0210 HAYNES
- Sir Rhys Hopkin Morris (1888–1956). Independent Liberal MP for Cardiganshire, 1923–32; MP for Carmarthenshire, 1945–56.
   GB 0210 RHYSRIS
- Lord Ogmore (1903–76) (formerly David Rees Rees-Williams). A former Labour MP, 1945–50, he

joined the Liberal Party in 1959; Liberal Party president, 1963–64. **GB 0210 LORORE** 

- Emrys O. Roberts (1910– 90). MP for Merionethshire, 1945–51. GB 0210 EMRRTS
- J. Herbert Roberts, Baron Clwyd (1863–1951). MP for West Denbighshire, 1892– 1918. 'Some Memories of my Life' (1937 typescript) (NLW MS 16861C).
   Viscount Tenby (Gwilym Lloyd-George) – See Lloyd George Manuscripts GB 0210 MSLLOYDGEORGE
- Arthur John Williams (1830–1911), MP for South Glamorgan, 1885–95, and Eliot Crawshay-Williams (1879–1962), assistant private secretary to Winston Churchill at the Colonial Office, 1906–08, and MP for Leicester, 1910–13, when he served as parliamentary private secretary to David Lloyd George. **GB 0210 ELICRAAMS**
- Councillor Cecilia Barton Papers – Ceredigion Councillor and prominent Liberal activist **GB 0210 BARTON**
- Dr George Morrison **GB** 0210 GEOSON
- Merfyn Jones GB 0210 MERNES
- Mr Gwyn Griffiths. The last chairman of the Welsh Liberal Party before it merged with the SDP in 1988. GB 0210 GWYITH
- Mr Peter Sain ley Berry. A former Liberal who was a founder member of the SDP in 1981, and who stood as the party's candidate at Swansea West in 1983, Pontypridd in 1987, and Pembroke in 1992. **GB** 0210 PETBER
- Rev. Roger Roberts. Liberal candidate at Conwy in the general elections of 1987, 1992 and 1997. **GB** 0210 ROGROB
- There are also some letters written by W. E. Gladstone (1809–98) in a number of archives including those of Lewis Llewelyn Dillwyn MP, Stuart Rendel MP,

Henry Richard MP and Sir Henry Hussey Vivian MP. The library has also purchased complete microfilm copies of the most extensive archives of the Gladstone Papers in the custody of St Deiniols Library, Hawarden, and the British Library as published in the microfilm series The Papers of the Prime Ministers of Great Britain (MFL 54).

#### Papers of parties, groups and campaigns

The library is fortunate to have many records relating to the Welsh Liberal Party, Welsh Liberal Democrats, the Social Democratic Party in Wales and numerous local associations.

Records of the Welsh Liberal Party between 1966 and 1988 GB 0210 WELLIBPAR comprise Executive Committee and General Council minutes, Annual General Meeting papers and correspondence, correspondence and papers relating to local government reform and electoral reform, transport, economic policy and nationalisation, Welsh affairs, devolution, and Welsh Liberal Party structure and finance, papers relating to annual conferences, papers relating to parliamentary and other elections, correspondence and papers relating to individual parliamentary constituencies, Local Government and Parliamentary Boundary Commission submissions, Standing Committee and Policy Directorate papers, press releases, party publications, records of county Liberal Associations and records of Caernarfon Division Liberal Association.

The Welsh Liberal Democrats papers **GB 0210 WELSHLIBS** consists of material from the time of the SDP/Liberal merger and comprise papers from the Interim Federal Policy Committee, the Association of Social and Liberal Democrat Councillors, the Federal Executive of the SLD, copies of the Federal Green Papers, the Social and Liberal Democrats, 1986–1989, the Welsh Liberal Democrats, 1987–1991, the formation of the Social and Liberal Democrats, the Brecon and Radnor Liberal Democrats, local elections, and application forms of prospective parliamentary candidates.

The story of the Welsh Liberal Democrats since the merger can be found in the Liberal Democrats Wales Records **GB 0210 LIBDEMS.** These comprise minutes and agenda of the Liberal Democrats Wales meetings, constituency papers, financial papers, correspondence, conference papers, election material, party membership, press and media relations, party policy, published materials and miscellaneous papers.

Further papers relating to the Welsh Liberal Democrats can be found in the Peter Black (Liberal Democrats Wales) Papers **GB 0210 PETBLA**.

The Library is also home to a number of local party records, and papers of a number of local councillors and activists:

- Cardiganshire Liberal Association **GB 0210 CARLIB**
- Montgomeryshire Liberal Association **GB 0210 MONTLA**
- Monmouth Liberals and SDP Papers **GB 0210 MONLIB**
- Vale of Glamorgan
   SDP Records GB 0210
   VALSDP
- Vale of Glamorgan Liberal Association **GB 0210 VALEGLA**
- Ceredigion Lib Dem Association Papers (including SDP)

The library has also purchased from the Newport Library a photocopy of the minute book, 1886–89, of meetings of the Welsh Liberal MPs (NLW Fac 627). NLW MS 21,171D is the minute book, 1886–91, of the North Wales Liberal Federation. The library also holds a small group of records deriving from the 1955 Liberal Party conference held at Llandudno **GB 0210 LIBABLY**.

#### Ephemera collection

The library holds a substantial collection of electoral ephemera. Copies of election addresses and political leaflets from parliamentary and by-elections after 1945 may be found among the papers of the Rev. Ivor T. Rees of Swansea

#### GB 0210 IVTRES.

Since the 1983, the Welsh Political Archive has collected a near complete set of the election addresses and leaflets issued by Liberal candidates in Welsh constituencies, as well as national literature in general, Assembly and European elections and by-elections as well as referenda on devolution in Wales **GB 0210 EPHEMERA**.

#### Microfilms

Among the extensive microform holdings of the National Library which are of political interest are:

- MFC 9–10 Archives of the British Liberal Party (Harvester Microfilms)
- MFC 9 Pamphlets and Leaflets Parts 1–4 1885– 1974; four boxes of microfiche
- MFC 10 National Liberal Federation Annual Reports, 1877–1936; one box of microfiche
- MFL 36 British Political Party General Election Addresses
- The National Liberal Club Collection from Bristol University (Harvester Microfilms): Part 1: General Election Addresses, 1892–1922 (twelve reels); Part 2: General Election Addresses, 1923–31 (sixteen reels).

#### **Electronic material**

The library makes snapshot archive copies of the websites of the main political parties in Wales, including the Welsh Liberal Democrats on an ongoing basis. Copies are also made of the websites of MPs, AMs and candidates and additional copies are taken in the run up to elections. This activity has been dependent on securing permission from the copyright holder, so the collection is incomplete but the websites can be viewed remotely at www.webarchive. org.uk. The extension of legal deposit to cover websites means that the library will be able to collect more widely in future, but the websites will only be available to consult in the library itself.

#### **Digitised material**

The library has a large-scale digitisation programme, designed to open up its collections for wider use, much of which is of interest to political historians. The *Campaign!* Exhibition has items relating to the 1906 general election, when the Liberals almost swept the board in Wales, the 1921 Cardiganshire by-election fought between Liberal and National Liberal candidates, and the 1985 Brecon and Radnor by-election.

The letters of David Lloyd George to his brother William George have also been digitised, along with David Lloyd George's 1886 diary. The large collection of Illingworth's political cartoons from the *Daily Mail*, as well as images from the collection of the photojournalist Geoff Charles can also be viewed on the library's website. The above resources are all available at www.llgc. org.uk.

Another resource for political historians is Welsh Newspapers online, which contains a large number of digitised newspapers from 1804–1919 which are free-text searchable. The collection is available at http:// welshnewspapers.llgc.org.uk.

The library has also contributed collections to the Cymru1914 digitisation project of material relating to the First World War. This material can be found at http://www. cymru1914.org.

#### Film, sound and images

The National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales, based at the library, holds a substantial collection of video and audio tapes of programmes of Welsh political interest, including news bulletins, discussion programmes, debates and election broadcasts. The NLW is a designated archive for off-air broadcasts and concentrates on recording material of Welsh interest. The entire programme archive of ITV Wales, comprising 250,000 items including cans of film, tapes, etc. and dating back over fifty years was recently added to this collection.

The library's photographic and artwork collections include portraits of Liberal politicians, as well as events from Welsh political history.

#### Welsh Political Archive lectures

The Welsh Political Archive has held an annual lecture since 1987. The earlier lectures were published in printed form while more recent lectures are published on the library's website. The following would be of particular interest to students of the history of the Liberal Party:

- John Grigg, 'Lloyd George and Wales' (1988)
- Lord Blake, 'An Incongruous Partnership: Lloyd George and Bonar Law' (1992)
- Lord Hooson, 'Rebirth or Death?: Liberalism in Wales in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century' (1994)
- Lord Prys Davies, 'Welsh Political Developments in the Twentieth Century' (2000).

#### Using the archives

All digitised materials are freely available via the library's website. To consult other material you will need to register with the library as a reader and visit us in Aberystwyth.

The library has a pay and display car park, and a frequent bus service from Aberystwyth Town Centre and the bus and railway stations. The reading rooms are open 9.30 am – 6.00 pm Monday to Friday and 9.30 am – 5.00 pm Saturdays. The exhibition opening hours may vary. There is also a café in the library serving drinks, sandwiches, cakes and snacks.

You can register as a reader at the library when you arrive, or beforehand on the library's website. You will need two proofs of identification such as a passport, bank card or driving licence, one of which will need to show your address.

It is also advisable to order material before you arrive, either by phone or through the online catalogue. If you are visiting on a Saturday, you will need to order material before 4 pm on Friday.

Most archives are fully accessible, however some material remains under embargo under exemptions in the Freedom of Information Act. You are advised to check before visiting the library. Much material has been catalogued and is available through the library's online catalogue, however some material may need to be traced through the library's Annual Reports which have been published ever since 1909, and which are now available for searching on a free-text data base. Some recent acquisitions may not yet have reached the catalogue.

The Welsh Political Archive newsletter is available on the Welsh Political Archive pages of the library's website, and lists all major acquisitions.

We're happy to help with enquiries, which can be made by letter, phone or email: http://www.llgc.org.uk/welshpoliticalarchive. Enquiries: gofyn@llgc.org.uk; +44 (0)1970 632800

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# REPORTS

### The man who made the weather: Joseph Chamberlain – imperial standard bearer, national leader, local icon

Centenary conference, Birmingham 4–5 July 2014 Report by **Tony Little** 

BOUT 100 PEOPLE attended the special conference held in Birmingham and partly funded by the Liberal Democrat History Group - to mark the centenary of the death of Joseph Chamberlain. Making the opening address at Newman University, Liberal Democrat MP, Sir Alan Beith, summed up Chamberlain as a man whom Birmingham should thank but the Liberal and Conservative parties probably wished they had never met. A pioneering executive mayor whose enterprise still shapes Birmingham, he was also the figurehead, and more, for the emergence of the Liberal Party as an accountable, campaigning, national, mass-membership organisation. Yet his 'morally ambiguous' imperialism helped split the party over devolution for Ireland, hurtling him into a partnership with the Tories. His restless quest for policies that promoted workingclass welfare while reinforcing the unity of the British Empire then split the Tories. As Sir Alan argued, in our own time only David Owen's record is comparable.

Sir Alan was followed by Peter Marsh, who has written the definitive Chamberlain biography and edited for publication some of the Chamberlain family correspondence. Peter Marsh attributed Chamberlain's municipal success to his background as an entrepreneurial businessman, a self-proclaimed 'Screw King', who understood the social impact of industrial businesses on the city and the importance of finance in securing the success of his renovation plans. By persuading the council to take over the gas and water utilities, he created a revenue base on which the council was able to borrow the capital for redevelopment. Chamberlain's unusual mayoral enterprise

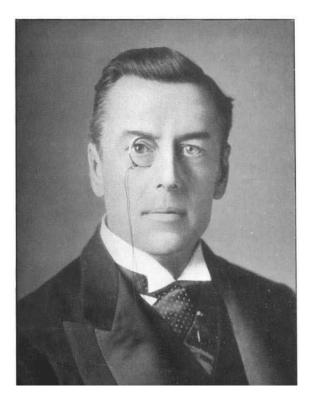
was compounded both by his creative vision of the post as prime ministerial rather than merely an honoured chairman, and by his unexpected partnership with Sir Richard Cross of Disraeli's 1874– 1880 government.<sup>1</sup>

The rest of the first day was taken up with a series of papers covering Chamberlain's interactions with the wider world: Chamberlain and his rivals; Chamberlain's posthome-rule career; and the representation of Chamberlain in the rich visual media of Victorian and Edwardian Britain. These formed the real meat of the conference for historians.

## Chamberlain and the wider world

Thomas Otte set out the community of interest between Chamberlain's imperialism and the outlook of the Salisbury government, which cemented the alliance with the Liberal Unionists despite differences in outlook between the two men. Chamberlain and some of the younger Conservatives preferred an Anglo-Saxon alliance on social-Darwinist grounds, favouring Germany over Salisbury's preference for France, and backed German expansion in China and Africa, at least up until the Boer War.

Jackie Grobler reminded delegates that Chamberlain was the only Victorian Colonial Secretary to visit South Africa and took them through the tangled and deceitful manoeuvres which provoked the Boer War. He suggested that, although Chamberlain worked well with Milner, he was not a comfortable ally of Rhodes. Chamberlain's attempts at reconciliation, during his post-war visit, were unsuccessful because the Boer War leaders refused to accept his vision of



a British South Africa or recognise the British contribution to its rebuilding. There are no memorials to Chamberlain in South Africa.

Relations with New Zealand's charismatic, radical premier, Richard Seddon, were rather more cordial, as Tom Brooking explained. Seddon was an autodidact - a selfmade mechanical engineer - and Popular Liberal. He introduced workmen's compensation and oldage pensions, causes favoured by Chamberlain in Britain, and supported Chamberlain's Imperial Preference scheme, as he saw the advantages to a small distant colony of a pact between the component nations of Britain's empire. He favoured an imperial council and sent troops and horses to support the British in the Boer War - and was furious when Chamberlain resigned in 1903.

#### Chamberlain and his rivals

Although politics is well known to be competitive, Chamberlain had a reputation for unusually sharp elbows that was both confirmed and undermined at this conference. Many think of Chamberlain as the archetypal Victorian radical, but Eleanor Tench showed that there were other, different radicals even among those who sympathised with Liberal Unionism when she compared the career of Chamberlain with that of Leonard Courtney. Elected to parliament in the same year as Chamberlain, and like him a friend of John Morley, Courtney was associated with the Chamberlain and Dilke radicals-though Ms Tench suggested that even where they did agree it was not for the same reasons. An Anglican rather than Nonconformist, Courtney still supported temperance and disestablishment and put proportional representation ahead of ministerial office. He voted against Jesse Collings' proposals for 'Three Acres and a Cow' and against home rule but was notoriously anti-imperialist, losing his seat for his pro-Boer stance in Chamberlain's war.

James Dixon, the great-grandson of George Dixon, elaborated on the thesis of his recent biography of his ancestor. Both Chamberlain and Dixon had been committed, active Liberals, both had been councillors for Birmingham and both represented the city in parliament. Chamberlain and Dixon cooperated to promote free primary education in Birmingham and to win elections. Yet Chamberlain acted to undermine Dixon's leadership of the national education campaign and pressured him to allow Chamberlain to succeed him at Westminster. Despite which, Dixon stuck with Chamberlain when he split from Gladstone over home rule.

However, Roland Quinault's survey of the relationship between Chamberlain and Gladstone sought to overthrow the orthodox view that they had always been uneasy colleagues and that Chamberlain sought to be Gladstone's successor, views propounded in particular by Chamberlain's early biographer J. L. Garvin. Prior to his election to Westminster, Chamberlain had campaigned against the education policy of Gladstone's first government as insufficiently radical, but was reconciled after Gladstone's 1874 defeat. In opposition, he praised Gladstone for taking up the cause of the Bulgarians and sided with the older man over the Tories' Afghan and Zulu wars, seeing no alternative for the leadership. Gladstone recognised Chamberlain's organisational skills, seeking to harness the Birmingham-based National Liberal Federation (NLF) to the mainstream. He brought Chamberlain into his 1880 Cabinet despite his lack of experience, and the two shared

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conference.

views on the expansion of suffrage and the obstructionism of the House of Lords. Gladstone backed Chamberlain's National Board scheme for Ireland when it was believed it might defuse the drive to home rule. Even when the pair parted over home rule, Chamberlain refrained from hostile comment about the Grand Old Man; and while Gladstone sought to reclaim Chamberlain through the round table talks, he could not bridge the philosophical gulf between them. While Gladstone thought Chamberlain 'the most remarkable man of his generation', Quinault did not believe that Chamberlain would ever have succeeded to the Liberal leadership, as he lacked the support to overcome Hartington and he faced a substantial obstacle in Queen Victoria's hostility.

#### The context of pre-war politics

Separation from the Liberals in 1886 opened a new phase in Chamberlain's career. Naomi Lloyd-Jones explored the battle for constituencies occasioned by home rule. She aimed to undermine Jonathan Parry's view that grass roots Liberal support for was for Gladstone personally rather than for Irish devolution itself. Her work, which is not yet complete, has mapped the 1,500 meetings that occurred in the aftermath of Gladstone's embrace of home rule and the resolutions that were discussed at these meetings, where they were contested within a local party and where parties competed to test local opinion. Meetings were particularly likely in areas where the MP was likely to oppose home rule, which led to criticisms that the NLF's Schnadhorst was 'wire-pulling' to coerce MPs towards the official party view. Efforts to secure a unanimous vote dictated the form of the resolution and in particular the inclusion of support for the Grand Old Man.

Cut off from much of his traditional support, Chamberlain did his best to retain the affection of Nonconformists and to bring them into sympathy with the Unionist alliance. Graham Goodlad argued that, as a Unitarian, Chamberlain was from a denomination that was a tiny minority but nevertheless one that was commercially successful and provided leadership for many campaigns – the Brahmins as it were of Nonconformity. While Chamberlain was 'on message' over education and disestablishment, his style suggested pragmatism rather than passion, and unlike Gladstone he was unable to build confidence in his audiences by employing the language of religion. Further he had differences with the Nonconformists over temperance, and in turn they rejected his utilitarian defence of coercive measures in Ireland. While there is evidence that Methodists supported the Unionist government during the Boer War, Chamberlain lost substantial Nonconformist support over the rates funding of established faith schools in the 1902 Education Act.

His need to create or extend a base of support after the Boer War and the Education Act, argued Oliver Betts, was the cause of Chamberlain's miscalculation in embracing tariff reform. Mistaken conclusions were drawn from by-elections at Dulwich and Lewisham, which the Conservatives held on to not because of the popularity of tariffs but because of the rising gentility of the area. Chamberlain was appealing to the electorate over the heads of fellow ministers, but it was an electorate that was more concerned with immigration than the threat of imports: the Conservatives did well at Bethnal Green, for example, on an anti-Jewish immigrant ticket. Evidence from Booth's surveys of the working class showed some trades would gain from import protection but others would lose from retaliation.

## A magnificent ego or just political nous?

It is hard to do justice to the final sessions of the first day, as so much of the material was pictorial, illustrating how Chamberlain was portrayed in the local and national press. Coming to fame before the development of moving pictures and sound recordings, Chamberlain's image was predominately formed in caricature and reinforced by other visual media such as post card sets and cigarette cards. While much was made of the feminising of Chamberlain in cartoons that portrayed him as Old Mother Hubbard or as a voluptuously shaped orchid, perhaps not enough was made of the way in which

#### **REPORT – JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN: IMPERIAL STANDARD BEARER, NATIONAL LEADER, LOCAL ICON**

Chamberlain cultivated his image. Always a sharp dresser, Chamberlain's orchid in the buttonhole, changed daily, became a trademark that helped the artists give him a recognisable persona. Most of the illustrations given in the presentations came from the Chamberlain papers, which also included a sample of his correspondence with a well-known cartoonist.

#### An evening at Highbury

Those conference goers who paid the necessary supplement had the pleasure of dinner at Chamberlain's home, Highbury, followed by a talk from Stephen Roberts. Highbury is a large, but by no means grand, Ruskin-influenced house which served as much as a political headquarters as domestic residence. In Chamberlain's time, the house had twelve bedrooms and thirty-four staff, of whom twenty were gardeners. The staff were mostly in their twenties and the policy was to recruit strangers to Birmingham to minimise the passing on of gossip. Annual garden parties for the party faithful could lead to speeches to (a tightly packed) crowd of six hundred in the hall if it rained. Intimate dinners were given to small groups of political allies and rivals, while private meetings in a smokewreathed library plotted progress. Highbury was so much identified with Joe that after his death the family moved away, and the building has now come into the keeping of Birmingham Council, though minus the extensive greenhouses that furnished those orchids for the Chamberlain image. Currently used as a wedding venue, the council plans a closer association between the home and its former owner.

#### A fanfare for Birmingham

The second day's proceedings opened with a newly composed *Fanfare for Birmingham* played in the theatre of the city's recently opened central library and a speech from the council leader, Albert Bore.<sup>2</sup> He was followed by Greg Clark, the Cities Minister, a post unheard of in Gladstone's time when cities were largely left to govern themselves.

The focus of the day was much more on the local context and current relevance. Michael Meadowcroft, Gisela Stuart MP and Lord Carrington, as representatives of the three main political parties, each claimed some of Chamberlain's legacy for their own and all argued for a return to greater initiative, autonomy and responsibility for local authorities. After a century of increasing Whitehall centralisation, patience may be required, though the Scottish referendum has opened a window of opportunity.

#### Chamberlain's duchy

Even so, time was found for the social culture of Joseph Chamberlain's Birmingham. Andrew Vail spoke of Chamberlain's relationships with the leading Nonconformist ministers, Dawson, Dale and Vince. The anti-Catholic Murphy riots of 1868 were exceptional; much more usual was the cooperation between the different denominations. Not only did the Unitarians and Quakers (such as Cadbury) exert influence out of proportion to their number but, in addition, over the course of the century, Nonconformists became a majority of church goers. Their political influence came from their development of the 'Civic Gospel', which preached the care of the poor not just through charity but also through the utilisation of municipal authority. The Civic Gospel was enthusiastically embraced by disciples such as Chamberlain. In addition, the involvement of budding leaders such as Chamberlain in Sunday school teaching strengthened and informed their participation in the campaign for state education.

Andrew Reekes revisited the exceptionalism of Birmingham in the 1906 general election. In that landslide, Liberals gained forty seats in Lancashire and similarly recovered ground in London, but Birmingham remained true to Chamberlain and, unlike the rest of the country, true to his fair trade vision. Only Sheffield and Liverpool showed comparable, though patchier, Unionist strength. Reekes argued that Birmingham had sympathised with fair trade since the mid-1880s and this was reinforced in a 1902 working men's petition. Chamberlain understood the nature of Birmingham businesses; its small-scale, craft-based organisations with weak





Conference speakers: Alan Beith MP, Michael Meadowcroft (photos © Graham CopeKoga)

union representation were those most threatened by an increasingly competitive world trade and the imposition of tariffs in Germany and America. Birmingham had long been renowned for its political organisation and this was not neglected by Chamberlain, who maintained trusted allies in key positions and ensured that loyalty was rewarded. Labour was politically poorly organised and Chamberlain even refused to share his duchy with his Tory allies. He understood the needs of the media, did not hesitate to employ female canvassers and dominated the public space by intimidation if necessary, as the riot occasioned by Lloyd George's visit in 1901 demonstrated. Again the lessons of Chamberlain's business life were reinforced. This was an executive who never forgot his home market, fostering good relations with his party workers and working-class voters.

The final academic paper, by Peter Bounous, drew attention to the construction dates of the various monuments to Chamberlain in the city and asked the question why they were all erected during his lifetime rather than in his memory. Was such 'pre-membering' public adoration, politics or ego? While Bounous conceded that there may have been an element of personal vanity, for example in the corner stone of the Council House, the timing of the monuments was much more suggestive of politically motivated public demonstration. The clock tower in the Jewellery Quarter was timed in relation to his resignation from government and renewed his links to small businessmen. 'Old Joe', the tower at the university of which Chamberlain was a principal sponsor, served to distract from the Boer War but also reminded the community of his commitment to promoting education. There are more – and more prominent - monuments to Chamberlain than to John Bright or Tory hero Colonel Burnaby, each popular in his time.

The second day also included a short film covering Chamberlain's career and an introduction to some of the library's Chamberlain archives, including correspondence, photographs, posters and the local architect's original plans for Highbury. It ended with a tour of Birmingham's magnificent Council House led by some of the leading members of the current administration who showed some of the relics and artwork associated with Chamberlain and the council chamber in which he established his reputation.

In his book of essays, *Great Contemporaries*, Winston Churchill portrayed Joseph Chamberlain as a political weather maker, a man who created the agenda with which allies and foes were forced to comply – and this was the verdict most frequently repeated during the conference. Where delegates profited was in a greater understanding of the entrepreneurial spirit he employed to achieve his ends and the political culture of Victorian Birmingham which both shaped and sustained his endeavours.

## Tony Little is the Chair of the Liberal Democrat History Group.

- I Peter Marsh's speech is available at http://www.newman.ac.uk/files/ w3/media-centre/pdf/Peter%20 Marsh.pdf?q=95
- 2 Available at http://www.newman. ac.uk/media-centre/3596/conference-joseph-chamberlain-imperialstandard-bearer-national-leader-lo

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conference.

#### **Liberal Thinkers**

Conference fringe meeting, 5 October 2014, with Alan Beith, John Pugh, Liz Barker and Mark Pack; chair: Malcolm Bruce

#### Report by Douglas Oliver

THE LIBERAL DEMOCRAT HIStory Group met on the Sunday night of the October Federal Conference to discuss 'Liberal Thinkers' in an event scheduled to tie in with the pamphlet of the same name released for the first time in Glasgow.

Musing upon his long involvement with the party, the discussion's chair Malcolm Bruce-the outgoing MP for Gordon, appearing at his last autumn conference as a Westminster representative before his scheduled 2015 retirement - remarked that he was both an aficionado of liberal history as well as a living example of it. The fact that the Great Welsh Wizard, David Lloyd George, had lived for a few months after he was born was a useful reminder to himself that the present and past ultimately always fade in to one.

The Liberal Democrat History Group is always proud to laud the august partisan history of the Whig and Liberal Party, but also seeks, more widely, to highlight the breadth of thought and ideas represented by political thinkers of a liberal or liberal-minded disposition throughout time. With this in mind, Liberal Thinkers was conceived as a pamphlet intended to provide an accessible introduction to writers including John Locke, Adam Smith, Mary Wollstonecraft, Richard Cobden, John Stuart Mill, L. T. Hobhouse, John Maynard Keynes, William Beveridge, and many more.

The four speakers introduced by Bruce were asked not only to discuss the works of the thinkers from the pamphlet that they found most impressive, but also to highlight the enduring legacy of the chosen writers' work and to delineate their relevance to liberalism and the domestic and international political struggle of today.

Inspired by his own long service as MP for Berwick Upon Tweed, the opening speaker, Alan Beith, noted two other illustrious Liberals who had represented the constituency at Westminster within the twentieth century: Foreign Secretary Edward Grey and the man often credited with designing the modern welfare state, Sir William Beveridge. Beith recalled that when he arrived in the area in the early 1970s, Beveridge's 'first-principles' approach and reflective poise was still widely remembered by locals in their mutual corner of north-east England. Beveridge was known in the area for his sometimes philosophical village hall discursives; and whilst he did occasionally contribute to canvassing and leafleting efforts locally, he was unenthusiastic about the micro-level of politics, which likely contributed to his electoral defeat to the Conservatives in May 1945. Given his deeply academic and cerebral outlook, Beveridge was best suited to looking at the big issues of politics: Beith's agent in the 1970s, Mrs Gregson, reported that Beveridge had confided in her, 'If they want to know what I think, they should read my books.'

His most famous publication, Social Insurance and Allied Services, better known as 1942's 'Beveridge Report', is often considered the blueprint for the welfare state, an assessment that Beith resiled from because of its simplicity. Whilst Beveridge's ideas had been appropriated by social democrats and socialists, the man himself was definitively a liberal, being a pragmatist with an aversion to a topdown command structures. The Beveridge version of welfare, Beith felt, included a flavour of the mixed economy, as well as provision for input from the voluntary sector and friendly societies. The late twentieth-century welfare system that the Labour government designed was less diverse in approach, and was consequently more prone to bureaucracy and sclerosis.

The key hallmark of Beveridge's method was, according to Beith, careful study and empirical analysis. If Beveridge had reflected today on such issues as the controversial 'Bedroom Tax', he would have

#### **REPORT – LIBERAL THINKERS**

felt it necessary to study its costs and benefits before deciding on an approach, as opposed to being tied to dogma. In his own time, for instance, Beveridge was willing to accept private relationship of GPs to the NHS, because it seemed like an effective way to deliver results, rather than because of any rigid position. Beith remarked, in a response to the audience, that it is likely that Beveridge would feel today that the twenty-first-century NHS-afflicted by all the constraints of an ageing population should, in turn, evolve to survive.

Whilst Beveridge sought to consider issues on a case-by-case basis, he was adamant about the need to defend liberal principles when they were clearly under threat. Though he was a close friend and associate of Beatrice and Sidney Webb, and saw some common cause with a centrist Fabian approach to public policy, he was appalled by their dalliance with the Soviet Union and Stalin in the latter part of the 1930s. He felt the threat of Communism to individual freedom to be clear and visceral: 'it represents savagery ... it means the devil'.

Meanwhile, whilst he identified 'Want' as one of society's great domestic social ills - along with disease, ignorance and squalor he specified idleness as the greatest evil: 'idleness alone will suffer want'. It was this belief that drove him to focus on the importance of tackling unemployment: though he favoured countercyclical or 'Keynesian' economic policy, he regarded it as a tool for encouraging people to make the most of their capabilities, rather than out of a more doctrinaire conception of the state's leadership in the economy.

Despite the tumultuous times of his own political career, Beveridge's politics are undoubtedly contemporary and relevant. Beith made clear that he was a passionate internationalist, and would have been exercised by the dangerous eccentricity of the modern Tory attitude to Europe. Domestically, he was also a great believer in housing construction as a means of supporting people's living standards and opportunities: in the 1930s he moved to the northeast, to live in a housing project he had helped bring forward, as he felt it was important to show that it was good enough to be lived in. He was also a great supporter of education

and, in this light, it was no coincidence that he spent so much of his life as an advocate for it in his role as director of the LSE. Meanwhile, although he was an instinctive civil libertarian, Beveridge was nuanced enough to appreciate the potent threat that crime could inflict on personal freedom.

Beveridge remarked on his deathbed in 1963 that he had 'still so much to do' and would doubtless have been fascinated as well as tortured by the problems of the modern day. With that in mind, Beith believed the lessons of Beveridge's life and thought – that an actively developed state can play a useful role in preserving and enhancing individual freedom, though only when public policy is rationally conceived and dextrously implemented – were useful for the party in coalition and beyond.

Liberal Democrat MP for Southport, John Pugh, followed Beith with a discussion of Thomas Hill Green, who had been important figure in his own political development. A Balliol academic, Green was a leading radical reformer and proponent of the temperance movement in the mid-Victorian period (he lived between 1836 and 1882). A leading figure in the 'British Idealist' movement and influenced by continental thinkers such as Hegel, Green has grown in recognition in very recent years, and is sometimes seen as a precursor of the 'social liberal' strand of thought within the Liberal Democrats.

Pugh outlined the seeming irony of the contrast between Green's apparently established English life and academic background, and the thinkers that had influenced him most in terms of his broader philosophical approach. In the midnineteenth century, Green was a leading disciple of enlightenment thinkers Hegel and Kant. In Pugh's mind, this gave Green the necessary latitude to critique not just David Hume but even the man voted by the Liberal Democrat History Group in 2007 to be the greatest Liberal in history, John Stuart Mill.

According to Pugh, Green took issue with Mill's philosophy of government outlined in *On Liberty*. In this, as Pugh put it, the latter conceived of 'government as a thing which occurs as ringmaster; as long as people don't hurt each other, that is fine' – falling in line with the

Liberal Thinkers was conceived as a pamphlet intended to provide an accessible introduction to writers including John Locke, Adam Smith, Mary Wol-Istonecraft, **Richard Cob**den, John Stuart Mill, L. T. Hobhouse, John Maynard Keynes, William Beveridge, and many more.

famous 'harm principle'. According to Green though, and Pugh, government cannot view human activity with complete detachment. Occasionally, though not necessarily often, it must act and Green felt that consequently certain points made by Mill about human conduct were left unresolved.

Nonetheless, Green was often ambivalent in his approach to the state and so, in Pugh's mind, should be considered 'liberal' in his flexibility. Green felt the state should be circumspect about exerting any influence which might upset the rights of individuals; he felt government power should only be deployed when clear threats to human liberty were apparent.

Pugh explained that, for much of the twentieth century, Green was an unpopular figure and that this was due to the central European flavour of his work. Though Green was famous during his lifetime and even to the end of the Victorian era, his recognition faded as the First World War made the central-European tenor of his work unfashionable. In the 1920s, Hobhouse criticised Green and explicitly referred to his work as being unpatriotic. Nonetheless, in the era of coalition, when the strains of government have encouraged certain wings of the party to express themselves more than in former times of placidity, Pugh felt that Green was an increasingly important symbol of the social liberal roots within the party, albeit one that provided a sympathetic juxtaposition to the great J. S. Mill.

Baroness Liz Barker followed as the third speaker on the panel by highlighting the influence of Mill's spouse, Harriet Taylor Mill. As Barker explained, the early roots of their relationship were controversial and – by the standards of the time – scandalous. Their liaison had begun several years before Harriet's first marriage had ended, and had been tacitly accepted by her then husband, John Taylor, so long as he and his wife could maintain superficial unity. Mill went on to marry Harriet in 1851, two years after Taylor's death.

Despite their contravention of Victorian mores, the strength of their marriage and the endurance of their mutual affection were felt by most who knew them – including Thomas Carlyle – to be a reflection, above all, of their shared sense of intellectual respect. As Barker noted, the two first met at a discussion on the rights of women in society. Whilst the besotted Mill declared Harriet a critical influence on all of his later work, including *On Liberty*, the impact that Harriet had on his work was perhaps most clear with regards to his deeply influential contribution to the fledging feminist movement.

Mill credited Harriet as coauthor of his seminal 1869 publication, The Subjection of Women, which showed remarkable similarities to and bore the influence of her 1851 work, The Enfranchisement of Women. Their work in this area showed that they were particularly exercised by the effect of mid-Victorian marriage arrangements on the curtailment of female liberty; however, their work was of particular importance and inspiration to the incipient suffragist movement. Whilst Mill is most remembered for his work on personal liberty in general, he was a supporter of female suffrage and, as an MP, proposed votes for women in 1867 as an amendment to the Second Reform Act. When women first won the vote in 1918, the first act of Milicent Fawcett and the NUWSS was to convene in celebration at Mill's statue in Temple Gardens.

In response to a question from the audience, Barker did accept

that a precise delineation of Harriet's work within the scope of Mill's broader opus was impossible. Nonetheless, their collective impact was huge, and their relevance and impact endures in a very potent manner and neither's legacy can be understood without the other.

Mill's legacy is often considered in Westminster today, but Barker felt that this influence extends also to his spouse. Barker felt that, were she alive today, Harriet Taylor Mill would have been very proud of the party's stance on gay marriage and its very obvious derivation from Millian liberal first principles. Meanwhile, Barker concluded, Harriet would have been a powerful critic of contemporary global religions and their attitude to marriage and individual rights, as well as also having a view of individual responsibility within such arrangements.

The final member of the panel to draw inspiration from the pamphlet was Liberal Democrat blogger and author, Mark Pack. Whilst cognisant of the paradox of choice, Pack decided to focus on two figures above all other because of their enduring legacy for the Liberal Democrats: Charles James Fox and, like Alan Beith, Sir William Beveridge.

For Pack, smilarities can be drawn between and Fox and two recent leaders of the Liberal Democrats: Charles Kennedy and Nick Clegg. Fox's reputation was associated with ardent support for civil liberties in the face of the harsh conservatism represented by those, like his rival Pitt, who would exploit domestic fear of foreign spectres such as Robespierre to reduce individual liberty on the British side of the Channel; the comparison with New Labour's exploitation of the image of Saddam Hussein is clear.

Whilst this, combined with his famous proclivity for alcohol consumption, might encourage comparisons with Kennedy, Pack also highlighted the similarity of his controversial 1783 pact with the Conservative Lord North, with the position and principle of the current leader of the Liberal Democrats, Nick Clegg. Like Clegg, Fox put aside his own animosity to a Conservative foe in the name of a broader political goal and national good. In the case of Fox, however, his unlikely coalition was aimed at reducing the harm to the political system caused by a volatile king and the attempted restriction of habeas corpus. Whilst Clegg's position might seem sui generis, together with the example of Fox it illustrates, in Pack's opinion, the nimbleness of liberal politics to face up to practical circumstances, unconstrained by the straitjacket of the left-right dogma of other parties.

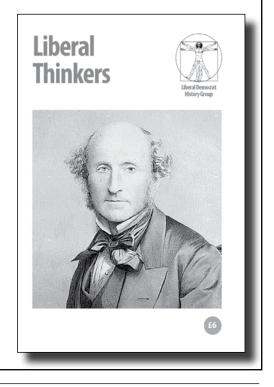
## **Liberal Thinkers**

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#### **REPORT – LIBERAL THINKERS**

Pack pointed out that, despite only brief stints in government, Fox was notable not only as the person who created the role of leader of the Opposition, but also as the first ever Foreign Secretary. Meanwhile, from a position outside of government, his strong personality and eloquence helped crystallise liberalism and Whiggery in British politics. Whilst, before, liberalism had only been nebulously associated with opposition to such forces as the monarchy, under his leadership, they gained a wider appeal linked to a clear delineation of principle, which proved enduring.

Nonetheless, upon summation, Pack emphasised that Fox's career should be judged a failure in a political sense, because he spent such a tiny proportion of it in a position to exert direct influence over people's lives in government. In this context, Pack compared Fox to William Beveridge. Echoing many of the initial points made by Alan Beith, Pack emphasised Beveridge's heterodox and flexible approach, which could only be understood within the liberal tradition and was not recognisable in the way socialists and the modern Labour Party built the welfare state. However, Beveridge was not a political victor and this affected his ability to disseminate his principle further.

Whilst Fox was a great personality, rhetorician and bon vivant of his age, Beveridge was a considered thinker who left a great legacy of thought. Fox was not original but he was a good adaptor of other people's thoughts and this was a very important political skill. Nonetheless in Pack's view, the lack of political success that both experienced was a reminder that, without campaigning nous and consequent political success, it is difficult for Liberals to improve people's lives – although this is ultimately the purpose of the creed.

The discussion concluded with a question from an audience member asking whether it was possible for an active political personality in the modern age to devote the necessary intellectual effort to bring forward advances in philosophical or political thought.

Barker felt that the rise of social enterprise organisations like Nesta was exciting and provided a more likely avenue for emerging thought

Malcolm Bruce finished the meeting with a reflection that liberalism was one of the nation's most potent and valuable gifts to wider humanity – with British liberal principles recited frequently from North America, to **South Africa** to Hong Kong.

than the circumstances of serving MPs, bogged down with constituency casework and the demands of an active media. Nonetheless, Barker felt there was a potential for synthesis between data and innovative political thought which had as yet remained unexploited and which would be an emerging challenge and area of interest.

Pack said that he was encouraged by the work of thinkers like the occupational psychologist John Seddon, who had come to prominence through ideas such as the notion of 'failure demand'. However, Pack felt that he also sometimes lacks the necessary communicative power to disseminate his ideas more widely into broader political life.

Malcolm Bruce finished the meeting with a reflection that

## REVIEWS

### 'Unquestionably a remarkable woman'<sup>1</sup>

Janet Hilderley, *Mrs Catherine Gladstone* (The Alpha Press, 2013)

Review by **Tony Little** 

HE SUFFRAGETTES – and the Pankhursts, in particular – have much to answer for. Not only have they helped establish the myth that their early-twentieth-century campaign with its petty violence was responsible for women gaining the vote, but also that until that event in 1918 women were not involved in politics. Not only have they eclipsed the role of the constitutional suffragists but by contrast have reinforced the view that Victorian women were submissive, confined to home management and therefore without involvement in public affairs.

In reality, Victorian women were involved in politics at all levels: from working-class participation in Chartist demonstrations to elite participation in the formation of Cabinets and the details of foreign policy; from the canvassing of voters to campaigning for property rights or against state regulation of prostitution.

liberalism was one of the nation's

most potent and valuable gifts to

eral principles recited frequently

from North America, to South

Africa to Hong Kong. Nonethe-

less, at home as well as abroad, lib-

eralism is still worth defending as

a partisan as well as a philosophical

concept: the other two parties have

not absorbed it simply because they

cannot. For this reason, Bruce con-

not too many people in the party

with time left for political philoso-

phy in the autumn of 2015, because

they will instead be actively legis-

Douglas Oliver is Secretary of the Lib-

eral Democrat History Group.

lating for it within Westminster.

cluded with the hope that there will

wider humanity - with British lib-

Consequently, it is important to be reminded that behind the stereotypes were real people with their own personalities and idiosyncrasies, with their own achievements and errors. Liberals in particular need to rescue the positive role played by women associated with the party, since some of the men in the Edwardian Liberal Party, such as Asquith, have been established as the chief obstacle to female progress.

Catherine Gladstone was the wife of William Ewart Gladstone. Their marriage lasted well beyond its golden anniversary and for virtually the whole of that time Gladstone was a frontbench spokesman, party leader, Prime Minister or Chancellor of the Exchequer. On the basis alone that 'behind every great man ...', Catherine deserves the attention of biographers. But that would be to short-change the reader. Catherine's life offers so much more.

In the style of Victorians, the Gladstones were a prolific family producing a mass of diaries, letters and memos and, more importantly, conserving them. Catherine and William were almost archetypal but still unconventional elite Victorians. He was the son of a selfmade capitalist, who was educated at Eton and Oxford before being guided by his domineering father to a career in politics. She was the daughter of a baronet who married into the aristocracy. He dominated the Commons and from the platform, inspiring hate and fear in his opponents, but encouraged his children to challenge or contradict him during dining table arguments and was happy to romp with them on the floor of his study. Not formally educated, Catherine never contemplated employment; she was graceful and charming but essentially a 'Grande Dame'<sup>2</sup> whose 'first consideration was her husband'3. Yet her daughters were independent-minded women, one of whom became a pioneer of women's university education and another worked in the male environment of Downing Street as one of her father's patronage secretaries. Beautiful in her youth, Catherine remained handsome into old age but rarely fussed about her appearance. Accustomed to wealth, she lived in a remarkably Spartan fashion though occasionally chafing at Gladstonian penny-pinching. As a well-documented Victorian materfamilias, there is much in her life to confound our unthinking memory of the archetypal Victorian.

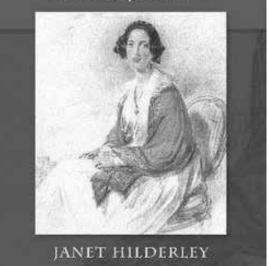
Janet Hilderley's biography is anecdotal rather than an analytical. It is at its strongest in its description of the courtship, marriage and development of family life. With a personality as significant as William Gladstone's, there is a danger that any biography of Catherine will be overwhelmed by the doings of her husband. This risk is avoided. Despite her previous experience as a biographer of Disraeli's wife, Hilderley treats the politics as background to the marriage rather than at its centre. She raises but does not pursue in depth the complexities of the marriage that arise from Gladstone's frequent absences and the risky friendships that developed out of his mission for rescuing fallen women. Neither does she penetrate very deeply into the relationships with the Gladstone children, particularly the girls, whose interests were subordinated to their parents' needs well into adulthood.

But women deserve to be seen as more than 'wife of' and 'mother of' and Catherine Gladstone, particularly, deserves attention in her own right. She was the first president of the Women's Liberal Federation (WLF). William Gladstone was such a dominant figure in Victorian politics that we can build our image of the political era around him but he was extremely untypical. He accepted leadership both as attribute to his capacity and as a God-given responsibility, but he did not seek to build a following in the manner typical of the leading aristocratic families. Consequently, Mrs Gladstone did not entertain in the aristocratic style of a Lady Palmerston or a Lady Waldegrave and indeed was sufficiently wayward to be considered almost a liability in that respect. It was with reluctance that she accepted the role at the WLF and abandoned it when her hostility to women's suffrage was challenged. But that does not mean that she had no political influence. It was her resolve which kept her husband in politics until an advanced old age, her support on his speaking tours which made them a practical possibility and her image which helped solidify his place in the affections of the widening electorate.

One aspect of Mrs Gladstone's waywardness comprises perhaps her most important claim to a good biography. It is alleged that she never missed the chance to importune her husband's important visitors for a donation to her latest charity. This was not the token 'do-gooding' of the lady of the manor, though Catherine never neglected her poorer neighbours, but fundraising on a substantial scale. She is reputed to have returned a cheque for £,500, substantially more than the cost of a suburban semi, to a donor on the basis that she had asked for £1000. The higher amount was produced.



'A woman not quite of her time'



Her involvement in charity ranged from the organising of soup kitchens for the Lancashire unemployed displaced by the US civil war, to employment opportunities for women rescued from prostitution; from the organisation of schools in Hawarden to the nursing of patients in a cholera epidemic, the provision of a free convalescent home and the housing and education for cholera orphans on her family estate. No detail was too small to escape Catherine, whether it was providing food for a waif watching her and the other 'great and good' attending a banquet or ensuring that the patients of her convalescent home enjoyed moraleraising entertainment.

With her background in the voluntary sector, Janet Hilderley devotes more space to Mrs Gladstone's charitable activity than some previous biographies, but I confess that, again, I had hoped that the approach would have been more comprehensive. An idea of how individual projects worked is given, the nature of Catherine's very hands-on involvement outlined and the range of her activities is illustrated. What is missing is an idea of the full scale of these projects,

#### REVIEWS

how far they overlapped and the degree to which they survived initial enthusiasm. One at least is still in operation today. To what extent was Catherine the prime mover? Did she work with a regular band of helpers or create teams for each project?

Janet Hilderley has written a gossipy, even 'noveletish' introduction to Catherine Gladstone, rather than the more academic analytical biography that Mrs G deserves and still awaits. Ordinarily, that should not be seen as an obstacle to recommending a book, but in this case I hesitate to do so out of concern over the weak editing and fact checking. On the back cover of the book and in the text, Catherine is described as an earl's daughter. But her father was a baronet and her mother the daughter of a baron. Gladstone's father. Sir John, is described as 'used to working among belching fires while children crawled under whirling machines' (p. 19). Sir John was originally a corn merchant who succeeded as a trader with the Americas and became a West Indian plantation (and slave) owner rather than a manufacturer. Catherine is described as making a trip to Dalmeny in 1837 to the 'home of the Jewish Lord and Lady Rosebery' where 'no mention is made of the heir, Archibald Primrose' (p. 10). The Roseberys were a Scottish family but not Jewish, though Archibald married a Rothschild. It is not surprising Archibald was not mentioned as he was not born until 1847: in 1837 Archibald's father was the heir. The well-known City solicitors, Freshfields, are described as bankers (p. 59), and John Bright is described as a 'Chartist politician' (p. 132). It would be unfair but not difficult to continue. This book would best appeal to those new to its subject, but these are the readers who should be most protected from such confidence-sapping errors.

### *Tony Little is Chair of the Liberal Democrat History Group.*

- I Sir Edward Hamilton, quoted in *Mrs Catherine Gladstone*, p. 237.
- 2 The Times obituary, 15 June 1900.
- 3 Sir Edward Hamilton, quoted in *Mrs Catherine Gladstone*, p. 237.

### The Grand Old Man and Dizzy re-examined

Dick Leonard, *The Great Rivalry: Gladstone & Disraeli* (I. B. Tauris, 2013)

#### Reviewed by Dr J. Graham Jones

N ACADEMIC CIRCLES, Dick Leonard is best known as the author of an authoritative trilogy of the lives of British prime ministers from the eighteenth century almost to the present day. Leonard is a leading, widely published authority on politics and elections in the UK and the European Union. His respected volume Elections in Britain, first published way back in 1968, is now in its fifth, completely revised edition. He was assistant editor and then Brussels correspondent of The Economist after a term as an independent-minded Labour MP himself. He has also worked for the BBC and contributed to many leading newspapers across the globe.

*The Great Rivalry*, building on the individual biographies in the

trilogy, describes the political drama of what was probably the most fascinating personal rivalry in the whole span of British political history, between the magisterial William Ewart Gladstone and the eclectic, mercurial Benjamin Disraeli, an unlikely Victorian as we imagine them today, but unexpectedly a favourite (and flatterer) of Queen Victoria. Although there are already several authoritative biographies of both men and many specialised studies on certain aspects of their careers, the author rightly felt the need 'for a single volume, of moderate length, which would constitute a comparative biography of the two men' (pp. ix-x). This book provides the full story of their rivalry and its origins, comparing the upbringing, education and personalities of the

**Janet Hilder**lev has written a gossipy, even 'noveletish' introduction to Catherine Gladstone, rather than the more academic analytical biography that Mrs G deserves and still awaits.

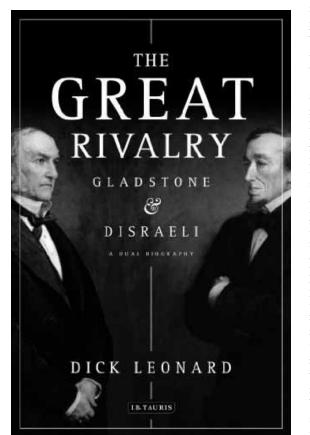
two leaders, as well as their political careers. Dick Leonard considers the impact of religion on the two men, their contrasting oratorical skills, their attitudes to political and social reform, foreign affairs and imperialism as well as their relationship over the decades with Queen Victoria.

The author has clearly fully immersed himself in the extensive scholarly literature on both politicians, but has kept clear of manuscript and documentary source materials. He has made full use of the published diaries of W. E. Gladstone edited by Colin Matthew (witness the multitude of references to 'GD' in the endnote references).

The volume is an unfailingly engrossing read from cover to cover - although it contains little that is really new. We read of Disraeli's lack of a formal education (he had attended neither public school nor university), of his first meeting with Gladstone in about 1835, and (reflecting his fondness for more mature women) of his marriage to Mary Anne Lewis, fully twelve years his senior, in August 1839. The love-match was to prove durable until her death nine years before her husband. He apparently succeeded almost completely in concealing the existence of his two illegitimate children. Gladstone, in striking contrast, received a gentleman's education at Eton, where he initiated the life-long practice of keeping an immensely detailed diary, and Christ Church, Oxford, where he achieved a celebrated 'Double First' in classics and mathematics in 1831 (see p. 29).

The main themes of both lives are most competently and vigorously dissected. Gladstone's pursuit, and attempted rescuing, of numerous 'fallen women' was apparently in full swing early in his career and continued unabated at least until his final retirement as prime minister in 1894 (see pp. 72 and 195). The main steps in his political career are clearly explained here, including the preparation and contents of his various budgets, especially the celebrated 1853 budget speech which continued for four hours and 45 minutes. Earlier in his parliamentary career he had been viewed 'as something of a maverick whose

heart was not really in the political game' (p. 91). When he received the queen's (reluctant) offer of the premiership for the first time in 1868, he was at his Hawarden Castle home indulging in his second favourite pastime of tree-felling on the estate. The account of the impressive welter of reforming legislation passed during his first administration of 1868–74 is comprehensive. Even so, its passage did not endear him to the queen whose heart – unlike Disraeli - he certainly never won. Gladstone's efforts to cajole her out of her inordinately lengthy period of reclusiveness following the tragic, premature death of the prince consort in 1861, and to bestow upon the Prince of Wales a far more extensive role in public life, met with an icy response from the monarch. When Gladstone returned to power for the second time in 1880, the queen wrote to her daughter Vicky that the experience was 'a bitter trial for there is no more disagreeable Minister to have to deal with' (p. 178). As late as 1892, when Gladstone's fourth and last ministry was formed, Queen Victoria had seriously considered an attempt to avoid having 'that dangerous old fanatic thrust



down her throat', but she was dissuaded from pursuing such a strategy (p. 189). There was never any reconciliation between these two headstrong figures.

Disraeli's political career, too, is outlined competently and with conviction. As Tory leader in the early years, he was, apparently, 'far more single-mindedly committed to his political career than Gladstone', fully mastering government blue books and other official documentation, and spending many long hours in the chamber each day, partly as the result of the ineptitude of his colleagues (see p. 73). His detailed daily reports to the queen on the proceedings of parliament much impressed her, she fully supported his proposal that his elderly, ailing wife might become Viscountess Beaconsfield in her own right in 1868, and he, in turn, was instrumental in ensuring that the queen should become Empress of India in 1876 - to the intense annoyance of the Prince of Wales (p. 164). When Disraeli died in 1881, the queen was most anxious for her old friend to be given a grand state funeral at Westminster Abbey, an ambition, however, thwarted by the terms of his will.

The evolving, ongoing relationship between Gladstone and Disraeli is carefully noted at various points in the narrative. Gladstone was certainly sympathetic when Mary Anne Disraeli suffered serious illness and when she died, aged 80, in 1872, but thereafter, generally, 'their relationship descended into one of pure hatred' (p. 135). Disraeli, we are told, proved supportive of the passage of the Secret Ballot Act of 1872 – although it had been introduced by Gladstone's first administration. Leonard is especially competent on the political significance of Benjamin Disraeli's many, highly regarded novels. Some of his Conservative colleagues 'took a dim view of his literary activities, believing that he pursued them at the expense of his parliamentary work', so that, in consequence, 'he had failed to mount an effective challenge to Gladstone' (p. 150). Furthermore, in the opinion of the author, he was really 'not much of a social reformer himself', other ministers being responsible for the framing of social legislation. It was, rather, his novels, pre-eminently Sybil or the

*Two Nations*, 'which gave him the reputation for being sympathetic to the poor and the working class' (p. 204).

Gladstone was to survive Disraeli by a little over seventeen years. In the penultimate chapter which examines this final period (1881–98), the most evocative image is that of the still vigorous, elderly man transporting in a wheelbarrow some 32,000 volumes from his Hawarden home to the newly established St Deiniol's Library which he had recently founded with a huge pecuniary donation of  $f_{40,000}$ . Recently rechristened the Gladstone Library in 2010, it still serves its purpose well to this very day, preserving and honouring its founder's ambitious ideals for its purpose. A final, brief section contrasts the roles and contributions of the two politicians and points up their continuing influence extending even to the present day coalition government.

At some points, the author, clearly the victim of a tight word limit, is compelled to simplify and generalise. But he has still succeeded in producing eminently readable and valuable mini-biographies of these two outstanding political figures. Throughout, the text is penned in a lively, personal, compelling writing style, sure to captivate the reader. The book also includes some nice, evocative photographs. It should certainly be read alongside Richard Aldous's The Lion and the Unicorn: Gladstone vs Disraeli (Hutchinson, 2006), reviewed by the present reviewer in a previous issue of this journal,<sup>1</sup> to which it is an admirable companion volume. Both books have succeeded in providing significant new perspectives on the two preeminent political figures of the Victorian age and will surely prove durable and influential. My advice would be to digest and appreciate the contents of both.

Dr J. Graham Jones was formerly Senior Archivist and Head of the Welsh Political Archive at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

I Dr J. Graham Jones, 'Dizzy and the Grand Old Man', *Journal of Liberal History*, 58 (Spring 2008), pp. 40–1.

#### **Michael Freeden's Liberalism**

Ben Jackson and Marc Stears (eds.), *Liberalism as Ideology: Essays in Honour of Michael Freeden* (OUP, 2012) Reviewed by **Tudor Jones** 

HIS COLLECTION OF essays by an international group of political theorists, political philosophers, historians and political scientists seeks to assess the impact of Michael Freeden's wideranging analyses of liberal ideology, history and theory that have been developed over the course of more than thirty years. He has been engaged in that project as a Professor of Politics at the University of Oxford, editor of the Journal of Political Ideologies since 1996, and as the founder, too, in 2002, of the related Centre for Political Ideologies at Oxford.

The book's editors, Ben Jackson and Marc Stears, state that it provides 'a broad and critical examination of the key themes in Freeden's work', covering the two general debates most associated with him, concerning, first, the historical development of British liberalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, notably in his two important historical studies, The New Liberalism (1978) and Liberalism Divided (1986), and, second, the methods to be deployed in the study of both political theory and ideology, the latter being viewed as a central aspect of that academic discipline. These two areas of scholarly debate are explored in Part 1 of Liberalism as Ideology, on 'Liberal Languages', and in its Part II, on 'Ideologies and Political Theory'.

In the first of those areas, some of the book's contributors observe that Freeden has sought to underline the internal diversity of liberalism as an ideology, and hence the need to avoid confining it to one doctrinal strand – for example, to an economic liberal one that emphasises the asocial individual, property rights, economic freedom and the limited state to the exclusion of a social liberal strand that emphasises social welfare, communal responsibility, positive freedom and state intervention.

Freeden's second main area of academic concern, at least since the late 1990s, has lain, other essayists point out, in stressing the significance of ideology and ideological debate for 'concrete', actionrelated political thinking developed in the face of public debate by some politicians and political activists and by social reformers, rather than just by professional political theorists or political philosophers.

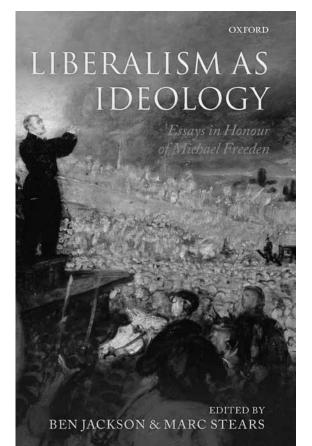
Among the essayists' own contributions to the scholarly examination of the development of liberalism, David Leopold provides some interesting reflections on the place of utopian theorising, that is, of detailed descriptions of an ideal society, within Western liberalism in the early and late twentieth century - specifically, in the work of J. A. Hobson, the British new liberal thinker, and in that of John Rawls, the American political philosopher. In another essay by Ben Jackson, more overtly historical in its approach, and which, among the book's thirteen essays, may be the one of greatest interest to readers of this journal, another key theme in Michael Freeden's early academic work is explored - namely, the relationship between the new liberalism and socialism in early twentiethcentury Britain. Jackson here emphasises the mutual influence and intellectual interdependence of those two ideological traditions. But he argues, too, that 'the intellectual influence of socialism on the new liberalism has been understated' by both historians and political theorists. Freeden's early historical works had meticulously documented, he recognises, the extent to which British socialists had been influenced by the ideas of new liberal theorists such as J. A. Hobson and L. T. Hobhouse. Jackson maintains, however, that new liberal theorists also drew on arguments and ideas that were 'socialist in their intellectual provenance', whereas Freeden had contended that: 'Liberal influences among many socialist leaders and intellectuals seem to have been stronger than the reverse'.

In offering his revised account of the British progressive tradition, Jackson traces the influence of This collection of essays by an international group of political theorists, political philosophers, historians and political scientists seeks to assess the impact of Michael Freeden's wide-ranging analyses of liberal ideology, history and theory that have been developed over the course of more than thirty years.

socialist ideas, as promoted within the trade unions and cooperative movement, and as formulated by Fabian socialists, syndicalists and guild socialists, upon the new liberalism by examining in particular the attitudes of new liberal thinkers towards the central socialist policy idea of the public ownership and control of industry. He points out that in the first half of the twentieth century the British new/ social liberal programme was not just focused on fiscal policy, social policy and labour market reform. It also included advocacy of a limited but significant measure of public ownership of productive resources. This was evident in works of political theory produced by Hobson and Hobhouse before 1914, in the debate surrounding the future of the coal industry after 1918, and in Sir William Beveridge's views on socialist planning during the 1930s and 1940s. Jackson makes these points effectively, but not in such a way as to undermine Freeden's earlier contention in 1979, in The New Liberalism, that 'intellectually and ideologically, liberalism itself was fully responsible for, and capable of, transforming its political doctrines'.

Other essays in the first section of *Liberalism as Ideology* provide studies of American, Indian and European liberalism. The book's second section is much more theoretical and methodological in its approach and focus, dealing throughout mainly with Michael Freeden's more recent concern with the study of ideology and the role of ideological analysis within political theory.

In an essay that draws a clear distinction between, on the one hand, a historically informed study of political ideologies and, on the other, the philosophical investigation provided by analytical, normative political philosophy, as practised by John Rawls, Robert Nozick, Ronald Dworkin and others, Andrew Vincent, while recognising that each is of scholarly value, argues for a 'positive segregation' between the two modes of intellectual enquiry. Vincent notes, too, that, as Freeden has also argued, the 'overemphasis, in much recent political philosophy, on synchronic abstracted reasoning can lead to a virtually semi-private professional academic language, which bears



little or no relation to the realities of politics, as perceived by the mass of ordinary citizens.' Analytical political philosophy (which Freeden usually refers to as 'philosophical liberalism' or 'Anglo-American political philosophy') is thus portrayed, in my view with a significant degree of justification, as, in spite of its various intellectual insights, largely out of touch not only with both the constrained realities and the fray of political practice but also with academic disciplines other than philosophy.

Other essayists in the book make similar critical observations about analytical political philosophy, although Gerald Gaus does offer a defence. It has to be said, however, that some of these criticisms are pitched at a level of abstraction reminiscent of their target. Nonetheless, in one of the volume's more accessible contributions to this debate, Mathew Humphrey, in an essay entitled, 'Getting "Real" About Political Ideas', presents it within the broader context of the 'realist' critique, as developed by Raymond Geuss and others, and as prefigured in Freeden's later work in political theory, of the 'ideal' mode of Anglo-American political philosophy.

As set out clearly by Humphrey, that critique has focused on three major alleged shortcomings of analytical political philosophy: first, its severe and unjustified abstraction; second, its lack of historical awareness and hence its lack of attention to the temporal and spatial contexts of political action and thought; and third, its application of normative models, stressing standards of logical consistency and argumentative coherence, and derived from moral philosophy, to the distinctive political realm. With regard to the second shortcoming, according to this 'realist' critique, 'ideal' political philosophers tend to 'freeze' historical time so that the principles they formulate (for example, Rawls on justice) appear timeless and universally valid.

With regard to the third shortcoming, their application of the normative models of moral philosophy to the political realm thereby misses, so 'realist' political theorists also maintain, questions fundamental to political activity such as political disagreement and conflict (a central point that the philosopher Bernard Williams had earlier recognised). Humphrey notes, too, other questions that tend to be sidelined in this way, questions that pervade the history of modern political thought such as the exercise of political power, the development of institutions with sovereign authority, the need for collective decision-making, and a Hobbesian concern with the establishment of political and social order.

The subject-matter of political theory, which Michael Freeden views, in Andrew Vincent's words, as 'a capacious category containing both political philosophy and ideology as subcategories', should therefore be 'concrete political thinking', the product of, in the broad sense of the term, ideologists, in all its varied manifestations – for instance, as embodied in influential political treatises, in pamphlets, manifestos, periodicals, speeches, etc., rather than merely in the work of professional political philosophers.

The task of political theory should consequently, in Freeden's view, be to decode, understand and interpret these forms of 'concrete' political thought, these political ideas flowing through the social order. To that end, in his attempt to recapture the importance of ideological analysis for political theory, notably in his *Ideologies and Political Theory* (1996), and in his subsequent work, Freeden has developed a morphological theory of ideology which examines the complex structures in which the core and adjacent concepts of particular ideologies are configured.

In the final essay of the volume, entitled 'The Professional Responsibilities of a Political Theorist', Freeden himself engages with most of its themes, and, in addressing one of the most prominent of these, restates his belief that 'the colonization of political theory... by analytical and ethical philosophers over the past forty years ' has been 'a rearguard intellectual diversion from what we should be investigating in our role as students of society and of the thought that societies host'.

Liberalism as Ideology is a volume that contains many such perceptive observations and interesting reflections. On the debit side, while this tribute to Freeden's innovative and stimulating work in political theory is well merited, the pervasive mutually congratulatory tone of the volume tends at times to be wearing. In addition, some of its contributions, as has been noted, are presented in a highly abstract manner that engages with an internal debate of greatest interest to the academic practitioners of political theory and political philosophy rather to the general reader interested in the 'stuff' of politics, namely, political ideas.

Finally, this reviewer remains unconvinced that the methods of political theory offer a more fruitful approach, rather than a complementary one, compared with that of intellectual history, and specifically the history of political thought, for charting the development of British, and Western, liberalism, an undertaking to which Michael Freeden has made such a distinguished contribution.

Dr Tudor Jones is Senior Lecturer in Political Studies at Coventry University. His most recent book is The Revival of British Liberalism: From Grimond to Clegg (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

## The Liberals in Hampshire: Martin Kyrle's reminiscences

Martin Kyrle, *The Liberals in Hampshire – a Part(l)y History Part 1: Southampton 1958–65* (Sarsen Press, 2013) Review by Mark Pack

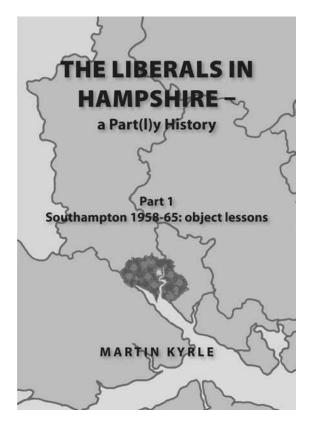
HERE HAS BEEN a recent and very welcome burst of histories of Liberal (Democrat) activism being published, such as Graham Tope's A Life in Politics, recording the contributions of people whose names would otherwise slip by the history books. In doing so, they paint a picture of what grassroots politics is actually like, often rather different from the sort of politics recorded in the memoirs of former ministers or analysed by political scientists. Martin Kyrle, a Liberal activist for over fifty years, is the latest to join this trend with a sixty-nine-page volume of his reminiscences and anecdotes, intended as the first volume in a series.

The collection tells the reader much about Martin, but this is not really an autobiography, for the tales jump about from one interesting event to another, giving a sense of what a small, often dysfunctional, political party organisation was like back in the 1950s and 1960s, rather than telling a continuous tale of his life.

He started off in Southampton, where 'attending the Executive Committee was seen [by other members] as an end in itself, not the means to one ... They saw nothing incongruous in spending an evening once a month debating the finer points of party policy when there was no possibility of any of their ideas being implemented, and saw no reason to complement their debates by undertaking practical activity which might make implementation possible, e.g. by standing for election'. Many of the obstacles to political activity that Martin Kyrle encountered are all too familiar even now, such as an Executive meeting getting completely hung up on ticket pricing for a fundraising event, to the extent that the meeting descended into a shouting match. Though it is not only in politics that meetings have a tendency to spend huge amounts of time generating large volumes of heat over minor details.

One part of the historic record that the book preserves is the contribution to Liberal Party campaigning techniques of John Wallbridge and his THOR organisation system. (Alas, even Martin cannot recall the origin of the name THOR itself.) The book also reproduces several election leaflets from the time, showing how not everything has changed – education, hospitals and being local featured just as strongly then.

At times the semi-professional nature of the publication shows



through, but these are only small blemishes in what is a light, quick and enjoyable read.

The Liberals in Hampshire – a Part(l)y History Part 1: Southampton 1958–65 by Martin Kyrle is priced at  $\pounds_{35}$  plus two first class stamps. Orders should be emailed to martinkyrle@fsmail.net.

Dr Mark Pack worked at Liberal Democrat HQ from 2000 to 2009, and prior to that was frequently a volunteer member of the Parliamentary By-Election team. He is co-author of 101 Ways To Win An Election and of the party's General Election Agents Manual.

# LETTERS

#### **Party colours**

I was fascinated by Graham Lippiatt's article on the history of party colours (*Journal of Liberal History* 84, autumn 2014). The suggestion that a movement from extremely diverse local choices of party colour to the present uniformity is connected to the rise of colour television, on to which to project a national party identity, seems likely to be correct.

However, the article only concerned Liberals in Britain. In a European context the Liberal colour scheme is more mixed. The official colours of the ALDE party are blue and yellow. In my experience, the media tend to use the yellow more often (such as in graphics showing seats held in the European Parliament) – although, on the

Colours used by Liberal parties in Europe		
Colour scheme	Number of member parties which use it	States in which those parties campaign
Blue	6	Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Luxembourg
Green	4	Netherlands, Croatia, Estonia, Sweden
Orange	3	Croatia, Lithuania, France
Yellow	2	Sweden, UK
Blue and yellow	2	Estonia, Germany
Blue and orange	2	Netherlands, Sweden
Blue and white	2	Lithuania, Catalonia
Magenta	2	Austria, Denmark
Blue and green	2	Slovakia, Slovenia
Yellow, red and green	1	Cyprus

ALDE website, at ALDE Congress and in other promotional materials blue is usually predominant.

Looking at parties that have seats in the ALDE Group in the 2014–19 European Parliament, the party colours are varied. In the following table, it should be remembered that many member states have more than one liberal party which may compete or collaborate at a domestic level, and may have the same or different colours, while working together in Brussels. I have included two French parties which sit as part of the ALDE group in Parliament but are not part of the wider ALDE Party.

The choice of official Liberal colour, reflecting state-level traditions and political history, thus varies across Europe, as Graham Lippiatt records that it once did across the UK. Blue is clearly the favourite and red almost entirely excluded. No doubt the wide variation will continue for some time yet.

Antony Hook (MEP Candidate, Liberal Democrat, South East England, 2014)

#### Orkney & Shetland; 1872 Ballot Act (1)

Michael Steed was, of course, correct in writing that Orkney and Shetland was won by a Conservative in 1935 and 1945 (Letters, *Journal of Liberal History* 84, autumn 2014). However, the constituency also departed from its post-Reform Whig/Radical/Liberal tradition when it was won by a Tory in 1835 who served until 1837. Further, in 1900, Orkney & Shetland was won by John Cathcart Wason (Liberal Unionist) who then defeated the incumbent Liberal MP. Wason, having departed from the Liberal Unionists, then successfully sought re-election, with Liberal and Liberal Unionist opposition, as an Independent Liberal at a byelection in 1902. Having then taken the Liberal Whip, he was re-elected as a Liberal in 1906 and in January and December 1910 and as a Coalition Liberal in 1918. After Wason's death in 1921, the constituency was represented, as from an uncontested by-election, by another Coalition Liberal who, as a National Liberal, was defeated by Sir Robert William Hamilton (Liberal) in 1922.

An interesting coincidence is that one of the pre-Reform MPs for Orkney & Shetland was Robert Baikie of Tankerness in Orkney, who was elected in 1780 but unseated on petition in 1781. When Jim Wallace, Liberal/Liberal Democrat MP for the constituency in 1983–2001 and Liberal Democrat MSP for Orkney in 1999–2007, was created a life peer in 2007, he took the title of Lord Wallace of Tankerness.

I would also comment on one of Michael Meadowcroft's queries about election counts in the same issue of the *Journal*.

At every count I have ever been at, from the Paisley by-election in April 1961 onwards, the papers from all the ballot boxes have been mixed before being sorted and counted by candidate. However, I recall that, after the Dumfries by-election in December 1963, it was reported at the next Scottish Liberal Party Council meeting by David Steel that in Dumfries the papers in each ballot box had been sorted and counted by candidate – hence the votes by candidate in each burgh and rural polling district were known. The implication was that the returning officer was inexperienced.

I also recall John Bannerman saying that at the general election count in Inverness in 1955, he thought he had won until the postal votes were counted – so the postal papers must have been counted separately,

Incidentally, as from the recent Scottish Independence Referendum, there is an ongoing investigation as to how it was possible to get some idea of total YES and NO votes from batches of postal votes while they were being verified.

Prior to the 1872 Ballot Act, with open voting, things were very different. Thus, for example, I have a note of the votes – for Ramsay and for Campbell (the future Sir Henry CB) – in each of the five burghs in Stirling Burghs at both the by-election in April 1868 and, on an extended franchise, at the general election in November 1868. I also have a note of the votes as between different categories of graduates in the two Scottish University constituencies at the 1868 general election.

Dr Sandy S. Waugh

#### 1872 Ballot Act (2)

Michael Meadowcroft (in Letters, Journal of Liberal History 84, autumn 2014) asks why, after the 1872 Ballot Act, it could be 'officially known' how individual votes had been cast, and wonders whether this was something peculiar to Wales. I think the answer to both questions may be: it wasn't, no.

In researching the Westmorland election of 1880 ('Ice in the centre of a glowing fire', *Transactions of the Cumberland & Westmorland Antiquarian & Archaeological Society*, 2008, pp. 219–40), I encountered local bigwig activists who claimed to have the exact figures for the distribution of votes at their particular polling station. These claims were, I think, based on intensive canvassing and telling, coupled with someone's desire to appear omniscient and important, rather than on illicit scrutiny of ballot papers.

Andy Connell

# THE LIBERAL-TORY COALITION OF 1915

In May 1915, following political and military setbacks, Liberal Prime Minister H H Asquith brought senior figures from the opposition parties into his government. This meeting, held jointly with the Conservative History Group, will look in detail at the background to the formation of the coalition and consider its performance in government before its dramatic fall in December 1916.

Speakers: **Dr Ian Packer** (Acting Head of the School of History and Heritage at Lincoln University, author of a number of books on Edwardian and Liberal politics) will look at the coalition from the Liberal side; Dr Nigel Keohane (Social Market Foundation, author of *The Conservative Party and the First World War*) will consider the coalition from a Conservative perspective. Chair: **Earl of Oxford and Asquith** (Raymond Asquith), the great-grandson of H H Asquith and the newest member of the Liberal Democrat team in the House of Lords.

**7.00pm, Monday 26 January 2015** (after the Liberal Democrat History Group AGM at 6.30pm) David Lloyd George Room, National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, London SW1

A Liberal Democrat History Group / Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors fringe meeting

# COMMUNITY POLITICS AND THE LIBERAL REVIVAL

The famous community politics resolution, adopted by the Liberal Party at its 1970 Assembly, helped to lay the foundations for revival after the party's loss of half its seats in the 1970 election. Discuss the community politics approach, what it meant and how it can help the Liberal Democrats in the future, with **Gordon Lishman** (co-author, *The Theory and Practice of Community Politics*) and **Mike Storey** (former leader of Liverpool council).

#### 8.15pm, Friday 13 March 2015

Room 13, Arena & Convention Centre, Kings Dock, Liverpool (conference pass needed for entry)