

establishing the Welsh Liberal Party in Wales – something we are still proud of today. He was a steadfast Liberal who cared for the people of Montgomeryshire and Wales. Emlyn was also a fervent advocate of Welsh culture and music having been President of both the national and international Eisteddfod.¹⁷

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

- 1 See J. Graham Jones, 'Emlyn Hooson's parliamentary debut: the Montgomeryshire by-election of March 1962', *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 81 (1993), pp. 121–29.
- 2 Norman Cook in his final article in the tour of the Welsh constituencies published in the *Liverpool Daily Post*, 15 April 1967.
- 3 NLW, Lord Hooson Papers, box 42, press cutting entitled 'The Assize of Youth'.
- 4 See the obituary in *The Guardian*, 26 February 2012.
- 5 See the reports in *The Times*, 18 and 19 January 1967; *The Guardian*, 19 January 1967; and Peter Barberis, *Liberal Lion Jo Grimond: a Political Life* (I. B. Tauris, 2005), p. 139.
- 6 Cited in Hooson's obituary in the *Daily Telegraph*, 22 February 2012.
- 7 See the penetrating analysis in Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Montgomeryshire's Liberal century: Rendel to Hooson, 1880–1979', *Welsh History Review*, vol. 16, no. 1 (June 1992), pp. 106–7.
- 8 *The Guardian*, 4 May 1978.
- 9 NLW, Lord Hooson Papers, box 45, PLP press release dated 15 April 1978, Emlyn Hooson's speech to the annual conference of the Welsh Liberal Party at the Commodore Conference Centre, Aberystwyth.
- 10 *Daily Telegraph*, 22 February 2012.
- 11 *Daily Telegraph*, 3 March 1979.
- 12 Election address of Emlyn Hooson, May 1979.
- 13 See Morgan, 'Montgomeryshire's Liberal century', pp. 107–8.
- 14 *House of Lords Debates*, vol. 430, c. 838 (20 May 1982).
- 15 See the obituary in *The Guardian*, 26 February 2012.
- 16 See the funeral report in the *Cambrian News*, 7 March 2012.
- 17 Wales Online website, consulted 16 May 2013.

REPORT

The Liberal–Tory Coalition of 1915

Evening meeting, 26 January 2015, with Ian Packer and Nigel Keohane; chair: Raymond Asquith (Earl of Oxford and Asquith and great-grandson of Herbert Asquith)

Report by **David Cloke**

IN MAY 1915, following political and military setbacks, Liberal Prime Minister H. H. Asquith brought senior figures from the opposition parties into his government – thus marking the end of the last solely Liberal government of Britain. Dr Ian Packer, Acting Head of the School of History and Heritage at Lincoln University and author of a number of books on Edwardian and Liberal politics, outlined the events that led to the formation of the Coalition, and went on to describe the difficulties that it faced and what eventually brought it down. He did this very much from the Liberal perspective. He was followed by Dr Nigel Keohane from the Social Market Foundation, author of *The Conservative Party and the First World War*, who provided further narrative as well as a commentary on the events described by Packer from a Conservative perspective.

Packer began by noting that the first wartime coalition formed in May 1915 had not received a very good press. Liberals disliked it as representing the end of the last Liberal government, and it was generally judged a failure for not securing military victory and the end of the First World War. However, he argued that it was not a particularly incompetent government and neither did it demonstrate that the Liberals were unable to adapt their ideology to fighting a modern war. Its problem was that it was in power during some of the most desperate times of the war.

The possibility of coalition had hung over British politics since the start of the war in August 1914. The period up until then has been seen as a classic period of two-party politics, but in fact most of the governments of the preceding thirty years had either been coalitions (Conservative and Liberal Unionist) or

minority governments, as had been the case from 1910. Hence, Packer suggested, there was not necessarily an aversion to coalitions. When the war began there was a possibility that a coalition could be formed immediately, as the Liberal Party was not wholly united over fighting the war. Packer argued that if a whole raft of cabinet ministers had resigned, the Prime Minister and the pro-intervention ministers might have entered into a coalition with the Conservatives then. However, Asquith's customary tact held his colleagues together.

Once through this difficulty things seemed brighter for the government. Despite having 25 fewer MPs than the Conservatives, the Liberals enjoyed a secure Commons majority through the support of the Irish Nationalists and the Labour Party. Although both parties included opponents of the decision to enter the war, both officially supported it. In Packer's view this bound them closer to the Liberals and made them fear a possible Liberal-Conservative coalition: the Labour Party because of the threat it might pose to trade union privileges, and the Irish Nationalists for fear it would block home rule. The Conservatives also had to be careful not to be seen to be criticising the government excessively, for fear of being seen as unpatriotic – a concern reinforced by Asquith's masterstroke of appointing Field Marshal Kitchener as Secretary of State for War. The Liberals, therefore, seemed safe.

Packer noted that the discussions within the cabinet regarding the conduct of the war did not appear to affect the cohesion developed over the course of the Liberal Party's nine years in government. The crucial conflict came over how much of the country's economic and manpower resources should

In May 1915, following political and military setbacks, Liberal Prime Minister H. H. Asquith brought senior figures from the opposition parties into his government – thus marking the end of the last solely Liberal government of Britain.

be devoted to the war. A group of ministers around McKenna, Runniman and Harcourt took a cautious approach, fearing that massively disrupting the economy would lead to financial collapse. Against them, Lloyd George associated himself with the policy of ‘total war’, calling for massive increases in munitions production and increased government intervention. Packer argued that these were not disputes between an approach that was ‘liberal’ and one that was not; the party had already accommodated itself to a significant degree of state intervention, especially in welfare. He argued that the differences were partly temperamental, while also reflecting pre-war attitudes to social reform. However, the divisions did lay the basis for the acrimonious debates in the 1915–16 coalition and caused lasting enmity between McKenna and Lloyd George.

Gradually during 1914–15 the cautious approach of McKenna was superseded, not least because of Kitchener’s decision to recruit a volunteer army of a million men. This rapidly started to distort the economy, with an accompanying expansion in munitions production and a contraction in other sectors starved of manpower and resources. The government was, therefore, increasingly drawn into the management of the economy regardless.

What finally undermined the government, however, was its inability to win the war quickly. Packer noted that military crises in France at the beginning of the war had led to a coalition government in that country; a similar series of events had the same effect in Britain. The decisive battle on the Western Front never came; instead, there were a series of military and diplomatic setbacks. The Anglo-French offensive in spring 1915 failed to break the German lines, and this was compounded by reports in *The Times* on 14 May 1915 suggesting that a lack of ammunition was to blame. The landing at the Dardanelles led to another stalemate, with neither the Ottoman Empire forced out of the war nor the neutral Balkan states brought into it on Britain’s side. On 15 May the Head of the Admiralty, the First Sea Lord, Lord Fisher, resigned over the Dardanelles policy.

Then, in the course of a meeting that apparently only lasted fifteen minutes, a coalition was agreed and the last Liberal government was terminated.

In these circumstances Asquith had to accept that the war was unlikely to be over quickly. The preceding events had damaged the government’s credibility and it became harder for the Conservative leader Bonar Law to restrain the attacks of his backbenchers. The government’s reputation was also being battered by the Conservative press which hounded it as being insufficiently patriotic over the treatment of enemy aliens and hinted that those Liberal ministers which had previously had close links with Germany were secretly traitors.

Asquith then took advantage of one of what he described as ‘the sudden curves in politics’, which Packer noted that he believed he had a special talent for spotting. On 17 May, Bonar Law visited Lloyd George at the Treasury to find out whether Fisher had indeed resigned. Although there were no contemporary records of the discussions held during the day, events seemed to develop as follows. During the discussions between Lloyd George and Bonar Law the idea of an all-party coalition emerged. Lloyd George then went to Downing Street to report this to the Prime Minister. Asquith in turn phoned Bonar Law and asked him to a meeting. Then, in the course of a meeting that apparently only lasted fifteen minutes, a coalition was agreed and the last Liberal government was terminated.

Why did Asquith take this momentous step? Packer suggested that he probably felt the need to agree a deal as soon as possible before cabinet authority and Liberal Party popularity waned any further. A coalition would force the Conservatives to share responsibility – and therefore blame – for the conduct of the war. This was not welcomed by all in the Conservative leadership, but they felt unable to refuse. Packer also noted that the Labour Party joined the coalition, whilst the Irish Nationalists did not. In questions it was suggested that the emotional consequences of Venetia Stanley ending her relationship with Asquith only a few days before had contributed to what, in retrospect, seemed like a rash decision. Packer replied that it was very hard to judge the impact of private emotional developments on public actions. However, his

sense was not one of a man being out of control but of one seizing the moment.

In Keohane’s view Asquith came away with the spoils. Asquith remained Prime Minister and in a cabinet of 22 members, 12 were Liberal and only 8 Conservatives, the remaining places being taken by the Labour leader Arthur Henderson and by Lord Kitchener. In addition, the positions taken by the Conservatives were relatively marginal ones: Bonar Law himself was Colonial Secretary. No Conservative had a central role in the conduct of the war other than Balfour at the Admiralty, who, as the previous Tory leader, Packer suggested, might have been placed there to provide a counterweight to Bonar Law. It was, thus, still very much Asquith’s government. Reflecting on a later question, Packer suggested that Asquith had perhaps been even too successful in marginalising the Conservatives and that this had contributed to his later difficulties.

Many Liberals outside government, however, were dismayed: a Liberal government had been dismantled without consultation. Many still saw the Conservatives as their main political enemy and had no wish to cooperate with them. Packer noted that Asquith had to be at his very best to convince a meeting of Liberal MPs to back the coalition. As Christopher Addison noted, ‘some of the members were moved to tears, as was the PM himself’.

Packer suggested that the real difficulty Asquith created for himself was one that he had not foreseen. Since he had been elected Liberal leader in 1908 no credible contender had emerged. Lloyd George had no supporters in cabinet other than Churchill (whose reputation had been eclipsed) and many others hated or despised him. Once the coalition had been formed, however, it was no longer necessary to be Leader of the Liberal Party in order to be Prime Minister. Indeed, Packer believed that it was probably the only way that Asquith could have been displaced.

A number of factors then came into play. Initially Asquith had intended to make Lloyd George Secretary State for War, but Kitchener’s popularity prevented this.

Instead Asquith moved Lloyd George to the new Ministry of Munitions. This new role enabled him to enhance his reputation as a wartime leader. Tackling one of the greatest crises facing the government suited him very well, and he did it successfully. The massive increase in munitions production kept the war effort going and made Lloyd George's reputation. At the same time, however, there were increasing questions over manpower and conscription. Lloyd George thought that conscription was necessary and made his views public in September 1915. This aligned him with the Conservative Party rather than with his Liberal colleagues, who were largely reluctant. 1915–16 saw a long political battle about conscription which led to it being pushed through in stages during 1916, mainly because the war effort simply needed the men.

Packer argued that once he had got conscription through Asquith very much lost his usefulness to the more hawkish members of the government. In addition, his dilatoriness on the matter frustrated Lloyd George. Events in 1916 only increased this sense of dissatisfaction: defeat in Iraq, the collapse of Romania and, above all, the Somme offensive. At the same time food production was perilously low and the general shortage of manpower in the economy meant that it was increasingly reliant on American loans. There was the beginning of talk of a compromise peace. Both the Conservatives and Lloyd George felt that Asquith was not being determined enough in his conduct of the war. Lloyd George also believed that the government needed to be restructured, with a small war cabinet operating at the highest level. As a questioner later noted, A. J. P. Taylor highlighted this period as a stark turning point between a negotiated peace and socialism.

On 1 December 1916 Lloyd George put a proposal for a war cabinet to Asquith. While Asquith would remain Prime Minister and Liberal leader he would not be a member of the war cabinet. Asquith's response was initially cautious and he indicated a willingness to negotiate. However, he later back-tracked, possibly, Packer suggested, because he did not believe that Lloyd George had

the Conservative support that he claimed. This was a miscalculation. On 5 December Asquith resigned and challenged his critics to put another government together. King George V approached Bonar Law, who replied that he could not form a government but suggested that Lloyd George could. Lloyd George was thus invited to form his government.

Packer then turned to an analysis of this outcome on the Liberal Party, on Liberalism and on the war effort. He believed that the Lloyd George coalition was not the inevitable outcome, arguing that Lloyd George had not intended to replace Asquith as Prime Minister. Nonetheless, the impact on the party was catastrophic: it was cut in two, which led directly to the electoral disaster of 1918. It also ended the progressive alliance with Labour, as Arthur Henderson refused to act with Asquith, arguing that Labour would decide for itself, and took on an enhanced role in the new coalition. As Packer noted later in response to a question, this enabled Labour to look like a national party and helped ensure that there was an independent successor to the Liberal Party waiting in the wings.

Was the 1915–16 government any better as a defender of Liberal values? Asquith might argue that conscription was introduced in a fairly liberal way, including allowing for conscientious objection. On the other hand Packer noted that a number of Liberal sacred cows had been slaughtered – such as free trade, following the introduction of the McKenna duties in the 1915 budget. Some eminently Liberal policies had not been enacted, such as home rule for Ireland after the Easter Rising. Thus the government had not been good for Liberalism either. A questioner at the end of the meeting argued that this indicated that the Liberals were ideologically incoherent. Dr Keohane did not wholly agree; he believed that there were a number of coherent ideological positions within the party, but they did not add up together. The Labour Party suffered from this also, but the Conservatives not at all, and this contributed to their later success.

Finally, in terms of the conduct of war, Packer observed that Lloyd George's government proved to be not much better than

its predecessor, and difficult decisions, such as rationing and price control, were still reached slowly. Behind the rhetoric there was much continuity.

In summing up, Packer noted that the birth of the coalition was inauspicious. It was a government no one really wanted, an ingenious scheme born on the spur of the moment. However, it had to deliver military success and without that the calls for new men and new measures would not go away.

Nigel Keohane began by noting that it was perhaps a little unfair on Asquith to talk about him in the Lloyd George Room of the National Liberal Club and wondered in passing whether in a hundred years time there would be a meeting about David Cameron in the Farage Room! His intention was to fill in any gaps and to provide the perspective of the Conservative Party, including its verdict on the coalition and its impact on the party.

Keohane shared Packer's view on the fluidity of politics at the time. He noted that Lord Selborne, a Liberal Unionist, had argued that it was the Conservative Party that was the natural heir to mid-Victorian Liberalism and to principles abandoned by the Liberal Party. Nonetheless, domestic politicians had been at loggerheads. The key divisions in Edwardian politics had been between tariff reform and free trade, and home rule and the union. Initially at least, these continued even after the patriotic truce agreed between the parties in August and September 1914. The Liberals continued to enact controversial legislation, such as the disestablishment of the Welsh Church and the Irish Home Rule Act, the latter leading the Conservative Party to walk out of the House of Commons in silence.

In 1915, however, war policy gained greater traction. No fewer than 139 Conservative MPs were fighting at the front and they reported back on the lack of guns and high explosives. Many Conservatives felt that the Liberals were not dealing with the issue of enemy aliens effectively. There were also divisions on the issue of drink. The government began to be worried about the effect of drink on munitions production and considered restrictions on the sale of alcohol. Conservatives, for a range

In terms of the conduct of war, Packer observed that Lloyd George's government proved to be not much better than its predecessor, and difficult decisions, such as rationing and price control, were still reached slowly. Behind the rhetoric there was much continuity.

of reasons, some self-interested, did not believe that alcohol was an issue. These divisions contributed to the climate prior to the formation of the coalition.

Keohane noted that thirty years ago historians would have been united in their view that the coalition government had been a failure. However, he believed that it did have some significant successes to its name: the increase in munitions production, keeping Britain in the war, the introduction of conscription, the relatively low levels of industrial unrest and, at the Somme, embarking on the biggest battle in which Britain had ever engaged.

Why, then, did the coalition fail? In part, Keohane argued, it was because of the power balance within it. Bonar Law was a relatively meek leader and so the Liberals ran away with the spoils at the start. This meant that the Conservatives did not in reality possess the power that their supporters thought they had. As F. S. Oliver said, the ‘predominating flavour remained the same’. There were divisions over war strategy, with Conservatives holding the relatively crude view of conscripting labour and sending them to fight, and the Liberals worrying about the economy and the philosophical implications of conscription. Over time Lloyd George and the Conservatives came to hold the same position and as Asquith’s star fell, Lloyd George’s rose within the Conservative Party. By October 1915 the Conservative Chief Whip was already informing his leader that most Conservative MPs were behind Lloyd George.

Bonar Law was very weak at various points during this period and Keohane argued that this was also a contributing factor. A later questioner from the floor noted that a leadership crisis had led Bonar Law to write a resignation letter on 6 May. Keohane proposed that pressure from his back-benchers to be more active in his criticisms of the government, despite his belief that Asquith should remain Prime Minister, may have contributed to the initial formation of the coalition and the weak position of the Conservatives within it. In the spring 1916 crisis on conscription Bonar Law was only saved by the intervention of Baldwin. In the summer of 1916 200 Conservative

MPs expressed their anger at the outcome of Lloyd George’s negotiations with the Irish. During the Nigeria debate almost as many Conservative MPs voted against Bonar Law as sided with him. All this influenced Bonar Law’s thinking in his discussions with Lloyd George. Historians tended to regard the Liberal Party as the weak party at this stage; Keohane argued that the Conservative Party was almost as divided.

Why, then, was Bonar Law not pushed out? Essentially, there wasn’t a Lloyd George within the Conservative Party. Each possible successor had significant flaws: Austen Chamberlain was a natural lieutenant, not a leader; Walter Long was obsessed with the Irish question; Lord Milner was regarded as not being a proper Tory; and Carson was leader of the Ulster Unionists. Keohane also noted that if the war had ended in December 1916 the Conservative Party would have been in a difficult position, with significant party disunity, especially over Ireland.

In the longer term, however, the picture was very different and much more positive for the Conservatives. The Lloyd George coalition succeeded in the objectives that the Conservatives set it: winning the war and responding to the threat of Bolshevism. It also enabled the party to display its governing and patriotic instincts and put behind it the threats of civil war made in 1914. Since it was in power the party was also able to shape its own political destiny, notably in terms of electoral politics; for example, the distribution of seats ensured that there were good agricultural and suburban seats the party could win. Plural voting, which enabled businessmen also to vote where their business resided, and other outdated aspects of the electoral system which favoured the Tories, were retained. They were also able to ensure that the House of Lords retained a significant voice.

In questions from the floor it was argued that the massive weight of military failure, from Jutland to the Somme and to Russia, had been understated by the speakers. Keohane queried whether, with a censored press, the public was aware of the extent of the military setbacks. Nonetheless, he acknowledged the general point that the failure of war

strategy led to the collapse of the coalition. But he also noted that, in terms of strategy and the government’s relationship to the generals, Asquith was closer to the Conservative position of support for the ‘Western Strategy’ than was Lloyd George, who sympathised with consideration of an ‘Eastern Strategy’ and was keen to meddle in military strategy. The problem, as Packer noted, was Asquith’s failures on the domestic front through his failure to provide inspirational leadership committed to the effective organisation of the economy at home.

A questioner followed this up by asking about Asquith’s alleged indecisiveness and whether he suffered from a lack of good ‘PR’ and of friends in the press. It was also suggested that Asquith had been badly affected by the death of his son Raymond at the Somme. Raymond Asquith, the meeting’s chair, confirmed that Asquith had been very hard hit by the death of his son but argued that he was not the kind of man who would have had his professional judgement affected by it. Packer added that he did not think Asquith was indecisive and believed that his will to power was as strong as ever at this time. Packer did acknowledge, however, that Asquith had a public relations problem. By the end of 1916 it had become apparent that, as the war went on, the kind of leader the country needed was an inspirational and driving figure, and Lloyd George fitted that requirement better. Asquith’s public image before 1914 had been of a serene political orchestrator who didn’t panic and who took the right decisions when needed. He was not an inspirational orator. In addition, while Asquith and Grey had their ‘spin doctors’, they were not as numerous nor as effective as those working for Lloyd George.

A final questioner suggested that the role of the press had also been understated and argued that Kitchener’s initial opposition to war correspondents had created distrust between the government and the press, compounded by the official communiqués being contradicted by the casualty lists in the local papers. Packer acknowledged the important role of the press as a vehicle for information and for opinion. Public images were partly shaped by the press and, as noted at

Overall, the message of the meeting was of a government and a Prime Minister brought down by ‘events’ and a fundamental failure to win, or at least, successfully prosecute, the war.

various points in the meeting, Conservative frustrations with the government came out in the Conservative press.

Overall, however, the message of the meeting was of a government and a Prime Minister brought down by ‘events’

and a fundamental failure to win, or at least, successfully prosecute, the war.

David Cloke is a member of the Liberal Democrat History Group executive.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

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

Letters of Richard Cobden (1804–65)

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

Dadabhai Naoroji

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

The political career of Edward Strutt, 1st Baron Belper

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

Charles Day Rose (1847–1913)

Charles Day Rose, a partner in the City banking firm of Morton Rose, was Liberal MP for Newmarket 1903–10 and 1910–13. Living at Hardwick House on the banks of the Thames in Oxfordshire, he may have been the model for Mr Toad in Kenneth Grahame’s *The Wind in the Willows*. Rose died just before the First World War after being taken up for a spin in an aeroplane, leading the coroner to observe that ‘airplaning’ should clearly be left to ‘the young, the vigorous and the robust’. Any documentary information bearing on any aspect of his multifarious life would be of interest. *Dr Michael Redley, 10 Norman Avenue, Henley on Thames, Oxfordshire, RG9 1SG; michael.redley@appleinter.net.*

The emergence of the ‘public service ethos’

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

Sir Edward Grey (1862–1933)

I am currently writing a biography of Sir Edward Grey, and I am keen to discover any letters or other documents relating to him that may be in private hands. *Thomas Otte, University of East Anglia; T.Otte@uea.ac.uk.*

The life of Professor Reginald W Revans, 1907–2003

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

Recruitment of Liberals into the Conservative Party, 1906–1935

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

Four nations history of the Irish Home Rule crisis

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

Beyond Westminster: Grassroots Liberalism 1910–1929

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

The Liberal Party’s political communication, 1945–2002

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

The Liberal Party in Wales, 1966–1988

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

Policy position and leadership strategy within the Liberal Democrats

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