

Journal of Liberal

HISTORY



Voice of Montgomeryshire

J. Graham Jones

Emlyn Hooson (1925 – 2012) Life and career

Michael Steed, Tony Greaves, Andrew Duff, Joyce Arram

Assessing Jeremy Thorpe

James Owen

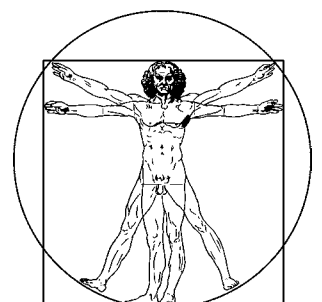
The struggle for political representation Labour candidates and the Liberals, 1868–85

Cecil Bloom

A conspiracy of silence? Lloyd George and Basil Zaharoff

David Cloke

The Liberal–Tory coalition of 1915 History Group meeting report

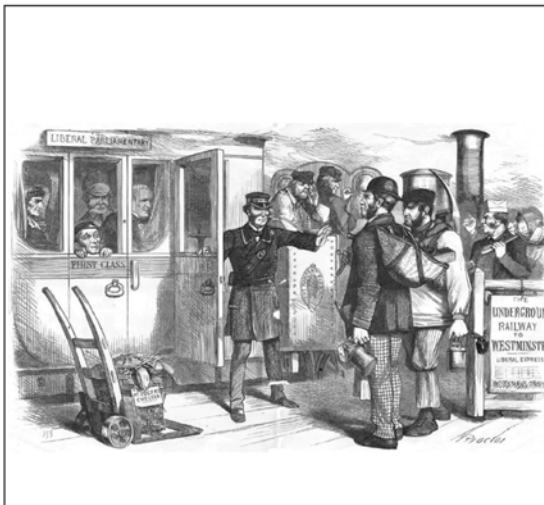


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Labour and the Caucus

James Owen



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in England, 1868–1888*

JAMES OWEN

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Chartist, No 268

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Reviews in History, Feb 2015

Studies in Labour History, 3

254pp. 234 x 156 mm

HB ISBN: 9781846319440 • June 2014 • £70 £49

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Dr James Owen is a Research Fellow on the History of Parliament, House of Commons, 1832–1945 project.

Liverpool University Press
Tel: +44 (0)151 794 2233
email: lup@liv.ac.uk
www.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk

Distributed in North America by
Oxford University Press
email: orders.cary@oup.com
global.oup.com/academic

Journal of Liberal History

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

ISSN 1479-9642

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

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

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

Cover design concept: **Lynne Featherstone**

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

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

April 2015

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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

SPRING 2015

Obituary: Lord Mackie of Benshie

The following eulogy was delivered by David Steel at Lord Mackie's funeral in Kirriemuir Old Parish Church on Thursday 26 February 2015.

One of the noticeable traits of George Mackie was his reluctance to talk about his wartime exploits in Bomber Command. We of a younger generation wanted to hear more of the events which led to his remarkable survival and the awards of the DSO and DFC, but the tales had to be coaxed out of him. He was never boastful.

It is a huge privilege to be asked to speak here about his role in politics – for me it is a small labour of love, because I owe my entire political career to him. In 1962, when I had just graduated in law but had no intention of becoming a lawyer, he offered me a one-year post as assistant secretary of the Scottish Liberal Party at the princely salary of £895. Because Alec Douglas-Home, the new Prime Minister, delayed the election it turned out to be two years during which I was heavily involved in several by-election campaigns and in fund-raising.

I had already been adopted as prospective candidate for Edinburgh Pentlands, where our only realistic prospect was to save my deposit. But the candidate in the Borders had resigned and this was a seat where Liberals had never been lower than second place and had indeed won the somewhat changed seat in 1950. George himself had secured a notable second place in South Angus at the previous election, and Squadron Leader Arthur Purdom, whom he had appointed as secretary of the party, famously observed that 'what this party needs is a few less brilliant seconds and a few more mediocre firsts'.

George later wrote as follows in an article for *Liberal News*:

A large crop of university students, inspired by Jo Grimond, had joined the party and my job

was to make proper use of them. One of the young striplings was David Steel and another slightly older Russell Johnston. Needless to say they were a damned nuisance at conferences, producing masses of resolutions of doubtful value ...

I had frightful trouble with the Borders – they were extremely arrogant about candidates. Their specifications fitted only God or Jo Grimond. After turning good people down they were determined to have David Steel who was already in Pentlands, so I entered into negotiations with that constituency association and they eventually said no. So we simply removed David to the Borders and pacified Pentlands by having the Party Executive pass a vote of censure on Mackie for his authoritarian conduct.

George was, as vice-chairman in charge of organisation and later chairman of the party, the organising genius behind the Scottish party's revival, working closely with Jo Grimond and John Bannerman, both charismatic figures but with limited interest in the mechanics of building the party. He organised a research post in the party for Russell Johnston, enabling him also to be a full-time candidate in Inverness, and so in 1964 we swept to victory in the three Highland seats, to be followed six months later by my by-election in the Borders. George led from the front by winning Caithness & Sutherland.

He was already an acknowledged authority on agriculture, not just in practice but on which he had published a policy pamphlet. Members enjoyed his gentle sparring with his brother John who was one of Prime Minister Wilson's agriculture ministers. George was also later in the Lords deeply involved in the details of the Scottish devolution proposals during the Callaghan government which

he nevertheless described rightly as wholly inadequate.

He was not always gently tolerant. I was with him at a by-election when he took our rather shy and diffident candidate round the farmers' mart, after which, as we were walking back to the by-election office, the candidate was unwise enough to ask: 'Mr Mackie, was the speech I gave last night all right?' A by now quite exasperated George turned to him and said 'the content was fine but when you are speaking I do wish you would not hop from one foot to the other as though you had just shat your breeks'. The man's confidence was not enhanced and he went on to lose his deposit.

On another occasion he thought that three young candidates, Steel, Johnston and, in Argyll, John Mackay needed tuition in agriculture and he invited us to spend a day on his farm at Benshie, after which he reported to the Executive: 'Steel and Johnston were hopeless. Mackay was quite good.' John Mackay went on to become an able Conservative minister in the Scottish Office.

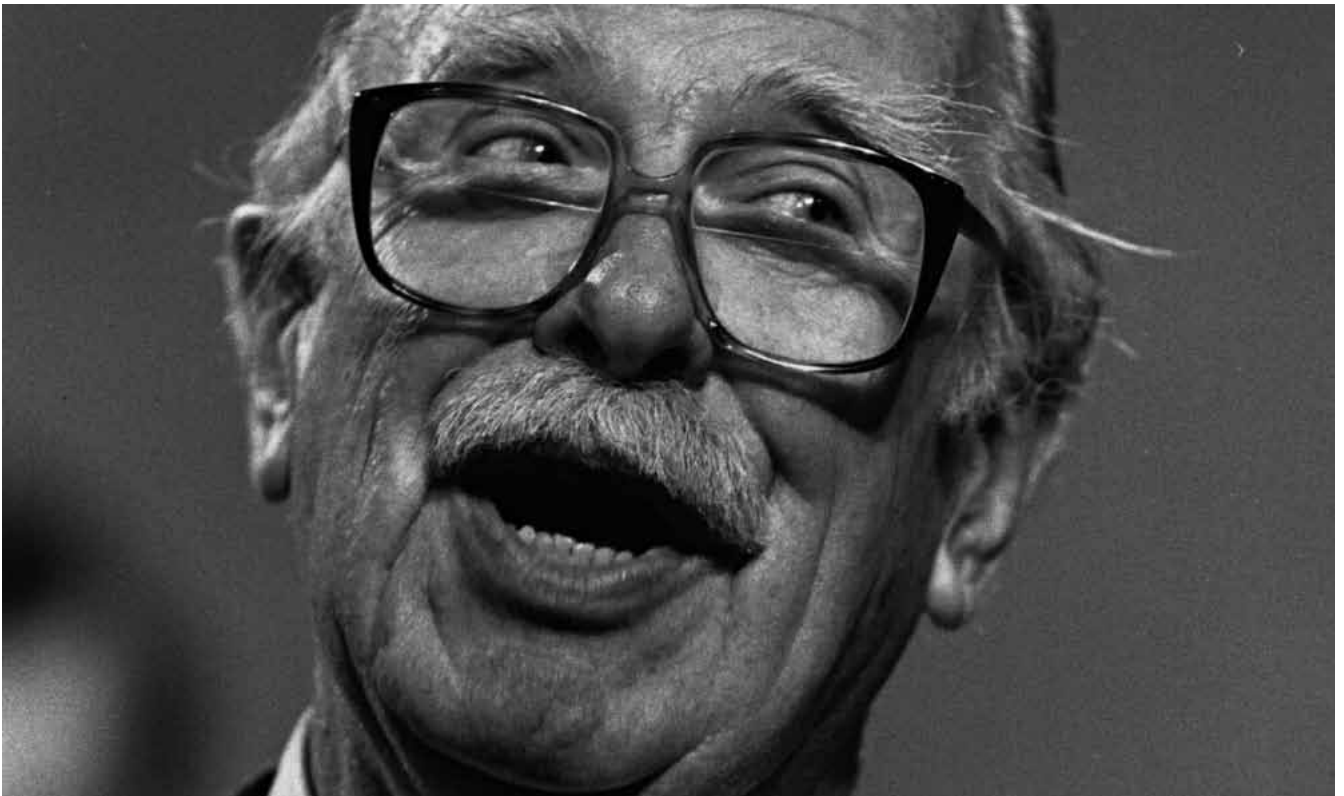
Despite that justified adverse opinion he remained a most loyal personal supporter, and when I was fighting John Pardoe in the first ever democratic contest for political party leadership in Britain he wrote in his memoirs:

John Pardoe made the mistake of alleging that because he was a bit of a bastard that made him suitable for taking the party through the difficult period ahead. We had lots of fun and I wrote a ditty about it:

Pardoe's crude – but he will fight
Scattering shot to left and right.
Must we – to gather votes in
season

Abandon now the use of reason?
Perhaps young Steel can break
the deadlock

Although, alas, he's born in
wedlock!



That was typical of the many entertaining ditties he wrote, and an example of the wit with which he always laced his speeches, which made him such a popular member of both the Commons and the Lords. Indeed, one story which he told about failing to get off the night sleeper at Carlisle was so funny that his colleagues always insisted that he repeated it at every dinner at which he was speaking.

George was also fortunate in the wholehearted support of his two successful marriages, first of Lindsay in fundraising and campaigning in the north, and then of Jacqui in his role in the Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Judy and I will always be grateful for the help he gave her campaigning during general elections in my constituency when I was busy touring the country as party leader.

Last year, on my way back from speaking at a dinner for Malcolm Bruce in Aberdeenshire I called in to visit George. On leaving he came out of the cottage on two sticks to see me into my car, and I think we both knew that would be our last farewell. A colleague has written to me saying it is the end of an era: 'I shall miss his wise counsel and enthusiasm for life'.

To conclude, I can do no better than quote two sentences from the

George Yull Mackie, Baron Mackie of Benshie (10 July 1919 – 17 February 2015), in 1987

many extensive newspaper obituaries last week:

George Mackie was a Liberal of the old school, whose values of public service and fairness stemmed from his family's sense of responsibility towards the land they farmed and the people who worked for them. He was a big man who exuded geniality, good humour and a sense of duty which he retained to the end.

David Steel (Lord Steel of Aikwood) was MP for Roxburgh, Selkirk & Peebles, later Tweeddale, Ettrick & Lauderdale, 1965–97, and Leader of the Liberal Party 1976–88.

Obituary: Patrick Jackson

It is with regret that I notice the death of Mr Patrick Jackson CB, on 7 November 2014. It is with pleasure that I notice his life.

Jackson will be familiar to readers of this journal as the author of five well-received political studies of significant but secondary figures in the history of the Victorian Liberal Party.¹ The fact that he served for many years in the civil service was much remarked upon in reviews of his first two books. It was apparently noteworthy that a

man had managed to get himself to retirement, then voluntarily committed himself to twenty years hard labour in the recesses of the Bodleian, the Public Record Office, and the British Library. Despite the fact that most scholars and students of Victorian politics had occasion to read and benefit from his work, few actually knew him.

Jackson was born on 10 February 1929. He was raised in Huddersfield, won a scholarship to University College Oxford, and in 1949 took a degree in modern history. In 1952 he married his sixth-form sweetheart, Kathleen Roper, a sharp young teacher who had studied English literature at the University of Hull, and who shared his love of books and opera. For anyone else I might say it was a match made in heaven. In any case, Patrick and Kate were loving companions through sixty-two years of marriage, and were justly proud of their children Katharine and Robert, and the grandchildren and great-grandchildren that followed.

I know nothing of Jackson's government work, except that he rose to the position of under-secretary in the Department of Transport, and that his profession enabled him to raise a family in the comfort of suburban Bromley. When I remember him, however, I think first of Yorkshire and the

Victorian facades of Huddersfield. Neither Patrick nor Kate were believers, but they were certainly products of the Nonconformist culture into which they were born as England entered into the Great Depression. I recall Kate once expounding on the iron truth of the childhood mantra, 'cleanliness is next to godliness'. The phrase undoubtedly bore some Wesleyan religious overtones, but to the Huddersfield young it admonished discipline in the face of the relentless, penetrating dust from the textile mills that dominated the city. Cleanliness was the necessary first step in respectable sanctification.

There must have been days when Jackson grew impatient with bureaucracy, but he was committed to the work of government. Politically nurtured during the Attlee years, he remained passionately committed to the ideals of the welfare state. When I met Jackson in the late 1990s, ten years after his retirement, he was happily immersed in Victorian Liberal politics. We sat at an outdoor table at the King's Arms in Oxford, exchanged copies of our latest books, and unabashedly talked of archival discoveries and telling political phrases as if they were lays in a heroic tale. I looked forward to my (almost) annual visits with Patrick, for though he was in his late seventies and I in my forties, he was as vivacious as a debutante. I learned a lot from him, and often as not I was doubly rewarded, for in addition to the pleasure of his company he would treat me to a meal at his beloved Le Deuxieme.

The Liberal Democrat History Group was present, as usual, at the Liberal Democrats' spring conference in Liverpool in March. Below, Liberal Democrat cabinet ministers Ed Davey and Nick Clegg chat to History Group chair Tony Little.

Jackson employed a simple and consistent method: to read all the letters and manuscripts of his subject, and every line of speech recorded in *Hansard*. He seldom wrote to great themes or inferred from slight premises. As he observed at the beginning of his work on Hartington, 'This is essentially a political biography, and it will not often be necessary to interrupt the political narrative in order to consider Hartington as a private man.' Recognising the impossibility of an absolute proscription, Jackson devoted the introductory chapter to Hartington's private life. 'Having thus intruded initially upon his privacy', Jackson wrote, 'we can tell most of the rest of the story in what he would have regarded as a decently impersonal way' (p. 15). In this most unassuming manner, Jackson rendered, in the words of Professor Jonathan Parry, 'an impressive psychological portrait', capturing 'a great deal of Hartington's personality and ambiguity'.²

As someone who came late to the profession, Jackson was reticent about numbering himself among the professional historians of Victorian high politics, and it was in part for this reason that he refrained from studies of the upper echelons of the Liberal Party. If he never produced a seminal work, however, he was there in company with the vast majority of professional historians. In terms of scholarship, he produced more academic work than most and did it in half the time. His books were uniformly praised for generosity, balance,

clarity, and thoroughness. Professor Bruce Kinzer's assessment of Jackson's achievement in *Morley of Blackburn* may stand as a fair representation of the 'professional' view his career:

While no one can (or should) do for Morley what Morley did for Gladstone, neither should anyone feel the need to do for Morley more than Jackson has now done for him. Not art, perhaps, but the well-wrought work of a proficient practitioner of political biography.³

Jackson gladly accepted this as a laurel. During the last twenty-five years of his life, he worked for the pleasure of the task, and for the memories of men who had devoted themselves to the liberal cause which had made such a difference in his life.

John Powell is a member of the Editorial Board of the Journal of Liberal History and Professor of History at Oklahoma Baptist University.

- 1 *The Last of the Whigs: A Political Biography of Lord Hartington, later Eighth Duke of Devonshire* (1994); *Education Act Forster: A Political Biography of W. E. Forster* (1997); *Harcourt and Son: A Political Biography of Sir William Harcourt* (2004); *Loulou: Selected Extracts from the Journals of Lewis Harcourt* (2006); *Morley of Blackburn: A Literary and Political Biography of John Morley* (2012), all published by Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.
- 2 *Nineteenth-Century Prose* 22 (Fall 1995): 200.



Taped interviews

Between 1994 and 1997 I conducted over 140 interviews with Liberals active between 1945 and 1964 as part of my DPhil research (the results of which were later published as *Coming into Focus: the transformation of the Liberal Party 1945–64*, available for rather a lot of money on Amazon). I spoke to some of the party's leading lights, including Jeremy Thorpe, Arthur Holt, Nancy Seear, George Mackie and John Foot, but also many local councillors and activists from across the UK. Some were active Liberals before the war, with one old-timer recalling electioneering in 1910. Many were inspired by Jo Grimond to join the party.

Around 100 interviews were recorded on tiny cassettes using a Dictaphone which no longer works. I transcribed a few but for most I simply transcribed notes, using my own shorthand (LA for Liberal Association, for example). The tapes now sit in a carrier bag in my office and I would like to donate them to a library or record office which could digitise them and make them more widely available. Many of the people I interviewed are now dead and most probably did not record their memories of the Liberal Party in any other form.

The tapes are an invaluable source of Liberal history.

The British Library were interested in taking the tapes but have decided against on financial grounds. I wondered if any members could suggest how I might be able to ensue these recordings are digitised for other researchers to use – perhaps sources of funding I could gain access to or institutions who may be interested in taking the tapes.

Mark Egan

Biography of Rufus Isaacs

My interest in Rufus Isaacs began after finding that he rose to dizzy heights from relatively humble beginnings. He became first Marquess of Reading, having started as the son of a Spitalfields fruiterer. Along the way he was Lord Chief Justice, Special Ambassador to the United States of America, Viceroy of India, and Foreign Secretary. This inspired me to nominate him for the blue plaque which went up in Curzon Street, Mayfair, in 1971, and to have a road named after him in Caversham, Reading, in 1994. (He was MP for Reading from 1904 to 1912 and is still remembered in the town.)

I believe that there has been no biography on him since Denis Judd's in 1985 and I know that the present marquess would be pleased to see another book and would make family papers available.

Any prospective biographer should contact me at kettner_soc@yahoo.co.uk to progress this matter.

Peter Whyte

Scottish Liberal Party's evidence to the Royal Commission on the Constitution

I am anxious to obtain or borrow a copy of the Scottish Liberal Party's written evidence to the Royal Commission on the Constitution (aka the Crowther–Kilbrandon Commission) of 1969–1973.

It was published as a SLP booklet in 1970 (?) and included input from our Structure of Government Committee, of which I was Convener.

Anyone who can help please contact me at s.waugh.bnchry@btinternet.com.

Sandy Waugh

Sir Edward Grey

I am currently writing a biography of Sir Edward Grey, and I am always keen to discover any letters or other documents relating to him that may be in private hands. Alan Beith very kindly made two letters available to me, which somehow had come his way. Who knows what is out there?

Anyone who can help please contact me at T.Otte@uea.ac.uk.

Thomas Otte

On This Day ...

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

March

21 March 1910: The Parliament Bill is introduced in the House of Commons, ultimately establishing the primacy of the Commons over the House of Lords. The bill was a response to the constitutional crisis following the introduction of Lloyd George's radical 1909 budget, which was rejected by the Conservative-dominated Lords, overturning the convention that the Lords did not interfere with money bills. The crisis was finally resolved when the Parliament Act received Royal Assent in August 1911.

April

3 April 1846: Birth of Robert Threshie Reid, 1st Earl Loreburn, Liberal MP for Hereford 1880–85 and Dumfries Burghs 1886–1905. In the Liberal governments of the 1890s Reid served as Attorney General 1894 and Solicitor General 1894–95. Firmly on the radical wing of the party, Reid supported Campbell-Bannerman in his difficulties with Lord Rosebery and the Liberal Imperialists. When Campbell-Bannerman became Prime Minister he appointed Reid as Lord Chancellor and he continued to serve in that post under Asquith until ill-health forced his resignation in 1912.

May

9 May 1976: Jeremy Thorpe resigns as Liberal leader. Thorpe's career had been damaged by claims that he had had a love affair with Norman Scott, an acquaintance, in the early 1960s. At that time homosexuality was illegal. Thorpe was charged with conspiracy to murder Scott; he was acquitted in 1979 but not before losing his seat in the general election of that year. Following the hung parliament in the February 1974 election Thorpe declined to enter a coalition with the Conservatives, led by Edward Heath, as he felt Heath would not be able to deliver progress on electoral reform and failing to do so would split the Liberal Party, which had approached 30 per cent in the polls in the lead-up to the election..

ASSESSING JEREMY THORPE

Jeremy Thorpe, leader of the Liberal Party from 1967 to 1976, died three weeks before Christmas 2014. In the last issue of the *Journal of Liberal History* (issue 85, winter 2014–15), we carried two articles by Robert Ingham and Ronald Porter commemorating Thorpe's political career. Several of our readers subsequently wrote to take issue with, or to supplement, the picture of Thorpe's life and political career they portrayed. Here we carry articles by **Michael Steed, Tony Greaves, Andrew Duff and Joyce Arram.**



JEREMY THORPE

Jeremy Thorpe – myth and magic

The announcement of Jeremy Thorpe's death on 5 December 2014 unleashed a wide range of feelings and claims.

The Jeremy fan club came out in force, with views from Sir Nick Harvey (present MP for North Devon) that his predecessor had 'shaped the political landscape' to *The Times* news report by Lucy Fisher, calling him a 'crucial moderniser who turned the Liberal Party into a radical force'. But late on the evening of 5 December, BBC Radio 4 broadcast what had originally been put together in 1979 as a documentary by Tom Mangold, scheduled to go out following the expected 'guilty' verdict at Thorpe's Old Bailey trial. In this, the Thorpe story was presented, with emphasis on the class character of 1960s British society, as an establishment conspiracy, including contemporary interviews establishing early police knowledge of Jeremy's risky sex-life, and clear evidence that the purpose of the plot in which he was involved was indeed to kill his former lover, Norman Scott. The former leader had been a would-be murderer.

Not surprisingly, the obituaries found it difficult to strike a balance. Of those I read, the *Daily Telegraph's* was the most comprehensive and balanced, while that in *The Times* contained most errors and doubtful judgements (both were anonymous). Richard Moore's in *The*

Independent offered an interesting and very personal appreciation, while fighting old battles against the Young Liberals (about whom both he and Thorpe were rather ill-informed). Michael Meadowcroft's reflections in *Liberator* were also something of a witness statement, this time about how difficult Jeremy made it for party officers to do their job, even whilst they were striving to protect the reputation of their leader, or (by 1978 at the Southport Assembly) that of their party against the way its former leader wanted to drag it down with him.

Michael Bloch's long-awaited biography was hurriedly (with inadequate time for proper index-checking) published straight after Thorpe's death, a fascinating and thoroughly researched delve into Jeremy's psychology, though not always so reliable on political and electoral detail (reviewed by me in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 1 April 2015; review in the *Journal* forthcoming). No attempt to evaluate his life and career should now be made without taking this magnum opus into account. Bloch is careful to reserve judgement on some critical points, e.g. whether the point of the plot was to kill Scott or just to scare him into silence.

Bloch, however, makes a bold judgement on Jeremy's character. He argues that he was a fantasist, who needed to live dangerously;

he developed an obsession with the idea that Scott was a serious threat, even after his pathetic ravings had been dismissed by everyone who then mattered. Thorpe's addiction to risk-taking brought about his nemesis. It was close to a case of political suicide, in which the passengers in the vehicle he piloted (his party) were put recklessly at risk. It is an interpretation which fits my own encounters with Jeremy Thorpe.

My own full reflections would be coloured by the fact that the major part of my personal contributions to the Liberal cause came during the two decades that Jeremy sat for North Devon, first as the rising hope of the Grimond revival, then as my leader for nine years and finally (in the three years following his resignation as leader) as a haunting presence still demanding a leading role in politics. It was during this last period that I found myself, as party president, investigating what had happened to large donations secured by Thorpe from Jack Hayward for the party – they turned out to have been used for legitimate political purposes, but with loose accounting procedures that would today be outside the law.

That was not the only investigation I once made into his darker side – I saw that when as returning officer for the 1971 Young Liberal elections I had to deal with (and for

Thorpe arrives at 10 Downing Street for talks with Prime Minister Edward Heath, 2 March 1974

the sake of the party's reputation draw a veil over) his attempt to rig those elections to block Peter Hain, as Tony Greaves explains below. I am also witness to many occasions in which he undermined, bypassed or trampled over party officers, so weakening the party's collective leadership. If the Liberal Party organisation was sometimes ineffective or muddled during his leadership years, his behaviour bears much responsibility.

Yet I also recall a leader of real passion and deep principle, truly capable of inspiring. A leader who really does bring tangible political benefit to his cause can be forgiven a lot of rough handling. So let us focus on simply what good he did for the Liberal Party.

He was a superb constituency Liberal MP, not the first, and certainly not the last – but a model for many who followed and have learned how to cultivate their patches and so build up the party's Commons representation.

He has been said to have made an intellectual input. This is absurd, not least as it is what he specifically claimed not to do. Rather, he claimed that, Jo Grimond having brought intellectual credibility to the party, his purpose was to bring it political credibility. Did he?

The unexpected six million Liberal votes cast in February 1974 suggest some success. Anyone who knocked on doors then (as I did) can witness to the wave of personal support he aroused – similar to Cleggmania in 2010. His style matched the moment, aided by the way he led the campaign by press conferences relayed from Barnstaple to London. He decided on this innovation (paid for by Hayward) to save what he wrongly thought was his vulnerable seat in North Devon; it gave him simultaneously presence and a curious magisterial detachment from a frayed national campaign. He deserves some credit for the six million.

But the relevant innovation was that the Liberal Party, previously scarred by the mass loss of deposits in 1950, decided to fight on a broader front, while Heath's hesitation about using the miners' strike as an excuse for a precipitate election allowed the party organisation to get a lot more candidates in the field. Thorpe played no part in that; credit goes to John Pardoe, who

had argued for the broadest front (against Thorpe's judgement) from 1970 on, and the president-elect, Arthur Holt, who made it happen. The jump from 328 candidates in 1970 and the 380 the party had in the field on 8 February 1974 to the 517 that stood at the general election on 28 February was achieved by the very party officers that Thorpe liked to bypass; characteristically, Jeremy grabbed the credit for the extra votes this produced. On 28 February, Labour (which took office) lost more deposits than the Liberals.

We must also put the surge of February 1974 against the slumps of June 1970 and October 1974. When they led the party, both Grimond and Steel achieved two surges against one slump; Thorpe's campaign track record was the worst of the three. The party's misfortune in the 1970 and October 1974 elections owed as much to its leader as did the February 1974 fortune – in particular, his final broadcast in 1970 telling the electorate that it was about to vote Wilson back into power (Heath won), so the country needed a few opposition Liberal MPs. In October 1974 he seemed not to know what he was doing; Bloch's revelations on the growing pressures on him at that stage may help to explain why.

Those seeking credits for Thorpe's leadership point to his focus on winnable seats, some even seeing it as the herald of the party's successful targeting strategy. Yet targeting was not new; in the 1950 election, the student activist Jeremy had gone (in vain) to the target seat of North Dorset to help the chief whip, Frank Byers. He went on to raise funds personally to disperse directly in secrecy (a practice now unlawful) to favoured candidates or seats he spotted as winnable. A leader raising funds outside the party's accounts, and dispersing in that manner, was also not new: Lloyd George had done it before, on a grander scale.

To spot winnable seats, he did what we all did in those days – picking the few, mainly in the Celtic fringe, with a good vote in the depths of the 1950s, or those which had returned a Liberal MP sometime after 1931. Some now possess, once more, Liberal (Democrat) MPs; some like Denbigh or North Dorset proved to be

If the Liberal Party organisation was sometimes ineffective or muddled during his leadership years, his behaviour bears much responsibility.

bottomless pits for cash and human effort. It is difficult to identify a single seat which Thorpe's methods or money made winnable – the best case perhaps is the Isle of Ely by-election in 1973. The test in the end is what happened to Liberal representation at Westminster. Under Grimond, the party rose from 6 MPs (half of them dependent on Conservative votes) to 12 (all in three-cornered fights); under Thorpe it just limped up from 12 to 13. With Steel it went from 13 to 17 (or 19 Lib Dems).

Further, the myth of Thorpe's success hides the real revolution in targeting. Already in the mid 1950s, some Liberals locally took the view that the party could win outside Celtic fringe or traditional areas by patient, hard work and a long-term commitment. Typically in newer urban areas, they set about building up support through local elections; from 1960, that became a national strategy. The credit for that goes to men (*sic*) like Richard Wainwright, Pratap Chitnis and Michael Meadowcroft, i.e. despised party officers and generally Thorpe's opponents. The fruits were victories in seats not previously within the party's radar: Orpington (1962), Cheadle/Hazel Grove (1966/74) and Birmingham Ladywood (1969). By 1970, Trevor Jones, with his innovative techniques, and the Young Liberals, in search of an ideal, brought methods and philosophy together as the community politics strategy; many more electoral victories have followed.

This of course happened on Thorpe's watch, but he played little part in it. It is doubtful that he really understood what was happening at his party's grassroots; he was always an Oxford Union and House of Commons man, not a community politician. Yet as a role-model constituency MP, he nicely complemented the strategy his party adopted.

He could also inspire activists to go out delivering the leaflets and knocking on the doors that the strategy required. He was, too and for a time, immensely popular with them, whilst ill at ease both with his own party officers and those (by the early 1970s grouped around *Radical Bulletin*) who were promoting the strategy. What was his magic?

At the personal level, he had an exciting platform and TV screen

presence; his view of politics was theatrical and he was a top-class performer on his chosen stages. His fantasist's self-confidence saw the party through setbacks, and played up meagre advances into triumphs. With drive, wit, mimicry and old-fashioned (Oxford Union) rhetoric, he could soar over reality. The Young Liberals, with whose own drive and commitment he struggled, greeted him at Great Yarmouth in 1967 (their first conference after his election as leader) with chants of 'Jeremy, Jeremy, Jeremy' – more like a Nuremberg rally than a gathering of rational Liberals or the revolting young! Only later did they identify him as an obstacle to radical Liberalism. But many Liberals continued to idolise him until, and even after, his disgrace.

At the political level, he joined a party struggling to survive but convinced that in its internationalism, its understanding of Britain's changed role in the world, its commitment to freedom with social justice, its programmes of constitutional reform and of co-partnership in industry, it stood for distinctive principles. He was a skilled articulator of this identity, and persuaded many who sympathised with the consequent policies – particularly with European integration, African freedom and a pragmatic moderation on economic issues – to join with and work for the Liberal Party. The party's tradition and Jo Grimond defined his starting points. He did not need to add to them; he maintained them well.

So how do we balance the Thorpe account? Nick Clegg's concise tribute, circulated to party members on the day that Jeremy Thorpe died, is a reasonable summing up:

Jeremy Thorpe's leadership and resolve were the driving force that continued the Liberal revival that began under Jo Grimond. Jeremy oversaw some of the party's most famous by-election victories and his involvement with the anti-apartheid movement and the campaign for Britain's membership of the Common Market were ahead of his time.

Michael Steed

Thorpe and the Young Liberals

I fear that too many people are rewriting the history of Jeremy Thorpe's leadership of the Liberal Party. Others will debunk the idea that he was personally responsible for all the electoral advances in the early 1970s (or indeed in the 1960s) better than I can. However, the following true stories from 1970–71, when I chaired the Young Liberals, may give a sense of the flavour of his leadership.

Attempt to bully the YLs

The annual Easter conference of the National League of Young Liberals (NLYL) in 1970 took place at Skegness. I was elected as YL chairman. Apart from the forthcoming South African cricket tour, the main topic of discussion was Israel/Palestine. There was a long and thorough debate, with proposals from all viewpoints. A pro-Palestinian resolution was very clearly carried which resulted in national publicity, including hostile coverage in the Jewish press.

Shortly afterwards I travelled to London on YL business. When I arrived I was told that Ted Wheeler (head of Liberal Party HQ – known as the Liberal Party Organisation, or LPO, and located in a scruffy yard off the Strand) wanted to see me urgently. I was rushed into his room. 'Jeremy wants to see you – now,' he said. I explained that I was due to meet fellow YL officer David Mumford over lunch and could not see him until the afternoon.

I insisted, but Wheeler said: 'I can't tell him that – you will have to tell him', rang his number and passed me the phone. 'You must come to the House of Commons now,' said Thorpe, 'We are all waiting for you.' I wondered who they 'all' were but told him firmly but politely that I would see him at 2.30. He slammed the phone down.

When I got to his office in the Commons, I found Thorpe himself sitting behind his desk, Lord (Frank) Byers (leader of the Liberal Party in the Lords and perhaps Thorpe's main party manager) sitting nearby, and Desmond Banks (chairman of the Liberal Party Executive, later a Liberal peer) sitting at the other end of the room. I sat on the green leather chaise longue that was a feature of the office.

Thorpe then tried to bully me into changing YL policy on Israel/Palestine. 'Tony – you are now Leader of the Young Liberals.' (No, I said, I was the chairman, not the leader). 'We believe that you must show the necessary leadership on behalf of the party. The future of the party is at stake and we are relying on you.'

I asked what this was all about and he said that the YL policy on Israel and Palestine and the publicity from it was very damaging. He said it had been passed by a few unrepresentative individuals and I had to make it clear that it was not the view of the Young Liberals. He said they had prepared a press statement for me and all I had to do was agree to it.

I said that there had been a very thorough discussion at the conference with several hundred members in attendance, there had been a long debate with all sides putting their views forward, and the final vote had been quite decisive. The YLs were a democratic body and there was no way I could overturn the decision. And really, why was it so important?

Lord Byers looked me in the eye and said I must understand how serious it was. The party was almost bankrupt, with a general election pending, and it relied heavily on a few important donors. I looked back at him and he paused. Then he said: 'We are talking about a few very generous members of the party who are also leading members of the Jewish community.'

Desmond Banks looked unhappy but said nothing throughout the whole interview. I said I was sorry but there was nothing I could do, and after some further but repetitive discussion I left. I reported back to the other YL officers that I had been asked to change YL policy and had refused, but was otherwise circumspect in what I told them.

The Terrell Commission

In the year I chaired the YLs I was teaching at Colne Grammar School in Lancashire. One lunchtime in December 1970 the school secretary put her head round the staff-room door and said: 'Jeremy Thorpe is on the phone for you.' (The phone in the school office being the only

The party's tradition and Jo Grimond defined his starting points. He did not need to add to them; he maintained them well.

one in the school at the time!) I had about five minutes before I was due to take the first class in the afternoon.

Thorpe said: 'Tony – we are getting all these complaints about the Young Liberals and we would like to help you to sort things out. This afternoon I am announcing to the press that we are setting up a commission of inquiry to investigate the relationship between the Young Liberals and the party. We have prepared a statement and I am asking you to add your name to it.' He said that the inquiry (which subsequently called itself the 'Liberal Commission') would be chaired by Stephen Terrell, a Liberal QC who had contested Eastbourne at the 1970 election, and he hoped that we would co-operate fully with its work.

I told him I had to teach at 1.30 and had no time to talk. I asked him to delay by a day so I could consider the matter and consult my other officers (answer – no); and then if we could nominate a member of the inquiry (answer – 'we expected you to say that and we have considered the matter but we have decided against it'). I refused to put my name to it, told him we would discuss our attitude to it and let him know, and rushed off to meet my geography class.

The YL National Executive did subsequently agree, though not unanimously, to co-operate and give evidence. The inquiry reported to the party and in spite of some not totally coherent criticism of NLYL the only proposal was in regard to the membership system. Previously all members of YL branches were automatically members of their constituency association (and thereby the party). The proposal was that all members should be enrolled through the party. However, the report was seriously undermined by two of the three members of the commission (Lord (John) Foot and Councillor Gruffydd Evans) who each issued a separate addendum which started with the words 'This is not a note of dissent ... but ...'.

In the event the Women's Liberal Federation objected to the terms of the proposed constitutional amendment and it was amended (and adopted at the Liberal Assembly in 1971) to merely give a constituency association the right to deny party membership

to any member of a YL branch (or other 'recognised unit' such as a Women's Liberal Association) within their area. The YLs did not disagree with this, and I never came across a single instance of the provision being used. What is certain is that the Terrell Commission took up a lot of fruitless time and energy during the rest of the year, including a night spent by me on Kings Cross station after missing the last train after giving evidence to them!

Postal vote scam

In 1971 an attempt was made to rig the election for the new chairman of NLYL and some other posts. The election took place at the annual conference of NLYL in Plymouth at Easter. I was the retiring chairman but not standing again. The plot was based in North Devon and it was and is clear that Thorpe was behind it and funded it, though that could not be proved at the time.

The expected successor was Peter Hain, the retiring publicity vice-chairman and the only candidate from amongst the existing YL officers. The challenge came from Chris Green, a young mainstream radical Liberal who had contested Surbiton at the 1970 general election and by Easter 1971 lived in the North West. Chris had organised a large and successful community action programme while a student in London, and wanted to bring that experience to the YLs. He was not involved in the vote-rigging plot and was dismayed when he found out how he was being used. (He was later to fight almost successful parliamentary campaigns in Cheadle and Hereford and played a leading part in Liberal and Liberal Democrat policy-making in the arts field).

The YLs had a system of individual membership in which branches paid an 'affiliation fee' to YL HQ in London for each of their members. They had also introduced a system of postal voting on demand for their internal elections. In the weeks leading up to the conference YL HQ received several hundred new membership registrations, followed by postal vote requests, mainly from YL branches in North Devon, with some from other parts of the Devon and Cornwall area.

There were also a number of press articles in Devon and

Cornwall and nationally linking the leadership to a campaign to defeat Hain. Suspicions were raised when YL HQ reported that most of the cheques for the memberships were from one person, a young activist in Barnstaple (North Devon).

On the recommendation of the joint returning officers, Michael Steed and Margareta Holmstedt, the conference agreed to set up a commission to investigate the matter, and a group of people including me spent much of the conference weekend doing that. We were fortunate to be able to include two regional party officials, one of whom was Frank Suter, a respected Devon solicitor, Liberal candidate in Tiverton and Devon County Councillor, who had just come along to observe the proceedings! Stuart Mole was appointed to carry out fieldwork, since he had turned up in his own car – luckily we were meeting in Plymouth – and was nicknamed 'Inspector Mole'. (Stuart was subsequently the almost successful Liberal candidate in Chelmsford and a leading member of Chelmsford Council; he is still in the lists this year in his now home patch of East Devon.)

Various irregularities came to light. Not only were some of the people on the lists not aware that they had been signed up as YLs, and some of the Devon village branches were clearly fictitious, but the supposed YLs also included grannies and aunts, and even family pets and farm animals among many genuine young Liberal supporters. Bizarrely, it was also discovered that members of an anarchist commune in Cornwall had signed up as YLs in order to help block the plot!

The outcome was that many of the postal vote applications which were generated by this activity were disallowed (the technical reason in many cases was the lack of any signature on the lists of names sent in by post) and the plot failed. NLYL benefited from the money which was not returned, Peter Hain was elected as YL chairman, and the plot by the party leadership to 'take over' the YLs was thwarted. Chris Green went on to play a part as an officer of the Young Liberals in the North West and in retrospect would have made a good radical YL chair – something that neither we nor Thorpe realised at the time!

Tony Greaves

I fear that too many people are rewriting the history of Jeremy Thorpe's leadership of the Liberal Party.

The European cause

Robert Ingham and Ronald Porter are surely right to insist that, despite his downfall, Thorpe left an important legacy to the Liberal Party. At the first election in which I could vote, in February 1974, I was drawn to join the Liberals because of Thorpe's stylish, modern leadership, his clear articulation of the need for Britain to be radically reformed, and, above all, his advocacy of the case for UK membership of the European Community. In the latter cause, Thorpe appeared to be rather less defensive than Ted Heath and much more sincere than Harold Wilson; only the Liberals, so it seemed, offered a

sense of British potential in a united Europe.

Jeremy Thorpe was hugely encouraging to young aspirants like me. He could charm both party and public audiences. Clement Freud told me that when Thorpe came up to the Isle of Ely by-election in 1973, he wooed the crowd at the Ely Maltings by declaring: 'If you elect Clement Freud, nobody will ever again have to ask who is the Member of Parliament for Ely'. Freud told him afterwards how touched he had been by those words. 'Oh, that's alright,' said Thorpe, 'I say that at all my campaign meetings.'

Andrew Duff

Candidates, coalition and charities

I first met Jeremy Thorpe when he had been recently elected MP for North Devon at a ball to raise funds for the Liberal Party, held at the home of Laurence and Stina (later Baroness) Robson at Kidlington – think Gosforth Park and Down-ton Abbey and you can imagine the scene. I was one of a party of young hopeful parliamentary candidates. Jeremy was dashing, elegant, witty and charming in his white tie and tails. We remained friends ever after and, along with a small band of other loyal friends, were there for him to turn to during the time of his losing his seat and throughout his trial. We recognised his faults and weaknesses and did not hesitate to tell him when we thought he was in the wrong.

As a member of the committee of the Parliamentary Candidates Association (of which he was a Vice President at the time) during 1974, when there were the two general elections, I was one of the organisers of the emergency meeting of candidates held to consider the situation after the February election and to tell Jeremy that if he entered into any deal with the Tories he would find himself without any parliamentary candidates prepared to stand for the party at the next election. When an article about these events appeared in the *Journal of Liberal History* in late 2008 (issue 61, winter 2008–09) I showed

it to him and he told me that he had had no intention of taking up Heath's invitation, but felt that he had at least to hear what he had to offer. He was fully aware of the party's feelings about a coalition at the time.

Jeremy's ability to remember people was renowned. I once asked him what his secret was and he told me it was 'association of ideas', and recounted an instance when a woman came up to him gushing: 'I don't suppose you would remember me, Mr Thorpe'. 'Oh yes, I do, Mrs Bag', came the reply. 'My name is Mrs Sacks', was her frosty retort!

Jeremy was deeply devoted to his wife Marion, and she reciprocated his devotion. Her concern was that she would die before him, which sadly happened. You could not but be moved at his distress and loss at her funeral.

Despite his cruel illness, which gradually robbed him of his agility, his mind remained as acute as ever and he loved having friends call and tell him the latest events, gossip and progress of the party. His interest extended to his charities, including the National Benevolent Fund for the Aged, of which he was one of the founding trustees in 1957 and of which he remained a trustee until his Parkinson's made it too difficult for him to get to our trustee meetings; he stepped down as recently as November 2002. When its 'legal'



Election poster, February 1974 general election

trustee retired in October 1993 he suggested that I should replace him, which I did. Despite his no longer being involved, whenever I came to see him he always wanted to know how the charity was faring and what it was doing.

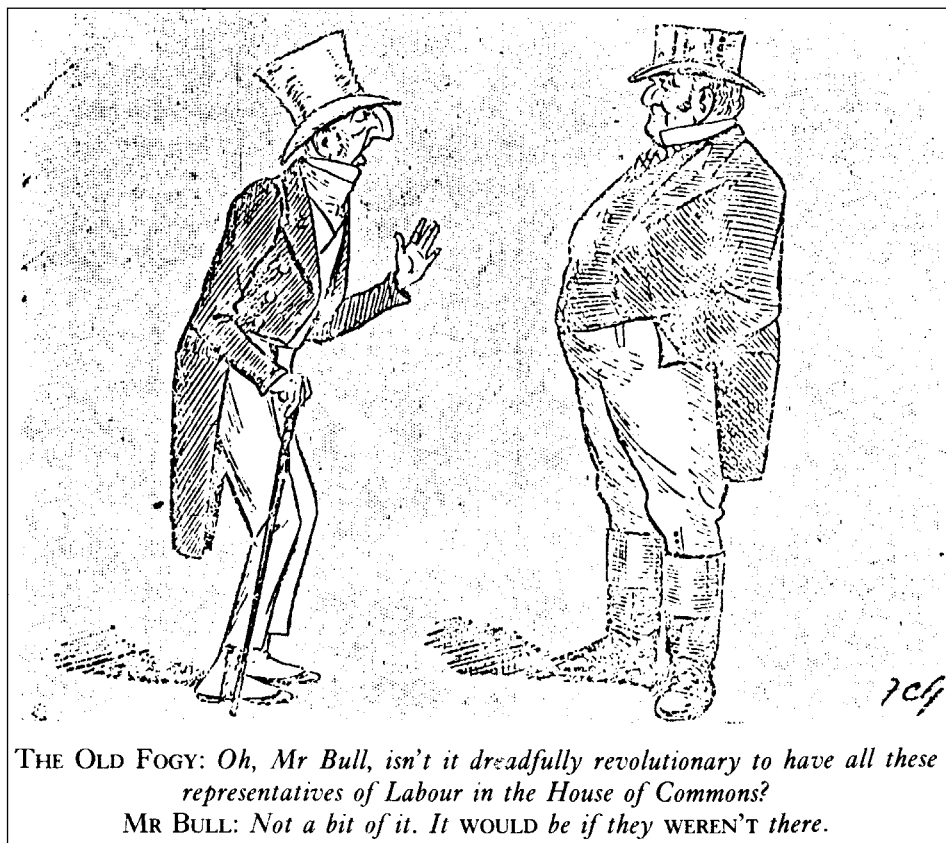
His other charity was the Caroline Thorpe Memorial Fund, set up in memory of his first wife and mother of his son Rupert, which raised funds initially for the Caroline Thorpe Children's Ward at North Devon Hospital, and then expanded to include all deprived children in North Devon.

Jeremy's nickname for me was 'the Arum lily', a play on my surname. I last saw him ten days before he died, dropping in on the off-chance and, despite his loss of voice due to his throat cancer, he still managed to say to me: 'how did we do in the by-election?' – a reference to the Rochester & Strood by-election in November 2014. Unfortunately the exertion of this small question rendered him voiceless for the rest of my visit, and he communicated in signs for the rest of the time. I am so glad I had that opportunity of (unwittingly) saying goodbye to a good friend.

Joyce Arram

THE STRUGGLE FOR POLITICAL REFORM LABOUR CANDIDATES AND THE

In November 1868 a leading article in *The Bee-Hive*, a weekly trade unionist journal, declared that 'there is a vast amount of rottenness in the ranks of the Liberal Party which must be rooted out before the working men can expect to be treated fair and honourably in their efforts to enter the House of Commons'.¹ The call for direct labour representation – understood here as the election of working-class men to parliament to represent the labour interest as Liberal MPs rather than independently – had enjoyed a broad range of support during the reform agitations that followed the establishment of the Reform League in February 1865. **James Owen** explores what happens between 1968 and 1885.



WILLIAM GLADSTONE, ALONG with several prominent Liberal MPs, such as Henry Fawcett and Peter Alfred Taylor, had spoken in support of working-class parliamentary representation, while the working-class radicals in whom the management of the Reform League was vested were zealous advocates for the labour movement having its own voice inside the Commons.²

However, in the decade following the 1867 Reform Act – which enfranchised 'registered and residential' male householders, giving the vote to 30 per cent of working men – the labour movement struggled to secure the return of their own representatives. For many labour activists, at the heart of this struggle was the unwillingness of the managers of local Liberal Associations to select a

POLITICAL REPRESENTATION THE LIBERAL PARTY, 1868 – 85

working-class man as their parliamentary candidate.³ According to one frustrated working-class political campaigner, ‘if an angel from heaven came down ... unless he had the imprimatur of the Liberal Association, he was unfit for office’.⁴ This created a legacy of bitterness, which manifested itself in a number of working-class, self-styled ‘labour’ candidates opposing the official Liberal candidate at parliamentary elections. This article examines how both sides behaved in these elections and considers what these contests can tell us about the nature of the changing relationship between the labour movement and the Liberal Party in the third-quarter of the nineteenth century; a period which witnessed the rise of mass politics and the apex of popular Liberalism.

There is an important reason to look again at these contests. The current scholarly emphasis is that the progression from Gladstonian Liberalism and Victorian radicalism to the embryonic Labour Party of the early twentieth century was a straightforward, linear one.⁵ Yet, this interpretation, which has become something of an orthodoxy, overstates the confluence of the labour movement and Liberalism during this period. As discussed below, the relationship between the two could be tense and troubled, and it could change depending on the political context or the locality.

Labour candidates and the Liberal Party: the 1868 general election

Soon after the 1867 Reform Act was passed, the general council of the Reform League called for joint action with trade unions to secure the return of ‘a number of working men proportionate to the other interests and classes at present represented in Parliament’.⁶ This proved to be a highly problematic undertaking. Firstly, the Reform League’s London headquarters had little influence over local constituency branches, many of which had already lapsed due to inactivity following the passing of the Second Reform Act.⁷ Money was also a major obstacle: in 1868 the League’s finances were in a parlous state.⁸ In the summer of 1868 Howell had negotiated a secret financial agreement on behalf of the Reform League with the Liberal chief whip, George Glyn, whereby a sum of £1,000, supplied by the wealthy Liberal manufacturer Samuel Morley, could be used to promote the establishment of working-class political organisations that would support Liberal candidates. But this pact, and the money that underpinned it, existed only to advance Liberal candidates against vulnerable sitting Conservatives; not a penny would be used to oppose a Liberal.⁹

Ultimately, the decision to bring forward a working-class candidate in the Liberal interest rested with the managers of the local Liberal associations. Working-class

involvement in local Liberal organisation at this time was patchy and limited: there was evidence of it in Rochdale and Stockport in the 1850s and to a certain extent in Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester in the 1860s, but these were the exceptions.¹⁰ Popular Liberal organisation was woeful in the majority of English boroughs, and at the 1868 general election many Liberal associations were established simply on an ad hoc basis. Unsurprisingly, those who held the purse strings of the local associations were loath to back a working-class candidate who would not be able to sustain himself financially if elected, and the managers of the association, who zealously defended provincial independence, looked unkindly on not only Reform League agents who wished to intervene, but also the efforts of Glyn, who encouraged, largely in vain, local party managers to embrace the new electoral opportunities presented by the Second Reform Act.¹¹

Only two working-class candidates backed by the Reform League made it to the polls at the 1868 general election: George Howell at Aylesbury and William Randal Cremer at Warwick. Both seats were double-member boroughs where only one official Liberal had been brought forward, but neither man secured the endorsement of the local Liberal association. At Aylesbury, the Liberal candidate, Nathaniel Mayer de Rothschild, was a local landowner who effectively

Left: How *Punch* saw the entry of working-class MPs to Parliament

held the purse strings of local Liberalism. Rothschild had no wish to give either financial or vocal support to a trade unionist who was an outsider to the agricultural borough.¹² Glyn, in a letter to Gladstone, lamented Howell's decision to stand, writing that 'he has unfortunately chosen the wrong place. ... A stranger cannot win there'.¹³ At Warwick, the president of the local Reform Association wanted full control of the Liberal nomination, and effectively disabled Cremer's candidature by refusing to provide any financial assistance.¹⁴ Both Howell and Cremer finished bottom of their respective polls, comfortably defeated by a Liberal and Conservative candidate who outspent them by a ratio of three to one.¹⁵ Significantly, neither Howell nor Cremer, in their campaign speeches, attacked the national Liberal Party. Both promised unequivocal support to Gladstone.¹⁶ But their candidatures did represent an important protest against the neutralisation of their chosen borough's voice following the decision of the local party not to endorse a second Liberal.

The Labour Representation League

A series of electoral contests in the following five years witnessed a subtle but important shift in how the labour movement articulated its identity in relation to the Liberal Party. This change began in November 1869 with the formation of the Labour Representation League (LRL), established by the leaders of London trade unionism in order to promote the return of working-class men to parliament. The language of the LRL at its inaugural meeting stressed the need for independence from middle-class politicians. George Odger, a shoemaker and Reform League lecturer, described middle-class Liberal MPs as the 'sorry representatives of labour in Parliament', while George Potter, owner of *The Bee-Hive*, insisted that working-men should put themselves forward at parliamentary elections, irrespective of the wishes of local Liberal associations.¹⁷

Odger's candidacy at the Southwark by-election of February 1870 revealed the potential strength of a working-class candidate willing

to aggressively challenge organised Liberalism. After failing to secure the Liberal nomination, which went to Sir Sydney Waterlow, a city banker, Odger persisted, offering as an independent candidate in the labour interest.¹⁸ He stood on a solid, advanced Liberal platform, but he was implacably opposed to the moderates who ran the Southwark Liberal Association. The tension here was that the obstructionist leaders of local Liberalism did not reflect the direction in which Odger felt the Liberal Party should be heading, particularly in regards to direct labour representation. Under the guidance of his agent, the experienced political operator James Acland, Odger successfully courted the support of neighbouring Liberal and working-men's associations. Generous donations from Liberal sympathisers also helped him to avoid a nefarious attempt to derail his campaign when the returning officer demanded that Odger pay £200 to cover his share of expenses and refused to release tickets for Odger's supporters to the elections hustings until he did so. It was Sir Sydney Waterlow's intransigence, however, that proved fatal. Although Odger received 4,382 votes, Waterlow, who retired hours before polling closed, gained just under 2,951, allowing the Conservative candidate to be returned with 4,686 votes.

The inflexibility of organised Liberalism in dealing with a popular working-class candidate like Odger prompted the LRL to re-evaluate the labour movement's relationship with the Liberal Party. In 1873 the League issued an address to its supporters, which declared:

We urge you to organize in your several constituencies, not as mere consenting parties to the doings of local wirepullers, but as a great Labour party – a party which knows its strength, and is prepared to fight and win.¹⁹

This discussion of a 'great Labour party' is significant and should not be dismissed. Even though the LRL did not reject Liberal principles, it is an important example of the leaders of the labour movement articulating their identity in a way that separated them from organised Liberalism. Unfortunately, their

assertive rhetoric was not matched by organisational strength. The leaders of the LRL were unable to secure any pledge from the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in support of labour representation in parliament. This failure reflected cultural divisions within the trade union movement regarding the centralisation of its finances. The TUC frequently debated the merits of a national electoral fund for parliamentary candidates, to which all affiliated unions would contribute, but, while the London-based trade unionists behind the LRL championed this approach, there was consistent opposition from elsewhere, especially from delegates of the Durham and Northumbrian miners, who felt that a centralised fund would undermine their regional autonomy.²⁰ The League's finances were therefore constantly in a precarious state and in 1873, its secretary, Henry Broadhurst, began to solicit subscriptions from Liberal MPs favourable to their cause, which was hardly indicative of a serious plan to go their own way.²¹

The return of the country's first two working-class MPs at the 1874 general election underlined the importance of financial stability and securing special deals between organised labour and local official Liberalism.

Labour candidates and the Liberal Party: the 1874 general election

The return of the country's first two working-class MPs at the 1874 general election underlined the importance of financial stability and securing special deals between organised labour and local official Liberalism. At Stafford, Alexander Macdonald of the Miners' National Association was elected in second place. His candidature was a direct result of a deal brokered in 1869 between the Staffordshire miners and the local Liberal Party: following Odger's defeat in a test ballot at Stafford that year, it was agreed between the two bodies that a working-class candidate would be brought forward at the next general election. The traditional obstacle of finance was overcome when the Durham Miners' Association funded Macdonald's expenses.²² Importantly, Macdonald himself was reasonably wealthy from speculative investments in the mining industry, so he was clearly able to sustain himself in parliament if elected. There was also little doubt about the financial health of Thomas Burt, the agent of the Northumberland Miners'

Association who came in for Morpeth. The Miners' Association covered his election costs and provided him with an annual salary of £500.²³

The LRL brought forward ten other working-class candidates at the 1874 election: they were all defeated and their failures underlined the range of obstacles facing labour candidates in the 1870s.²⁴ In addition to lack of money, localism was a problem: sending the London-based George Howell, George Potter and Henry Broadhurst to contest, respectively, Aylesbury, Peterborough and Wycombe, was foolhardy given the level of suspicion of outside interference amongst local Liberals. Even when the candidates were local, such as the silkweaver Thomas Motterhead at Preston and the miners' agent William Pickard at Wigan, working-class support for the Conservative Party proved to be an insurmountable obstacle. There was also a wider problem that had been evident at the debates at the Trades Union Congress: working men were not necessarily anxious to be represented in parliament by their own class.²⁵

Local Liberal associations, moreover, displayed superior canvassing tactics that helped to neutralise the threat of a labour candidate. For example, at Middlesbrough, John Kane, founder of the National Association of Ironworkers in Gateshead, represented a potentially serious challenge to Henry Bolckow, the local iron master. But within forty-eight hours of Kane announcing his candidacy, the Middlesbrough Liberal Reform Association specifically targeted the division's unskilled and non-unionised Irish workforce, issuing four thousand circulars. When Kane attempted to reach out to the members of the local Home Rule Association, local Liberals swiftly arranged for members of the Middlesbrough Irish Literary Association to canvass on behalf of Bolckow.²⁶ This slick, well-oiled local Liberal machine helped deliver Bolckow a commanding majority. More broadly, the increasing control of urban space by party managers, through controlled and ticketed meetings, led many labour candidates to give open air speeches in derelict areas on the outskirts of urban

As *The Bee-Hive*, which had become the organ of the League, noted following the 1874 general election, 'labour candidates to a man were of Liberal principles, who would have given an intelligent support to a really Liberal government, and yet the managers of the Liberal Party ... regarded them with suspicion, and treated them in an unfriendly spirit'.

constituencies, underlining their separateness from Liberal and Conservative candidates.

Despite these range of obstacles, in the post-mortem that followed the 1874 general election, the LRL laid the blame squarely at the door of organised Liberalism. As *The Bee-Hive*, which had become the organ of the League, noted following the 1874 general election, 'labour candidates to a man were of Liberal principles, who would have given an intelligent support to a really Liberal government, and yet the managers of the Liberal Party ... regarded them with suspicion, and treated them in an unfriendly spirit'.²⁷ In this context, the League's response was prefiguring the later adoption of the 'caucus' as a political bogeyman.

Labour and the rise of the 'caucus'

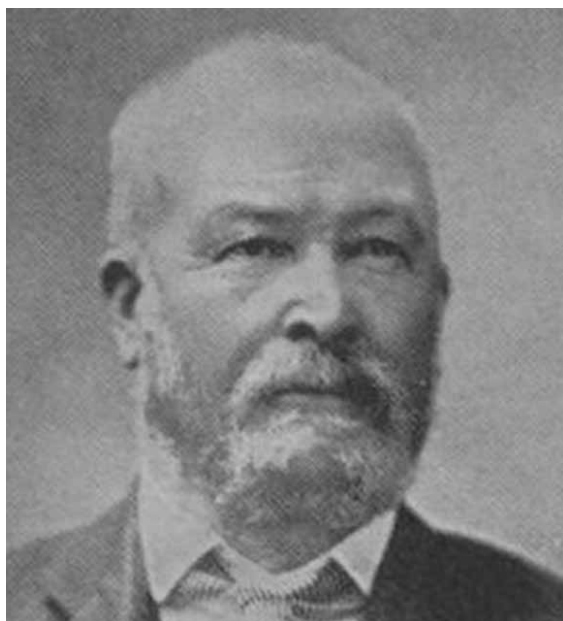
The formation of the National Liberal Federation (NLF) in May 1877 generated one of the most prominent public debates of the 1870s: how to organise a democracy in a new era of mass politics. Created by Joseph Chamberlain and the leaders of the Birmingham Liberal Association, the NLF was intended to be a forum for popularly elected constituency associations. Firstly, it would promote the establishment, across industrial England, of local Liberal associations mirrored on the Birmingham one, the basis of which were ward branches that elected members to a general committee, which would vote on matters such as parliamentary candidates, and an executive committee, which was responsible for the day-to-day running of the organisation. Secondly, the NLF would referee policy debate amongst activists and therefore act, in Chamberlain's words, as a 'Liberal Parliament'.²⁸

The concept of the NLF was attacked by Liberal and Conservative political thinkers, who believed that the introduction of what they felt was machine politics into England would corrupt ideals of representation; namely that an MP should be free to exercise his judgement without sacrificing it to his constituents and that extra-parliamentary movements undermined true parliamentary government. Prominent

Liberal intellectuals who expressed unease at what they felt was the emergence of mass, democratic politics included Henry Maine, Goldwin Smith and Albert Venn Dicey.²⁹ The Liberal MPs Leonard Courtney and John Lubbock, meanwhile, advocated the cause of proportional representation in a bid to limit what they felt was the nefarious influence of constituency organisations.³⁰

Some commentators, such as the Liberal journalist William Fraser Rae, suggested that the Birmingham model mirrored the American 'caucus', a pejorative term used to describe closed-door meetings where unscrupulous party wire-pullers chose a candidate for an election.³¹ This comparison was fiercely rejected by Chamberlain and the historian and Liberal MP James Bryce, who argued that as the American and English political systems were inherently different, any analogies were deeply flawed.³² Chamberlain, though, understood the rhetorical significance of the word, writing that the term 'caucus', because of its association with corruption in American politics, had 'the great merit of being inferentially offensive'.³³ Sure enough, the word was subsequently appropriated by would-be politicians during election campaigns, particularly, though not exclusively, self-styled 'labour' candidates who had been denied the Liberal nomination, in order to paint their opponent as the nominee of dictatorial wire-pullers.³⁴ Anti-caucus rhetoric in the late 1870s and 1880s was also a cultural expression of a candidate's 'manliness'. As recent research has shown, a candidate's refusal to bow to the dictation of the 'caucus' was proof that they behaved in a 'manly' fashion.³⁵

Labour's response to the formation of the NLF was both intellectual and practical. George Howell, in an article titled 'The Caucus System and the Liberal Party', raised the familiar purist objections regarding machine politics substituting discipline for popular force, but his analysis was also coloured by the fear that the rise of the caucus would irrevocably damage the cause of labour representation in parliament. For Howell, the caucus system meant entrenching the power of candidate selection in those who paid the association's



expenses.³⁶ His views were echoed by the radical journalist Lloyd Jones, who felt that those who ran the party machine would never select a workman who could not be elected free of expense.³⁷ However, neither Howell nor Lloyd Jones rejected the notion of greater party organisation. For them, party machinery should be used for propaganda purposes: to promote party unity around national concerns, and not accentuate, in Howell's words, 'petty local ambitions'.³⁸

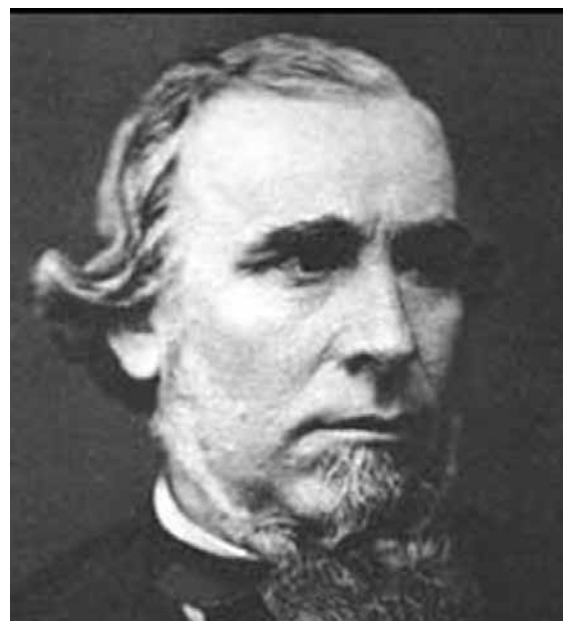
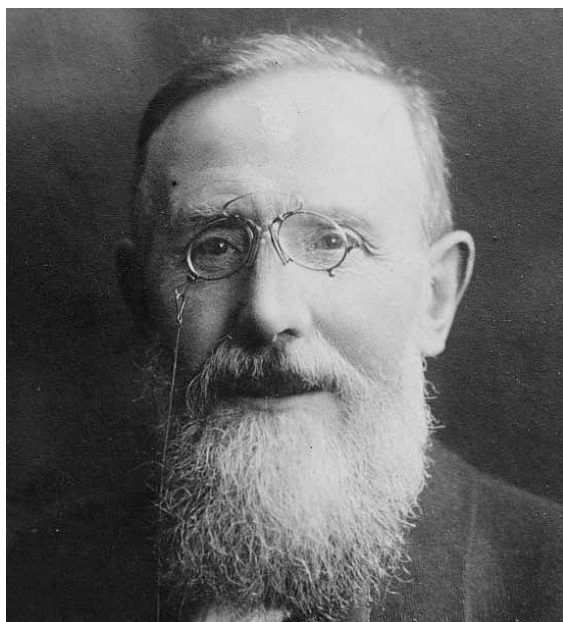
Chamberlain, and the NLF's secretary, the seasoned political organiser Francis Schnadhorst, insisted that the working classes could join their local Liberal association and have a voice in the choice of candidate.³⁹ Yet, it was one thing for workers to join an association and quite another for them to sit on its executive and influence its direction. The majority of workers had neither the time nor the money to do this. This was evident by the derisory number of working-class delegates that were sent to the NLF annual meetings in its early years.⁴⁰ The participation of working-class women in the NLF and its affiliated branches was certainly limited. By the early 1880s women's Liberal associations had been established in a number of towns, most notably Birmingham, Bristol, York and Darlington, and there were already forty in existence when the Women's Liberal Federation was formed in 1887.⁴¹ But working-class women, like their male counterparts, did not have the time or resources to take up leading positions, and the agenda of the women's Liberal associations tended to reflect middle-class preoccupations such as local government reform and education.⁴² Moreover, although figures like Chamberlain and Schnadhorst championed working-class involvement in these new model associations, the independence of local organisations remained. According to Robert Spence Watson, president of the NLF from 1890 to 1902, 'it was made abundantly clear that the independence of local organisations would not be interfered with'.⁴³ In 1892, the Liberal chief whip Herbert Gladstone echoed this interpretation, writing that 'constituencies and their local managers are infinitely sensitive over advice from headquarters'.⁴⁴

The formation of the NLF therefore did not materially alter the prospects for would-be working-class politicians, though it did precipitate the rise of a distinct anti-caucus rhetoric that helped thwarted working-class candidates express their dissatisfaction at those who ran the local party machine. Significantly, prominent labour activists, such as George Howell, did not reject the necessity for party organisation, reflecting a pragmatic approach that became evident at the 1885 general election.

Lib-Labs and the 1885 general election

What arguably had a greater impact than the NLF on how working-class 'labour' candidates and the managers of organised Liberalism shared and negotiated power was the 1885 Redistribution Act, which created new single-member constituencies. Existing Liberal organisations were split into divisional ones, strengthening the identification between the local party association and the chosen candidate. Labour activists were generally positive towards the Redistribution Act. They supported the theory that constituencies would be divided so as to enable particular industries to send a Member to the Commons and they welcomed the abolition of double-member seats, believing that they had given the caucus greater opportunity to manipulate and regiment votes.⁴⁵

With the LRL having effectively ceased to exist by the end of the 1870s due to chronic lack of finances, there had been little coordinated effort by labour activists at the 1880 general election. Burt and Macdonald held their seats, while Henry Broadhurst came in for Stoke-on-Trent. The only other two working-class candidates were the former cabinetmaker Benjamin Lucraft, who finished bottom of the poll at Tower Hamlets, and Joseph Arch, the leader of the 'agricultural labourers', who was defeated at Wilton.⁴⁶ The creation of new single-member constituencies, however, along with the 1884 Reform Act, which extended the male householder franchise to the countryside, created new opportunities for working-class candidates to broker deals with Liberal associations.



In Durham, for example, upon the county being split into eight-single member divisions, the powerful Durham Miners' Association not only selected three candidates with an agreed annual salary of £500, but also reserved three constituencies for them, a decision that was readily accepted by the Durham Liberal Association, who were left to choose candidates for the remaining five seats. In this context, the Durham Miners' Association effectively became the leadership of local organised Liberalism, and in 1885 William Crawford, the miners' leader, and John Wilson, secretary of the Miners' Political Reform Association, were returned for Mid-Durham and Houghton-le-Spring respectively.⁴⁷

A separate tactic that had been used with some degree of success at municipal and school board elections was that labour candidates would garner the support of local working-men's clubs and associations, and use it as leverage when dealing with the local Liberal association. In Birmingham, for example, in the 1870s, the brass workers' leader John William Davis had united the city's working-class radicals into a local Labour Party, and with this organisation behind him, he was able, in negotiations with Schnadhorst and Chamberlain, to secure a certain number of working-class candidates on the shortlists produced by the Birmingham Liberal Association.⁴⁸ At the 1885 general election George Howell, standing for the new constituency of Bethnal Green North East, used this strategy. First, he secured the backing of the popular Bethnal Green Radical Club. The club then informed the leaders of the Bethnal Green Liberal Association that they would instruct their members to support the middle-class Liberal candidate in the south-west division on the condition that the Liberal Association backed Howell in the north-east. A bargain was struck, and after Howell's expenses were covered by donations from Liberal sympathisers, he was elected.⁴⁹ It's important to note, though, that the local political environment facilitated Howell's electoral strategy. London had a vibrant network of radical clubs that traditionally operated outside of Liberal bodies, and Howell was able to tap into this resource.⁵⁰ This

was not the case, for example, in Hull, where the independent working-class candidate, Neiles Billany, had the backing of only a nascent radical club that had little leverage with the local Liberal association, which swiftly rejected him.⁵¹

In total, twelve labour candidates who had been endorsed by a Liberal association were returned at the 1885 general election. They later become known as Lib-Labs. The progress that organised labour made under the stewardship of these men has played a large part in establishing the current orthodoxy of a largely untroubled alliance between working-class radicalism and the Liberals.⁵² However, this unity inside the walls of the Commons was not reflected in certain constituencies in England, particularly when the broader Lib-Lab movement was in direct competition with official Liberalism. For example, at Chesterfield at the 1885 general election, James Haslam, the secretary of the Derbyshire Miners' Association and a member of the Clay Cross Polling District Liberal Association, was the very epitome of Lib-Labism, yet he was rejected by the Chesterfield Liberal Association in favour of Alfred Barnes, a local colliery owner.⁵³ Haslam, who was funded by his miners, continued his campaign, despite the best efforts of the Chesterfield Liberals, who persistently canvassed Barnes' employees and banned Haslam from addressing 'Liberal gatherings'.⁵⁴ Haslam ultimately lost, but he polled nearly 2,000 votes, meaning that the wider Lib-Lab movement had delivered a significant rebuke to organised Liberalism.

There could also be tensions between Lib-Labism and organised labour. In county Durham, the neat electoral compact between the Lib-Lab leadership of the miners' association and local Liberalism was challenged by the wider labour movement. At Chester-le-Street, Lloyd Jones ran as an independent labour candidate against the local colliery owner James Joicey, arguing that the selection of a mine owner was a blow against the 'labour interest in Parliament'.⁵⁵ At Jarrow, meanwhile, the engineer James Johnston opposed the local shipowner Sir Charles Palmer, on the basis that Palmer's views did not represent those of the division's

working-class electorate.⁵⁶ Both Lloyd Jones and Johnston were defeated, but the high number of votes they received underlined the fact that even where the links between trade unionism and organised Liberalism were strong, disputes over candidate selection could quickly expose the tensions between the Lib-Lab movement and organised labour.

Given such instances of localised tension, it is clear that there was a diversity of responses from the labour movement towards organised Liberalism. It is therefore inadvisable to give a one-size-fits-all picture of the relationship between labour candidates and the Liberal Party in this period. Moreover, it is also the case that there was more than one road to becoming a working-class politician. The example of William Rolley is particularly relevant here. Born in Sheffield and apprenticed as a steel maker, Rolley was initially the archetypal Lib-Lab activist. President of the TUC in 1874, he was elected as a Liberal to the Sheffield school board and helped establish the Sheffield Labour Electoral Association. After failing to gain the Liberal nomination for the Attercliffe division in 1885, however, he became disillusioned with the leaders of local organised Liberalism. Hurt that his efforts on behalf of local Liberalism had not been recognised and believing that, in his words, 'the working classes were likely to get as much from the Tories as from the Liberals', he became a Conservative in 1888 and thereafter championed their legislative efforts on behalf of the labour interest.⁵⁷ Rejection by organised Liberalism could therefore have the opposite effect to pushing candidates towards independent labour representation: there was not simply a binary choice between the Liberal Party and independent labour.

Left: Lib-Labs – Henry Broadhurst (1840–1911; MP 1885–92, 1894–1906); Thomas Burt (1837–1922; MP 1874–1918); Alexander Macdonald (1821–81; MP 1874–81)

Conclusion

The period between 1868 and 1885 was clearly a significant one for the relationship between the labour movement and the Liberal Party. The franchise revolution of 1867, which gave the vote to 30 per cent of working men, ushered in a new era of mass politics. The two main political parties responded by introducing new forms of local

party machinery in an attempt to control an expanded electorate, and it is within this context that the labour movement's relationship with the Liberals needs to be understood. The ability of working-class candidates to secure the Liberal nomination was contingent on the local political environment and it is therefore inadvisable to give a one-size-fits-all picture of the relationship between the labour movement and local Liberal associations. A conclusion that can be drawn from the contests discussed above, though, is that evidence of brokered deals between working-class candidates and Liberal associations at local and national elections demonstrates that labour had direct personal experience of the power that party organisation could yield for both good and evil. There was therefore a pragmatic, pro-organisational strand to labour's political culture in the third-quarter of the nineteenth century.

When working-class candidates were rejected by what became known as the Liberal 'caucus', they subsequently made a distinction between the middle-class managers running the local party machine, whom they vociferously attacked, and advanced Liberal MPs at Westminster, whose values they supported. Nonetheless, the continuing impotence of the national party leadership to intervene in constituency matters raised the question of whether the Liberals would ever fully support the cause of labour, even when Lib-Labs sat in parliament. This predicament caused the labour movement to continually re-evaluate its identity as a political group in relation to the Liberals. The stream of self-styled 'labour' candidates putting themselves forward against Liberals was symptomatic of this continual process of re-evaluation and therefore reflected fault lines in the relationship between working-class labour activists and the Liberal Party that the current scholarly orthodoxy overlooks.

Dr James Owen is a Research Fellow for the History of Parliament's House of Commons, 1832–1945, project. His book, Labour and the Caucus: working-class radicalism and organised Liberalism in England, 1868–1888 (Liverpool University Press, 2014) is now available – see advert on page 2.

The stream of self-styled 'labour' candidates putting themselves forward against Liberals was symptomatic of this continual process of re-evaluation and therefore reflected fault lines in the relationship between working-class labour activists and the Liberal Party that the current scholarly orthodoxy overlooks.

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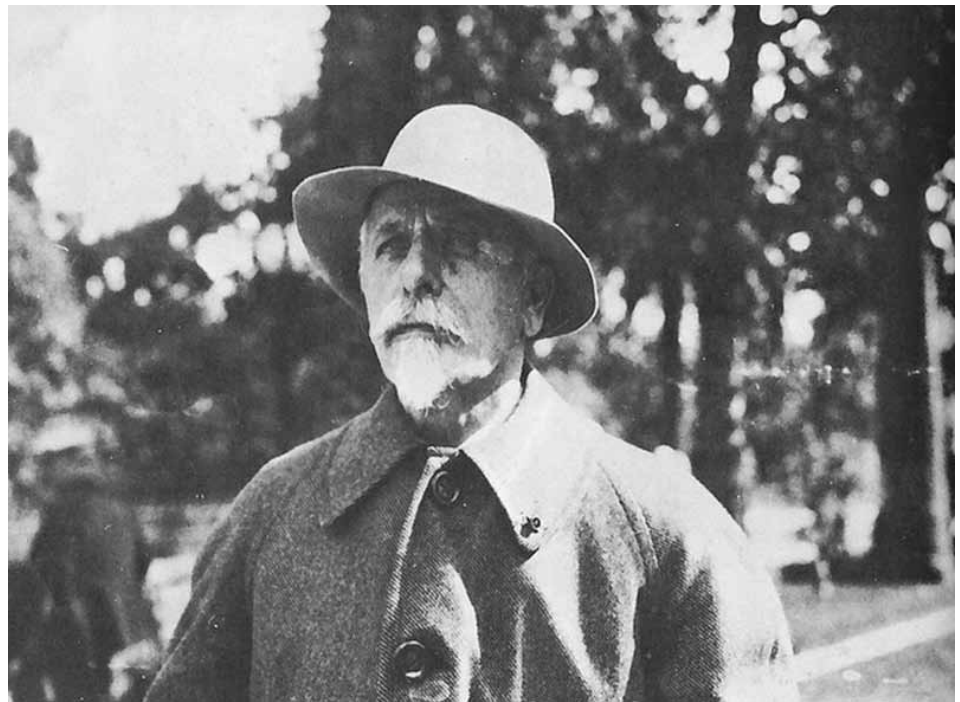
LIBERAL HISTORY QUIZ 2014

The 2014 Liberal history quiz was a feature of the History Group’s exhibition stand at the Liberal Democrat conference in Glasgow last October; the questions were (mostly) drawn from our new booklet *Liberal Thinkers*. The winner, with a rather impressive 20 marks out of 20, was Iain Sharpe. We also included anyone answering at least five questions correctly in a draw for a second prize: the winner was Alan Sherwell. Below we reprint the questions – the answers are on page 29.

- Which work by John Stuart Mill serves as the symbol of office of the President of the Liberal Democrats?
- Which liberal thinker was MP for Berwick-on-Tweed from 1944 to 1945?
- Which thinker and writer on the role of the state and capitalism had an SDP think-tank named after him?
- Which liberal thinker’s head is stored in a fridge?
- Which champion of civil liberties and religious toleration served as Foreign Secretary under three different prime ministers?
- Which liberal thinker is said to have gone straight from the declaration of the poll, when he was elected town councillor, to lecture on Kant’s *The Critique of Pure Reason*?
- Which great advocate of land reform and taxation ran as the United Labor Party candidate for mayor of New York in 1886 coming second but beating the Republican hopeful, Theodore Roosevelt, into third place?
- She was a radical, feminist thinker; her daughter wrote one of the most enduring horror stories in the English language. Who were they?
- Where is the ‘Rights of Man’ pub, and why is it there?
- John Stuart Mill, who wrote books, was defeated in the 1868 general election by his Tory opponent, who sold books. Who was his opponent?
- Who wrote after the 1929 election that he was ‘sorry that the Liberals did not get more seats, as I think (I know it’s blasphemy) they carry more brains to the square inch than Labour’?
- Which Liberal thinker held office under Oliver Cromwell’s government, having responsibility for dealing with all foreign correspondence?
- Which book is generally acknowledged as the only feminist classic written by a male author?
- The philosopher Bertrand Russell once said that: ‘Every time I argued with XX, I felt I was taking my life in my hands’. Who was XX?
- In what work did a liberal thinker call for ‘the liberty to know, to utter and to argue freely according to conscience above all liberties’?
- Who, in the 1830s, argued that ‘women’s minds are degenerated by habits of dependence’ caused by marriage, and called for the education of women and also for the right of divorce ‘without any reason assigned’?
- Which liberal thinker wrote in 1776: ‘There is no art which one government sooner learns of another than that of draining money from the pockets of the people?’
- What was the name of the organisation founded in 1953, principally under the influence of Elliott Dodds, which aimed to produce the first full-scale publication on the attitudes and policies of British Liberalism since the ‘Yellow Book’?
- Which husband-and-wife team of liberal thinkers concentrated in their work upon the effects and costs of the decline of the traditional village and the rise of industry?
- Which much-loved Liberal Democrat, it is argued in his entry in the *Dictionary of Liberal Thought*, ‘helped to make the party feel good about itself’?

A CONSPIRACY LLOYD GEORGE AND

There is not a single reference to Sir Basil Zaharoff in Lloyd George's *War Memoirs* & L.G.'s biographers completely ignore him. Yet the two men were closely associated throughout World War I and during the whole period of the 1918–22 Coalition Government. It is curious that objective biographers should have ignored this enigmatic figure who, as much as anyone, was responsible for the events which caused Lloyd George's fall from power.¹ **Cecil Bloom** traces the story of Zaharoff and Lloyd George.



DONALD McCORMICK'S *THE Mask of Merlin* was published in 1963, some eighteen years after David Lloyd George died and forty-one years after he left prime ministerial office. Yet, although Zaharoff's obituary in *The Times* described his relations with Lloyd George as being 'close and cordial during the War',² this book represented the first attempt to cast light on the nature of Lloyd George's association with this very rich arms dealer.

Basil Zaharoff was considered by many to be a Machiavellian figure – disreputable and notorious for his consistent use of corrupt business practices – although newspaper tycoon Lord Riddell called him 'a wonderful man'.³ French Prime Minister Clemenceau once called him 'the sixth power in Europe',⁴ and one historian has written that Zaharoff had become 'a figure of European legend (or demonology) long before his death'.⁵ It was once claimed that through Lloyd George he had the same influence on the

Y OF SILENCE? D BASIL ZAHAROFF

British government that he had previously had on the French thanks to Clemenceau; and it was said that he knew most of the British Cabinet and was a personal friend of Bonar Law and of Cabinet minister Walter Long. The writer Osbert Sitwell met him several times and has recorded that when he first saw him there was 'something evil and imposing about his figure' and that he resembled 'a vulture'.⁶

His place of birth is shrouded in mystery. He was probably Turkish, born in 1849, but he sometimes claimed to be Romanian, Greek, Polish or Russian. He died in Monte Carlo in 1936. He started selling armaments in Greece in 1877 for the Anglo-Swedish company Nordenfelt, and stayed with the company when it was taken over by the British Vickers Corporation in 1897, continuing to work for Vickers for thirty years and becoming a director. There he formed a close association with its financial director, Sir Vincent Caillard.

Zaharoff was said to have been despised by King George V, yet he received a knighthood from him.⁷ He became obsessed with gaining state honours; after receiving a number from the French government, one of his key objectives became the acquisition of British honours, which he termed 'chocolate' when referring to the matter in confidential documents. His unsavoury reputation resulted in a

number of fiction writers using his character in their novels. Andrew Undershaft, the unscrupulous arms dealer in George Bernard Shaw's play *Major Barbara* (1905) has, for example, been said to be based on Zaharoff, and many other eminent novelists including Upton Sinclair, Gerald Kersh and Eric Ambler have portrayed his character in their books. Nevertheless, he was generous and gave large sums to good causes as well as endowing university chairs – however it must be borne in mind that, in all likelihood, such generosity was principally intended to foster a favourable reputation.

So why were Lloyd George's connections with Zaharoff kept quiet over so many years? *The Times* reviewed McCormick's book in September 1963, but it was a very short review that accused McCormick of failing to provide evidence for the charges laid against the former prime minister and pronounced that a degree of questionable judgement seriously reduced the value of the biography. The book did not ignite any interest in a possible follow-up on the story until some years later. However, McCormick seems to have overlooked one crucial aspect of the relationship between the two men: he records simply that during the war Zaharoff was sent on 'various secret missions' by the prime minister, but gives no details. Yet

papers released by the Wiltshire and Swindon Archives Service in 1975, together with a number from both the National Archives and Parliamentary Archives, make it clear that Lloyd George used Zaharoff to conduct secret negotiations with the Turks – with the aim of bribing their leaders, eventually to the extent of \$25 million dollars – to get them to make peace with the Allies; and, as a result, Zaharoff did receive a number of honours. The archives also show the vigorous attempts made by Zaharoff's supporters in government to gain such honours for him. He was awarded first the Grand Cross of the British Empire, then the Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath, and eventually a knighthood.

In 1965 McCormick followed up on his first book by writing a biography of Zaharoff entitled *Pedlar of Death*, in which he repeated his earlier statement that Lloyd George had sent Zaharoff on various secret missions during the war. In this book Zaharoff is described as 'a super spy in the Lloyd George circle'.⁸ However it appears that Zaharoff's early connection with Lloyd George was a hostile one: Lloyd George was attacking the pre-war activities of munitions manufacturers and Zaharoff saw him as a dangerous enemy. Later, though, he decided that it was in his interest to befriend the man he believed was going to become a key figure

Left: Basil Zaharoff in 1928

A CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE?

in British politics. He took steps to find out as much as he could about Lloyd George – his weaknesses and his secrets – and for this he used Arthur Maundy-Gregory, later to feature on Lloyd George's behalf in the so-called honours scandal. It has been suggested that Zaharoff had a hold over Lloyd George because of a brief affair with Emily Ann Burrows, Zaharoff's former wife, but it was in 1915 when Lloyd George became Minister of Munitions in Asquith's administration that Zaharoff's relationship with Lloyd George strengthened.⁹

Zaharoff's principal involvement with Lloyd George began when the latter attempted to bribe the Turkish leaders headed by Enver Pasha with large sums of money to give up hostilities against the Allies, and it is this aspect of the relationship between the two men that forms the principal thrust of this article. But even before this, Zaharoff had been deeply involved with the British government when Asquith was prime minister. Through Caillard, he told the government in November 1915 that £1.5 million would allow him to bribe the Greek government into joining the Allies and start fighting the Bulgarians, thus shortening the war. As a result, money was transferred to Zaharoff – but eventually Asquith rejected Zaharoff's plan. Soon afterwards, however, Zaharoff went back to Asquith with a more ambitious scheme to bribe the whole of the Young Turk party (of which Enver Pasha was a leading figure) with £4 million, for which they would hand over Constantinople and the Dardanelles to the Allies before bolting to the United States.¹⁰ However this proposal to bribe the Turks does not appear to have been followed up until, in May 1917, an intelligence officer who had been involved in the Greek discussions drew Prime Minister Lloyd George's attention to it after dialogues with Zaharoff and Caillard.

Lloyd George certainly became interested in the possibilities with regard to Turkey, although initially he did have some doubts about the project, believing that any arrangement would, at the very least, have to involve internationalisation for Palestine – putting it under the protection or control of two or more nations, presumably intended

to be the UK and France – but he then decided that Zaharoff should proceed with his mission. Some disclosure of these events did occur before the release of the official archived documents, but what is less well known is that, as part of this deal, Lloyd George was prepared to consider allowing Turkey to retain some form of light suzerainty over Palestine. One further thing that emerges from the papers now available is the very considerable extent to which the correspondence regarding Zaharoff's activities was kept secret from most government ministers and civil servants – and for this purpose Zaharoff was given the code name 'Zedzed', with 'Chairman' and 'Treasurer' being used on a number of occasions to indicate the prime minister and the chancellor of the exchequer respectively. In return for acting as an intermediary, Zaharoff was to receive some 'chocolate', and his obsession with gaining British honours is referred to in the correspondence on a number of occasions. Lloyd George did not usually deal directly with Zaharoff but used Caillard as intermediary because of the latter's business links with Zaharoff, and all was coordinated in Whitehall by Walter Long, the Colonial Secretary, who was the principal individual charged by Lloyd George to deal with both Caillard and Zaharoff. Long was an important politician and could well have succeeded Balfour as Conservative leader in 1911. He became a strong admirer of Zaharoff and pressed on many occasions for him to be awarded an honour.

Two separate attempts were made by Zaharoff, acting on Lloyd George's instructions, to bribe the Turks – the first in 1917 and then later the following year. The plan, as before, involved the Young Turks, who would flee with their money to the safe haven of the United States. The scheme to get the Turks to give up hostilities is now well documented and Archival papers provide important evidence of the use of Zaharoff in negotiations with the Turks conducted in Switzerland in 1917.¹¹ Discussions took place between the Turks and Zaharoff, who was empowered not just to discuss a separate peace with the Turks, but to suggest to them the possibility of Turkey retaining

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nominal suzerainty in some form over Palestine.

Nothing came of Zaharoff's Turkish mission in 1917 but, with Lloyd George's connivance, he made a further attempt to bribe the Turks in the following year. Before this, however, a separate effort was made to explore the possibility of peace with Turkey, but this did not involve Zaharoff. This effort is described in Lloyd George's *War Memoirs* as being 'not satisfactory' and consisted of a meeting in Switzerland in December 1917 conducted by Philip Kerr, one of Lloyd George's additional private secretaries. Kerr was empowered by Lloyd George and General Smuts, a member of the War Cabinet, to negotiate with Dr Parodi of Geneva, who was acting on behalf of opposition elements in Turkey, about the possibility of a peace deal. Parodi had had several conversations with members of the Turkish Red Cross Mission in Switzerland and he believed that, while Enver Pasha was a pure militaristic Germanophile who was confident of German victory, one small part of the Turkish government – an Ententeophile section – was interested in seeking peace if they could get moderate terms for this. These terms would allow for the establishment of Syria, Mesopotamia and Palestine as autonomous provinces – either as separate entities or federated together – but under the Turkish flag, which would have to be preserved as a symbol of the unity of the Ottoman Empire. Kerr informed these Turks, via Parodi, that while the Allies were determined to have Turkish administration withdrawn from these countries, they 'might be willing in the event of an immediate peace to consider the retention of the Turkish flag as the symbol of Turkish suzerainty provided it carried no executive authority'. However nothing came of these negotiations and there is no suggestion that any monetary sums were involved.¹²

Initially, Lloyd George did have some doubts about Zaharoff meeting the Turks for a second time, but early in December 1917 Caillard received Lloyd George's personal views on the strategy now to be used towards Turkey. Part of the plan was that Arabia should be made independent but

Palestine should become a protectorate similar to pre-war Egypt and that there should be autonomy for Armenia and Syria. Caillard was instructed to tell Zaharoff that he should proceed with his second mission.¹³ Lloyd George had previously emphasised the importance of retaining possession of Mesopotamia but was, apparently, now prepared to consider some form of internationalisation for Palestine. The second mission, however, came to naught and the Turks withdrew from discussions

Interestingly, what appears to be a quite separate attempt at reaching peace with Turkey was made by the Foreign Office. Just seven days after Kerr's meeting with Parodi, orders were despatched on 25 December 1917 to the British minister in Berne to develop peace approaches towards the Turks and these specified that the government was not prepared to guarantee the Turkish flag in Palestine after the war although it would reconsider the possibility of leaving Syria and Mesopotamia within the Ottoman Empire. It does not appear that this peace effort got far.¹⁴ Why the Berne minister was chosen for this task is unclear.

The whole episode, however, raises questions about Lloyd George's sincerity towards Zionism. David Lloyd George has gone down in history as probably the most sympathetic towards Zionism of all British prime ministers. A. J. Balfour's strong support for Zionism really arose after he gave up being prime minister and some historians have argued that the declaration made in the latter's name should in fact have been called the Lloyd George Declaration. From early in his career, Lloyd George showed an understanding of the Jewish problem and of the need for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. In his official biography of Lloyd George, Malcolm Thomson wrote that he had always been a Zionist supporter. 'Reared from infancy on Holy Writ, and with his mind impregnated with the sayings of the Hebrew prophets and psalmists, he instinctively associated Palestine with the Hebrew people and looked forward to the day when in fulfilment of ancient prophecy they should return to the land with which, though they had been exiled from it for nearly two millenniums,

their name was in effaceably linked in human history.'¹⁵

Lloyd George became an admirer of Chaim Weizmann, the Zionist leader, when, as minister responsible for munitions, he became acquainted with Weizmann through the latter's work on acetone production. He wrote that he considered it an honour to reckon Weizmann as one of his friends.¹⁶ In March 1917 Balfour told Weizmann that in Cabinet Lloyd George had taken the view that it was of great importance for Palestine to be protected by Britain,¹⁷ and later, at a secret session of the House of Commons in May 1917, Lloyd George was emphatic in stating that allowing Turkey to continue to rule over Palestine post-war was unacceptable.¹⁸ Yet just a short while after this, he backed an initiative that could have resulted in Turkey being able to retain a degree of control over Palestine. The Zionists were never in favour of a peace with Turkey because they clearly understood that a comprehensive Turkish defeat was the best way to rid Palestine of despotic Ottoman control. Weizmann and his colleagues would have been appalled and dismayed had they known that Turkey may have been allowed to retain some form of control over Palestine and they would have felt grossly betrayed. Yet it appears that such a retention of control was contemplated by the same man who later wrote that 'Turkish misrule' in Palestine 'changed a land flowing with milk and honey' into 'a stony and unsightly desert'.¹⁹

So where does Balfour fit into this affair? There is no suggestion that he was complicit with Lloyd George's use of Zaharoff to seek peace with Turkey, but he must have been aware of Zaharoff's activities to a certain degree because there are letters to him from the British Ambassador in Paris, Lord Bertie, who saw a lot of Zaharoff. One letter from Bertie to Balfour stated that he had handed Zaharoff the insignia of the Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire on 19 April 1918,²⁰ and a further letter in August 1918 from Lord Derby, Bertie's successor as British ambassador in Paris told Balfour that Zaharoff had been in contact with Enver.²¹ Another letter a month later mentioned that Zaharoff was visiting Switzerland to see

Turkish representatives.²² Derby also told Balfour in October that Zaharoff had met Enver.²³ In April 1918 Balfour wrote to Caillard to thank him for sending him a message from Zaharoff, although there is no indication as to what this message contained²⁴ and Balfour sent a further letter to Caillard that same month to thank him for Zaharoff's 'last' report that was of great interest and importance, and Caillard was asked to pass on to Zaharoff Balfour's appreciation of his 'courage in carrying through a journey of this kind', with Balfour adding that he was hoping to see Sir Basil [sic] shortly.²⁵

There appears, however, to have been a conspiracy of silence surrounding the whole issue of Lloyd George's attempts to seek a separate peace with Turkey. Zaharoff is not even mentioned in Lloyd George's comprehensive two-volume *War Memoirs* (neither is Caillard) and, while there are five references to Enver Pasha, none relate to the bribery attempt – although Lloyd George does emphasise the need to rid countries in the region of Turkish rule. He wrote, 'The history of the Mesopotamia Expedition is the condemnation of Turkish rule in that part of the world. The same applies to Syria, Palestine, Armenia. The Turks must never be allowed to misgovern those great lands in future.'²⁶ In his later work, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties*, a statement referring to Allied peace proposals in January 1917 is included that asserts that there should be liberation of the non-Turkish people who then 'lay beneath the murderous tyranny of the Ottoman Empire'.²⁷ The only official reference to the possibility that the Turkish flag could remain flying in Palestine is given in Kerr's report in the *War Memoirs*. Lloyd George is, of course, given as the book's author, but was he really aware that this statement went into his memoirs? Was this book edited by others? And why was he apparently happy to disclose Kerr's attempt to negotiate (if, indeed, he was party to this disclosure in his *War Memoirs*), yet completely omit Zaharoff's two efforts?

It is of interest to note that in his *Memoirs of the Peace Conference*, published in New York in 1939 as a reprint of *The Truth about the Peace Treaties*, the reference to the

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Kerr–Parodi discussions is omitted. Had he now spotted the reference in his *War Memoirs* to the possibility that the Turkish flag could remain flying in Palestine post-war? Furthermore, no effort appears to have been made in public to challenge Lloyd George's description of events. In the preface to his *War Memoirs*, Lloyd George wrote that his memory was fallible and 'I may have made a mistake in some details' but that he would welcome corrections.²⁸ He issued a new edition of these memoirs in January 1938 in which he stated that this new edition had allowed him 'an opportunity for checking the statements published in the first edition in the light of public criticisms, of facts brought to light by subsequent writings, and of the numerous letters written to me by men who took an active part in the events I narrate', but he did not, in the event, find it necessary to revise or correct anything in the first edition. He added that his aim was to tell the naked truth about the war.²⁹ If there had indeed been any objections about what he had omitted, he clearly chose to ignore them.

Intriguingly, a long review of these memoirs appeared in *International Affairs* in 1935 written by Lord Meston, who had been a prominent civil servant during the war years. Meston did refer to Lloyd George's policy on Turkey, but made no mention of the attempt to bribe the Turks.³⁰ Meston quoted Lloyd George's statement that the Turks should never be allowed to misgovern these great lands in future, so the presumption must be that Meston was unaware of Lloyd George's original plan even those eighteen years later. Yet Zaharoff's efforts to bribe the Turks had not been kept entirely secret. Shortly after Zaharoff's death, the Peterborough column in the *Daily Telegraph* carried a short piece in which Peterborough claimed that he had just seen letters and papers that showed that Zaharoff had met Enver Pasha in Switzerland and had lengthy talks with him but that Enver's price of about £1 million pounds was considered to be too high.³¹ However this report apparently sparked no interest within any student of history. Similarly, when the full archive of documents on the matter was made available in 2005,³² this also did not produce much interest.

Shortly after Zaharoff's death, the Peterborough column in the *Daily Telegraph* carried a short piece in which Peterborough claimed that he had just seen letters and papers that showed that Zaharoff had met Enver Pasha in Switzerland and had lengthy talks with him but that Enver's price of about £1 million pounds was considered to be too high.

Indeed, the most bizarre aspect of this whole affair is the curious silence maintained about Zaharoff's wartime activities on the part of historians and others who wrote about the period under consideration; and it is puzzling that Lloyd George's association with Zaharoff and his attempt to bribe the Turkish leaders both in 1917 and in 1918 have not attracted the attention of many of the biographers of Lloyd George. A large number of books have been written about Lloyd George's premiership, as well as about his life and the politics of the time (over fifty such works have been identified), and there are some that should certainly have made reference to his association with Zaharoff but did not do so. Kenneth O. Morgan's monograph about Lloyd George in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, for example, does mention Zaharoff, but merely as a 'sinister' figure who 'hovered' around Lloyd George.³³

Whitehall Diary by Thomas Jones, published in 1969, purports to be a diary of the events of the time. Jones joined the Cabinet secretariat in 1916 and was deputy secretary of the Cabinet from 1916 to 1930, so one assumes he was cognisant of all government dealings at that time. He mentions a 'secret mission' carried out by General Smuts and Philip Kerr to meet Mendsdorff, the former Austro-Hungarian ambassador in London, to discuss possible peace with Austria, a mission carried out at about the same time as that of Kerr with Parodi, but the latter mission is not included in Jones' diary.³⁴ Furthermore, Zaharoff, Enver and Caillard have not a single mention in the book. Jones earlier wrote a biography of Lloyd George in which there is also no reference to Zaharoff, although there is a simple statement, 'A ten million pound [sic] to Enver at the right moment it has been said might have changed the policy of Turkey.'³⁵ He did in this biography make reference to Kerr's discussions with Parodi but he omitted any mention of the possibility of Turkey retaining suzerainty over Palestine.³⁶

Malcolm Thomson published his 'official' biography of Lloyd George in 1948 'in collaboration' with Lloyd George's second wife, Frances. Thomson himself worked under the same roof

as Lloyd George for fifteen years, part of which was during the writing of the *War Memoirs*, and yet he makes no mention of Zaharoff, Caillard or Enver.³⁷ Frances Stevenson became Lloyd George's personal secretary and mistress in 1913 and was on the government payroll until 1922. They married in 1943 after his wife's death and she wrote a diary that was published in 1971.³⁸ The diary covers the years 1917–1944, but some years such as the key one of 1918 are missing, for which there is no explanation, and there are no references to Zaharoff, Caillard or to Enver. Frances Stevenson also wrote a memoir, *The Years that are Past*, in 1967, which includes a chapter titled 'LG at No. 10'³⁹ – but again there is nothing on the Turkish venture or on Zaharoff. Yet there are at least two extant letters hand-written by Zaharoff and addressed to Frances Stevenson that indicate an association between Zaharoff and Lloyd George.⁴⁰ So it is clear that Stevenson must certainly have been aware of Zaharoff, and that the omission can only point to a deliberate decision on her part to exclude Zaharoff from any aspect of Lloyd George's life. Walter Long wrote his memoirs in 1923 and his book also contains no mention of Zaharoff, despite his many efforts to procure British honours for Zaharoff. Long wrote, 'I shall rely first of all on my memory and then upon the records which I have faithfully kept of various episodes in my life.'⁴¹ But the Zaharoff episodes were apparently not to be revealed. A. J. Sylvester first knew Lloyd George in December 1915. He became Hankey's private secretary a year later, joined the Downing Street secretariat in 1921, and became one of Lloyd George's secretaries in 1923. In *The Real Lloyd George* he mentions that Zaharoff was 'a remarkable man' and great admirer of Lloyd George and that the two men had once had lunch together, but that is all.⁴² The only chink of light is a footnote in Lord Beaverbrook's *Men & Power* (1956) that refers to negotiations for the surrender of Turkey being conducted by Zaharoff.⁴³

Apart from the Peterborough column, it was not until the 1970s that there appeared the first specific disclosure that Zaharoff had been used by the government. Morgan's 1970 paper referred to 'the initiative

in wider diplomatic policy [that] rested even more firmly with the Prime Minister who used unorthodox aides such as Kerr and Zaharoff.⁴⁴ Morgan followed up this paper with a book published in 1979 in which he wrote that Lloyd George employed a number of 'unexpected' advisers such as Zaharoff but gave no further information about the association between the two men.⁴⁵

The first book that did contain pertinent information about Zaharoff's negotiations with the Turks came a year after Morgan's 1970 paper when V. H. Rothwell published his *British War Aims and Peace Diplomacy 1914–1918*. Rothwell disclosed that Zaharoff became a friend of Lloyd George and gave an account both of Zaharoff's Turkish activities and of his influence with the prime minister, revealing full details of the negotiations with Enver. Rothwell pointed to Zaharoff being authorised to put forward terms to the Turkish leaders – who were definitely assured that Turkey might retain nominal suzerainty in Mesopotamia and, apparently, also Palestine, although with no voice in the administration. As far as can be determined, Rothwell is one of the few writers to have commented on the secrecy of the Zaharoff negotiations. He wrote:

The fact that this curious episode has, apparently, never previously been brought to light owes much to Zaharoff's undoubted skill in political intrigue, to the fact that both Enver and Zaharoff returned the money to its source and to Enver's evident belief that Zaharoff was not a British agent and was working for the French.⁴⁶

A year later, in 1972, Roberta Warman was also clear about Zaharoff's involvement in negotiations with the Turks. She outlined that during the last two years of the war Lloyd George did negotiate via Zaharoff with the Turks on a separate peace and that there was no evidence that the Foreign Office was aware of this. Caillard was said to be the usual point of contact between Lloyd George and Zaharoff. There is, however, in Warman's paper no indication of the offer of suzerainty to the Turks.⁴⁷ Anthony Allfrey's *Man of Arms*, published in 1989,

gives full details of the negotiations that Zaharoff conducted with the Turks and he seems to be the first to point out that after Zaharoff's death the Peterborough column in the *Daily Telegraph* did refer to these negotiations but that this gave no rise to concern elsewhere.⁴⁸

Apart from Warman's paper and Rothwell's and Allfrey's books, no disclosures about Zaharoff's negotiations with the Turks then appear to have been made until the 1993 publication of the 'Missing Persons' addendum to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, which contains a short piece on Zaharoff that refers to negotiations with Enver.⁴⁹ The 2004 edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, however, does carry a full monograph on Zaharoff's life that states that, with Lloyd George's cognisance, he was sent to Switzerland to bribe Turkish leaders with £10 million in gold so that they would cease hostilities. There is, however, no reference to the proposal regarding eventual control of Palestine.⁵⁰

And why has the issue of Turkish suzerainty over Palestine not been discussed by the many historians who have written on Zionist history? Isaiah Friedman, for example – one of the foremost writers on Zionist history with three important books on the subject published in 1997, 1998 and 2002 respectively – makes no reference to the possibility that, under Lloyd George's plans, Palestine could have remained to some extent under Ottoman control. As far as can be determined, only two such books mention the possibility that Turkey could have retained some form of control of Palestine after the war. David Fromkin, in *A Peace to End all Peace*, published in 1989, seems to be the first writer on Zionist history to draw attention to the matter as well as to Zaharoff's role in the whole saga.⁵¹ Jonathan Schneer's *The Balfour Declaration*, published in 2010, discusses in some detail Zaharoff's role in the attempt to get the Turks to sue for peace.⁵² Indeed, Schneer's book has more on Zaharoff's role and his relationship with Lloyd George than any other publication.

So why did Lloyd George hide his attempt to bribe the Turks? Was he anxious to avoid any disclosure of his relationship with a highly controversial figure, a person seen

Maundy Gregory was also in the pay of Zaharoff; indeed, McCormick claims that Gregory was a 'listening post' for Zaharoff during the war and for some years afterwards.

by many people as notorious and not to be trusted? That in his *War Memoirs* he mentioned the December 1917 Kerr–Parodi talks aimed at seeking peace with Turkey but omitted Zaharoff's efforts to bribe the Turks to leave the war surely points to a deliberate decision on his part not to mention Zaharoff's involvement. To that end, an interesting consideration arises in the figure of Arthur Maundy Gregory, the only person to be convicted under the Honours (Prevention of Abuses) Act 1925 (and whose behaviour in 1918 and central role in the honours scandal occasioned the act). Maundy Gregory was the key person used by Lloyd George to elicit money from wealthy men in exchange for national honours. However, Maundy Gregory was also in the pay of Zaharoff; indeed, McCormick claims that Gregory was a 'listening post' for Zaharoff during the war and for some years afterwards.⁵³

Beaverbrook was the only person associated with Lloyd George's government who made any reference in subsequent writings to Zaharoff and no explanation can be offered for all the other participants making no reference to plans to bribe the Turks. Not one of these writers ever referred to any other connection between the two men. Even Peterborough's disclosure, published soon after Zaharoff's death, did not prompt these writers to mention this association and this does suggest there were many participants in the politics of the time who were prepared to shield Lloyd George from a disclosure of a relationship with a notorious individual. Lloyd George's acceptance that Palestine could post-war still fall under some sort of control by Turkey may also have been another, albeit minor, factor in the reluctance. As for the many distinguished historians who have written about Lloyd George's time as prime minister, it is strange that mention of his association with Zaharoff has rarely been made – and it almost suggests that they were according Lloyd George a degree of protection from disclosure of a relationship with an unsavoury and notorious individual who strutted the international stage. Certainly both Malcolm Thomson, who wrote the 'official' biography, and

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Lloyd George's second wife, who wrote two books on her husband's political life, have much to answer for. Has there been a conspiracy of silence regarding Lloyd George's dealings with Zaharoff and in particular those relating to the negotiations with Turkey?

Lloyd George continued his association with Zaharoff after 1918, and this gave rise to a good deal of criticism from political opponents – especially in the House of Commons – but these attacks did not specifically refer to the Turkish bribery efforts. As for Zaharoff, he once said that he had burned diaries covering fifty years of his life and *The Times* commented that 'those diaries must have contained a good deal of the history of our times'.³⁴

Cecil Bloom, a professional chemist, was Technical Director of a major multinational pharmaceutical and agricultural chemical corporation. In retirement, he researches many aspects of history, especially Jewish history, and his papers have been published in journals in the UK, US, Israel, South Africa and Australia.

Appendix

Zaharoff had an obsession with receiving honours from Britain and part of his motivation in negotiating with the Turks was the lure of a British honour. He refers to the possibility of being rewarded in this way for his efforts in a number of his letters; and, in correspondence with Caillard, used the code 'chocolate' while complaining bitterly at his difficulty in getting an award for his work. In a telegram to Caillard, he said that if Lloyd George considered his latest report to be as important as he had stated, then he should 'spontaneously there and then do the chocolate fraternities'.³⁵ He told Caillard in another letter that he feared that 'chocolate being done' would not occur.³⁶

He first seems to have raised the issue in July 1917 but, at this point, Lloyd George refused to take immediate action.³⁷ Long also first asked Lloyd George in July 1917 to award the Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire to Zaharoff,³⁸ but a reply came from J. T. Davies, one of Lloyd George's secretaries, stating that no foreigners would be included in the forthcoming awards

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although 'he will be considered next time'.³⁹ Long then pleaded for an honour to be awarded to Zaharoff in the next honours list because he 'is in feeble health'.⁶⁰ At about the same time, Caillard told Zaharoff that he had spoken to Lloyd George and been told that it 'would be difficult to take *immediate* action' ('immediate' underlined), but he believed he could convince Lloyd George of its necessity.⁶¹

More letters were written on the subject in 1918, with the correspondence involving, amongst others, Lord Stamfordham, the king's secretary. A letter from Long to Lord Robert Cecil stated that Zaharoff was *very* anxious ('very' underlined) to have the GBE at once and that Zaharoff did not think any harm would be done if he received it.⁶² Caillard must have written to Buckingham Palace at about this time because Lord Stamfordham replied to him to say that the king could do nothing until the prime minister made a recommendation.⁶³ Long then wrote to Lloyd George to tell him that Zaharoff was anxious for the GBE and that he (Long) understood that the Foreign Office were willing.⁶⁴ A letter from Long to Zaharoff informed him that the king would receive Zaharoff on 2 August 1918.⁶⁵ Two days later Long wrote to 'Eddie' (presumably someone in government or monarchy service) that the Foreign Office had 'made a mess' over the GBE – it should have been the GCB since 'the King cannot knight foreigners'.⁶⁶ And then in October Lord Stamfordham wrote to Long to tell him that the king consented to Zaharoff assuming the title 'Sir Basil' and being called this in the United Kingdom even though he had not formally received the accolade.⁶⁷ Long wrote immediately to Caillard in a letter marked 'Very Confidential' to tell him that the king had consented to Zaharoff assuming the title and that he could continue to call himself and be called 'Sir Basil', although this decision would not be officially communicated (by whom is unclear) to Zaharoff.⁶⁸ *The Times* eventually reported in May 1919 that 'Sir Basil [sic] Zaharoff was received by H.M. King George V who invested him with the Insignia of a Knight Grand

Cross of the most Honourable Order of the Bath'.⁶⁹

One additional piece of information: Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin was asked in parliament by a Conservative MP to appoint a tribunal to inquire into allegations by Zaharoff's former secretary that Zaharoff had made corrupt payments to servants of the Crown. Baldwin refused to agree to this.⁷⁰

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the Wiltshire and Swindon Archive Service for permission to refer to the Long papers and I would also like to thank Gavin Fuller, the *Daily Telegraph's* librarian, for providing me with the information on the Peterborough column.

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 - 56 Letter from Zaharoff to Caillard, 13 Jan. 1918, TNA, FO 1093/54 fo. 275.
 - 57 Letter from Caillard to Zaharoff, 10 July 1917, TNA, FO 1093/52 fo. 216.
 - 58 Letter from Long to Lloyd George, 5 July 1917, LP, 947/778 fo. 503a.
 - 59 Letter from Davies to Batterbee (Long's secretary), 6 July 1917, LP, 947/778 fo. 503g.
 - 60 Letter from Batterbee to Davies, 9 July 1917, LP, 947/778 fo. 503g.
 - 61 Letter from Caillard to Zaharoff, 9 July 1917, TNA, FO 1093/52 fo. 216.
 - 62 Letter from Long to Lord Robert Cecil, 21 Jan. 1918, LP, 947/778 fo. 503d.
 - 63 Letter from Stamfordham to Caillard, 12 Feb. 1918, LP, 947/778 fo. 503f.
 - 64 Letter from Long to Lloyd George, 28 Feb. 1918, LP, 947/778 fo. 503f.
 - 65 Letter from Long to Zaharoff, 1 Aug. 1918, LP, 947/778 fo. 503h.
 - 66 Letter from Long to 'Eddie', 4 Aug. 1918, LP, 947/778 fo. 503j.
 - 67 Letter from Stamfordham to Long, 23 Oct. 1918, LP, 947/778 fo. 503x.
 - 68 Letter from Long to Caillard, 23 Oct. 1918, LP, 947/600.
 - 69 *The Times*, 14 May 1919, p. 15.
 - 70 Hansard, HC (series 5) vol. cccxviii, col. 1261 (2 Dec. 1936).

LIBERAL HISTORY QUIZ 2014

Answers to the questions listed on page 21.

1. *On Liberty*
2. William Beveridge
3. R. H. Tawney
4. Jeremy Bentham
5. Charles James Fox
6. T. H. Green
7. Henry George
8. Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley (author of *Frankenstein*)
9. Lewes, in Sussex – Tom Paine, who wrote *The Rights of Man*, lived there from 1768 to 1774; since the 17th century, the town has had a tradition of opposition to the monarchy and pro-republican sentiments
10. W. H. Smith
11. L. T. Hobhouse
12. John Milton
13. *The Subjection of Women*, by John Stuart Mill
14. John Maynard Keynes
15. *Areopagitica*, by John Milton
16. Harriet Taylor (later Harriet Taylor Mill)
17. Adam Smith
18. Unservile State Group
19. John and Barbara Hammond
20. Conrad Russell

EMLYN HOOSON

Dr J. Graham Jones examines the career of Emlyn Hooson, a respected Liberal MP for Montgomeryshire



EMLYN HUGH HOOSON was born on 26 March 1925, the son of Hugh and Elsie Hooson of Colomendy, Denbighshire, to a notable local family, well known in their locality. He was educated at Denbigh Grammar School. Hooson, operating on a corvette in the north Atlantic, had served in the Royal Navy (Fleet

Air Arm) from 1943 until 1946. He then became a student at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, where he graduated in law in 1949 and also served as president of the college's thriving debating union. Whilst at Aberystwyth he helped to reform the University College Liberal Society, which soon became the strongest political

club within the university college, and he also acted as joint-editor of the magazine *The New Radical*. Hooson was also awarded university colours in boxing and he played for his university college in soccer and rugby football. (He was, years later, to be appointed a Professorial Fellow of Aberystwyth University in 1997).

N (1925 – 2012)

re 1962–1979, later a prominent Liberal Democrat peer, and Welsh public figure and businessman.

In 1950 he married Shirley Margaret Wynne Hamer, the daughter of Sir George Hamer CBE of Llanidloes, a prominent and influential figure in the locality and a powerful Liberal in the politics of Montgomeryshire where he served as its Lord Lieutenant. There were to be two daughters of the marriage, Sioned and Lowri, both educated at the Welsh School at London, where their father became the chairman of the governing body. There were also in due course to be two grandchildren. Emlyn Hooson was a native and natural Welsh speaker, and a fervent supporter of Welsh causes and the national rights of Wales, including devolutionary initiatives, throughout his life.

Hooson was called to the Bar at Grays Inn in 1949, and was appointed QC in 1960 at the age of just 35, the youngest such appointment for decades, and one of the youngest ever. (He subsequently became a bencher of Grays Inn in 1968, and served as vice-treasurer there in 1985, and treasurer in 1986). At the Bar, Hooson earned a reputation as a cool, clear thinker and lucid advocate. His especial strengths before a judge and jury were the thoroughness of his preparation, the clarity and sharpness of his arguments, and his ability to get to the heart of any legal argument – together with his persuasive, attractive personality and unflinching eloquence.

As QC, Hooson represented Ian Brady, one of the ‘Moors Murderers’ along with Myra Hindley, when Brady was tried and convicted on three murder charges at Chester Crown Court in the spring

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of 1966. In December 1965 Hooson had been appointed to lead Ian Brady’s defence; Brady was charged with murdering Lesley Anne Downey (10), John Kilbride (12) and Edward Evans (17), (Myra Hindley was also charged with killing Lesley Anne and John). When the trial opened the following April, the evidence left Hooson little to work with. Brady admitted having wielded the axe against Evans, and although Hooson insisted there was only the ‘flimsiest evidence’ against him over the deaths of the two children, Brady and Hindley were convicted on all counts and sentenced to life imprisonment; Brady remains behind bars.

Emlyn Hooson became ever more convinced that the death penalty would not have deterred the Moors Murderers. When in the autumn of 1967, three years after its abolition, Duncan Sandys moved to reintroduce it because of a sharp increase in murder convictions, Hooson told him this was because juries were now readier to convict for murder given that the death penalty no longer existed. Otherwise, Hooson was generally a legal conservative who did not favour sweeping changes in the British legal system. He opposed the introduction of majority verdicts and, in the Lords, he resisted far-reaching reforms proposed by the Conservative Lord Chancellor, Lord MacKay, fearing they would undermine the independence of the judiciary and the Bar.

In 1970 Hooson appeared for the Ministry of Defence at a public inquiry over plans to move its experimental range from

Shoeburyness to Pembrey, near Carmarthen. Local Liberals, who hotly opposed the plan, were aghast. In February 1974, he had to pull out of a lucrative two-month bank robbery case at the Old Bailey when Edward Heath called a snap election. He was the deputy chairman of the Flintshire Quarter Sessions, 1960–72, deputy chairman of the Merionethshire Quarter Sessions, 1960–67, and then its chairman, 1967–72. He was appointed Recorder of Merthyr Tydfil early in 1971 and Recorder of Swansea in July of the same year. He was elected Leader of the Wales and Chester Circuit, 1971–74.

Having first been adopted as the Liberal candidate for Lloyd George’s old seat, the Carnarvon Boroughs (which was then abolished by the Boundary Commissioners in 1950), Emlyn Hooson had already contested Conway unsuccessfully for the party in the general elections of both 1950, when he lost to the Labour candidate, and 1951, when he was defeated by a Conservative. On both occasions he came third. He played little part in the 1955 general election campaign, but did speak at some Liberal meetings during the 1959 campaign. Then, doubtless with his father-in-law’s ready assistance, he had become the anointed heir for Montgomeryshire, the seat held ever since 1929 by the former Liberal Party leader, E. Clement Davies. When the Montgomeryshire Liberal Association had invited nominations for the vacancy in July 1960 (a course of events which had not occurred in the county since 1927), no fewer than seventeen names

had come to hand. This was later reduced to a short-list of just three – Stanley Clement-Davies (the only surviving child of the sitting MP for the county), Lt Colonel Patrick Lort-Phillips, and Emlyn Hooson. The withdrawal of the first named on grounds of ill health led to the selection of Hooson whose political and professional pedigree was impeccable. Welsh speaking and involved in an array of Welsh language cultural activities, professionally accomplished as a lawyer, the son of rural Denbighshire, and chairman of the Welsh Liberal organisation since 1956, he had received the fulsome blessing of Clement Davies. Moreover, he had earned his spurs in the Conway constituency in the general elections of 1950 and 1951 when he had much impressed local Liberals.¹

Hooson was elected Liberal MP for Montgomeryshire following a keenly contested by-election campaign in May 1962 caused by the death of Clement Davies. Local farmers proudly carried him shoulder-high through Welshpool following his dramatic victory at the polls. His initial majority there was a surprisingly high 7,549 votes. He had trebled the Liberals' majority in the by-election, at a stroke dispelling the widely held local myth (believed by all three local parties in the constituency) that Clement Davies had been the beneficiary of a most substantial personal vote in Montgomeryshire.

During the early 1960s the Liberal Party was experiencing something of a minor national revival encapsulated above all in the sensational victory in the Orpington by-election in March 1962. Hooson's shrewd policies urged rural and road development to reverse Welsh depopulation, demanding the Liberals become a 'wholly modern, radical and classless party'. By 1964 he was elected to the Liberal Party national executive. Although he continued his professional activities as a barrister (a preoccupation which invited sharp criticism from some sections of the party), Emlyn Hooson was much involved in the revival and reorganisation of his party in Wales in the mid-1960s. He was (in striking contrast to his party leader Jo Grimond) doggedly determined that the Liberals should reach no formal agreement with Harold Wilson's

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Labour government elected in October 1964, and he imaginatively depicted a distinct future for the Liberal Party as 'a radical, non-Socialist party in Britain'. Hooson was not wholly welcoming to the new Wilson government, demanding that they should abandon steel nationalisation. But he backed the Labour left-winger Sydney Silverman's effort to abolish capital punishment, on the basis of the score of capital cases in which he had been involved (including that of Ian Brady who, as already noted, remains behind bars to this very day).

Subsequently, as a warm admirer of Lyndon Johnson's Appalachian Bill in the USA, Emlyn Hooson devoted his energies to preparing a Liberal economic plan for Wales. He was also much involved in the negotiations which preceded the setting up in September 1966 of the independent Welsh Liberal Party, a step which he applauded with gusto, and he then served devotedly as chairman of the new party right through until 1979. Emlyn Hooson certainly occupied a quite distinctive niche within the Welsh and British political spectrum. Following the setting up of the quasi-independent Welsh Liberal Party, he was described by one political commentator the following spring at Westminster as 'a kind of one-man parliamentary party like Mr Gwynfor Evans, the solitary Welsh Nationalist at Westminster. ... There Mr Hooson sits, the solitary pride and joy of all that is left of the glorious Welsh Liberalism of years gone by'.² At the second annual conference of the Welsh Liberal Party convened at Llandrindod Wells in 1968, Emlyn Hooson claimed that by this time 'all internal criticism' of the once contentious decision to set up an autonomous Welsh party had been 'stilled'. The new party, he asserted with gusto, had become in a very short time 'the thinking party in Wales ... the think tank of Welsh politics. ... Liberalism ... is more thrustful, it is attracting more people. ... We must avoid the deadening hand of consensus politics if we are to have thrust and determination'.³ Prior to 1967, many influential Liberals in Wales had not approved of the idea to establish a separate Welsh party, preferring to retain the status quo and a

party which was wholly Westminster focused. Other Welsh Liberals, Emlyn Hooson among them, rejoiced that the deeply cherished dream of Lloyd George for Cymru Fydd in the 1890s had at long last become a reality with the creation of a single Welsh Liberal Party.

During the 1960s, Hooson was very conscious of a seemingly ever more menacing Plaid Cymru challenge. On 1 March 1967 he introduced in the House of Commons a Government of Wales Bill, which proposed an all-Wales Senate of eighty-eight members. He also introduced in the Commons a succession of measures to tackle depopulation, and various bills in support of the Welsh language. He resolutely refused to countenance any kind of agreement or electoral pact with Plaid Cymru. Hooson the QC defended nationalists accused of terrorism, but Hooson the politician trenchantly opposed 'Welsh extremism'. In 1968 he demanded concerted action to halt Welsh terrorists after a series of bombings. After twelve Welsh students were jailed in 1970 for invading a High Court case in London, Hooson said the Welsh were fed up with people who broke the law then whined about the consequences.

He had meanwhile, still politically ambitious, stood unsuccessfully against Jeremy Thorpe and Eric Lubbock for the party leadership in January 1967 following Jo Grimond's retirement. Defeat on the first ballot saw Hooson give his support to Thorpe formally. Emlyn Hooson was never to be a strong supporter of Thorpe as party leader throughout, but there was certainly no real possibility that he might rebel publicly against his party leader. It was widely felt at the time and subsequently that if Emlyn Hooson had been less brilliant and busy as a barrister and judge, he might well have succeeded Jo Grimond as leader of the Liberal Party in 1967.⁴ There were certainly rather unpleasant undertones surrounding the leadership contest. Almost forty years later Hooson was to claim that Laura Grimond, Jo Grimond's wife, had urged one of their Scottish colleagues not to give support to 'that Welshman' – evidence of, for whatever reason, a hostility towards Hooson north of the border.⁵ Grimond had also let it be known quite clearly that Jeremy

Thorpe was indeed his chosen successor as party leader. Had Grimond stood down earlier, between 1964 and 1966, which he had certainly been considering, then Hooson might have had a better chance of becoming leader, since there have been suggestions that the two Scottish MPs who lost their seats in the general election of March 1966, George Mackie and Alisdair MacKenzie, might well have supported him in a leadership ballot.

Later on, many within the Liberal Party came to believe that their party would have been better served in the long term by a Hooson or a Lubbock leadership. Had Hooson succeeded, he would certainly have been a more right-wing leader, more willing to fight the Labour Party as fiercely as the Tories. Behind the scenes at least during the late 1960s, Emlyn Hooson had given some support to the attempt by leading Liberal Party officials in the country at large like Tim Beaumont and Gruffydd Evans to put pressure on Jeremy Thorpe to stand down, or at least to agree to a collegiate form of party leadership. His distaste for the party leadership did at least enable Hooson to maintain a generally amicable relationship with the prospering Young Liberal movement during this crucial period in the party's history.

Being initially Eurosceptic, he would have wanted the Liberals to take a less pro-European line. He was the only Liberal to vote against Britain joining the European Community. But he was more anti-imperialist than others, fiercely opposing the Vietnam War in the 1960s. During the course of his speech at the 1967 Liberal Party Assembly at Blackpool, Emlyn Hooson opposed an amendment calling for the gradual reduction of economic links between United Nations members and apartheid South Africa. He specifically argued against trade boycotts in general. When, in March 1968, two leading Young Liberals were arrested for allegedly 'obstructing the police in the execution of their duties' outside the American Embassy in Grosvenor Square, one of those arrested (who was acquitted of the charge) was authorised by Emlyn Hooson to tell the court that he had been observing police behaviour to prepare a report for



Hooson (which, given Hooson's reputation in legal circles, may well have contributed to his acquittal). Generally he maintained an amicable relationship with the Young Liberal movement throughout.

Emlyn Hooson reckoned his suspicions about Jeremy Thorpe had been justified when, in 1971, the former male model Norman Scott arrived at Westminster and claimed to Hooson, David Steel and Lord Byers that Thorpe had had a homosexual relationship with him. Thorpe denied the allegations, but Hooson conducted an investigation that triggered a party inquiry. Although this cleared Thorpe, Hooson told Thorpe he should consider resigning the leadership and his seat and asked another Liberal MP, Peter Bessell, if he would back him for the job should Thorpe quit. Thorpe got to hear of this, and accused Hooson of running around 'trying to stir up something'.⁶

Jeremy Thorpe was forced out of the party leadership in 1976 after the affair became public and subsequently tried for incitement and conspiracy to murder Scott. Bessell testified that Hooson – who was not called as a witness – knew of 'retainer payments' of up to £700 made to Scott, and feared he might be accused of a cover-up. The court also heard a tape recording in which David Holmes, one of Thorpe's codefendants, told Bessell that Hooson had been 'firmly sat on' for

Hooson in 1962, the year in which he won the Montgomeryshire by-election

trying to force Thorpe out. Thorpe was cleared.

Hooson retained Montgomeryshire in five successive general elections, winning a handsome, substantially increased majority of 4,651 votes in the general election of February 1974, an election which witnessed something of a national Liberal revival. From 1966 (when Elystan Morgan defeated Roderic Bowen in Cardiganshire) until February 1974 (when Geraint Howells recaptured the division), he had been the only parliamentary representative of Welsh Liberalism. Following the near decimation of the Liberal Party in the general election of June 1970, Emlyn Hooson returned to Westminster with a heavy heart as one of only six Liberal MPs in the new House of Commons (his colleagues were Jo Grimond, Russell Johnstone, John Pardoe, David Steel and Jeremy Thorpe), and it seemed to many that the party's days were now numbered as a leading political player. Only Hooson and Grimond had anything resembling comfortable majorities. The very small number of Liberal MPs in the new house (almost a record low in the history of the party) inevitably led to bitter recriminations within the party.

Most of his English, more radical MP colleagues like Pardoe and Thorpe, perched firmly on the left wing of the Liberal Party, tended to view Emlyn Hooson as a

EMLYN HOOSON (1925–2012)

Parliamentary elections in Montgomeryshire, 1962–79				
Party	Candidate	Votes	%	±%
General election 1979				
Conservative	Delwyn Williams	11,751	40.3	+11.9
Liberal	Emlyn Hooson	10,158	34.9	–8.2
Labour	J. Price	4,751	16.3	–2.9
Plaid Cymru	C. Clowes	2,474	8.5	–0.8
<i>Majority</i>		1,593	5.5	
<i>Turnout</i>		29,134	81.4	+1.5
General election October 1974				
Liberal	Emlyn Hooson	11,280	43.1	–2.3
Conservative	W. R. C. Williams-Wynne	7,421	28.4	–0.5
Labour	P. W. Harris	5,031	19.2	+1.4
Plaid Cymru	A. P. Jones	2,440	9.3	+1.0
<i>Majority</i>		3,859	14.7	–2.2
<i>Turnout</i>		26,172	77.9	–4.7
General election February 1974				
Liberal	Emlyn Hooson	12,495	45.4	+7.0
Conservative	W. R. C. Williams-Wynne	7,844	28.5	–1.2
Labour	P. W. Harris	4,888	17.8	–2.3
Plaid Cymru	A. P. Jones	2,274	8.3	–3.5
<i>Majority</i>		4,651	16.9	+8.2
<i>Turnout</i>		27,501	82.6	+0.3
General election 1970				
Liberal	Emlyn Hooson	10,202	38.4	–3.1
Conservative	Delwyn Williams	7,891	29.7	+2.3
Labour	D. W. Thomas	5,335	20.1	–3.7
Plaid Cymru	E. J. Millward	3,145	11.8	+4.4
<i>Majority</i>		2,311	8.7	–5.4
<i>Turnout</i>		26,573	82.3	–0.5
General election 1966				
Liberal	Emlyn Hooson	10,278	41.5	–0.8
Conservative	A. W. Wiggan	6,784	27.4	+0.7
Labour	G. M. Evans	5,891	23.8	+1.3
Plaid Cymru	T. Edwards	1,841	7.4	–1.1
<i>Majority</i>		3,494	14.1	–1.5
<i>Turnout</i>		24,794	82.8	–1.3
General election 1964				
Liberal	Emlyn Hooson	10,738	42.3	+0.3
Conservative	A. W. Wiggan	6,768	26.7	–4.7
Labour	G. M. Evans	5,696	22.5	–4.1
Plaid Cymru	Islwyn Ffowc Elis	2,167	8.5	N/A
<i>Majority</i>		3,970	15.6	+4.9
<i>Turnout</i>		25,369	84.1	+0.3
By-election 1962				
Liberal	Emlyn Hooson	13,181	51.3	+9.2
Conservative	Robert H. Dawson	5,632	21.9	–9.4
Labour	Tudor Davies	5,299	20.6	–6.0
Plaid Cymru	Islwyn Ffowc Elis	1,594	6.2	N/A
<i>Majority</i>		7,549	29.4	+18.6
<i>Turnout</i>		25,706	85.1	+1.3

conservative-minded Liberal confined mainly to the Welsh political stage, and consequently somewhat remote from the Westminster vortex. But on occasion Hooson did adopt a notably forward, progressive stand on domestic matters, and he was undoubtedly the most fervent assailant within the Parliamentary Liberal Party of the centralising measures of the Heath government. He encapsulated the progressive Welsh Liberalism of the 1960s and 1970s, looking increasingly to the ‘second coming’ of the Liberal Party in Wales as a worthy successor to the rather declining Labour Party. At the same time he remained a warm admirer of Lloyd George and the radical ‘Yellow Book’ proposals of the late 1920s. After the heavy Liberal losses in the 1970 election, Hooson told the Liberal Assembly that the public wanted a middle-of-the-road party, blaming Jo Grimond and Jeremy Thorpe for trying to take it overtly leftward.

The traditional socio-cultural divide in Montgomeryshire politics was still very much apparent. Hooson was clearly most secure in those areas well removed from the English border, the Welsh-speaking parts of Montgomeryshire, the rural uplands and in market towns like Machynlleth, Llanfyllin, Llanbryn-mair and Llanidloes. At Newtown there was a delicate balance in the support for the political parties, while Welshpool clearly contained significant pockets of Conservative support. The farming communities generally still continued to rally to the Liberal banner, encouraged by their MP’s ongoing part-time role as a practising farmer at Summerfield Park, Llanidloes and ready sympathy for the problems of these agrarian communities. The county, with a population of about 45,000 people, remained one of the most intensely agricultural constituencies in the whole of the United Kingdom, containing over 7,000 individual holdings, some as tiny as one acre in size. But there were also significant social changes afoot: the introduction of light industries had meant that by 1974 there were some 2,000 new voters in the Newtown wards alone, and there was further suburban growth at Welshpool, particularly in the Guilsfield locality. To survive, it was imperative for Montgomeryshire Liberalism

to adapt to the new social admixture within the county. Many of the immigrants into the county had absolutely no tradition of voting Liberal or interest in Liberal politics.⁷

Perhaps surprisingly, Emlyn Hooson was a notably cautious advocate of the ‘Lib–Lab’ pact concluded between Prime Minister James Callaghan and Liberal Party leader David Steel in March 1977, a step which he grudgingly tolerated as a necessary evil. He even played an active role on the Liberal-government Consultative Committee which, he felt, gave his party a much need opportunity to destroy the ‘wilderness complex’ disadvantage. Many within the ranks of the Liberal Party (including a substantial innately ‘conservative’ element within Montgomeryshire) were highly critical of their leaders’ apparent readiness to keep in office a Labour government so clearly on the brink of ejection, and Hooson himself tended to favour bringing the highly contentious ‘Lib–Lab’ pact to an end in the autumn of 1978.

The Liberals in May 1978 unveiled what was expected to become a major plank in the party’s general election platform – the case for adopting the European Convention on Human Rights as Britain’s own Bill of Rights. After a complete review of the arguments, Emlyn Hooson, acting as his party’s home affairs spokesman, who had previously tried to introduce his own Bill of Rights in the Commons in 1969, had changed his mind and concluded that the European Convention provided the most effective means of bringing about what he called ‘a powerful weapon for the protection of civil liberties and for law reform – and, not least, an educative force of great potential’.⁸

As the period of the Lib–Lab pact drew to a close during the course of 1978, Hooson remained convinced that the experience had proved highly beneficial both to the Liberal Party and the country, although he now anticipated a ‘return to that position of complete independence and freedom of manoeuvre which we all so rightly value’.⁹ Hooson continued to portray himself as an active politician, one who had delivered more than forty major speeches in the

Commons during the period of the Lib–Lab pact and had also asked forty-two oral questions on a very wide range of issues to government ministers during the same period.

It was sometimes hard at times to see what Hooson had in common with his party’s radical mainstream. He saw the Labour Party as the main enemy, and after Enoch Powell’s ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech, he upset David Steel by telling constituents he could see nothing wrong with assisting immigrants who sought repatriation. Yet he had no truck with Margaret Thatcher, saying in 1978: ‘People are superficially attracted by her violent swing to the Right, but she cannot even work with Conservatives like Mr Heath and Peter Walker’.¹⁰

Nor did Hooson reap any personal benefit from his warm advocacy of a Welsh Assembly during 1978–79. Powys recorded the highest ‘No’ vote of all the Welsh counties in the referendum of 1 March 1979, and a dejected Emlyn Hooson could only comment that Welsh devolution was ‘a dead duck for this decade’.¹¹ A long-anticipated general election was also on the horizon. Since October 1974, their MP had written more than 5,500 letters on behalf of the people of Montgomeryshire – ‘*Everyone knows someone who has been helped by Emlyn Hooson*’.¹² But during the same period, too, far-reaching social changes had taken place, the county’s electorate had increased by 2,200 since October 1974 and the constituency had become much more anglicised. It was calculated that, of the 888 new families living in housing estates built by the local Newtown corporation, 435 of these had moved there from England. Many of these migrants had disapproved strongly of their MP’s hands-on active support for the cause of devolution and his recent commitment to the Lib–Lab pact of 1977–78. Local Conservative canvassers in the county were not slow to remind the electors of Montgomeryshire of the scandals, ranging from homosexuality to attempted murder, which had recently beset the Liberals’ former leader Jeremy Thorpe.¹³ Some electors had undoubtedly begun to feel that Hooson’s continuing devotion to his legal work meant that he was not wholly dedicated

It was sometimes hard at times to see what Hooson had in common with his party’s radical mainstream.

to the needs of his constituency, and inevitably the appeal of right-wing Thatcherism was beginning to be experienced even within Montgomeryshire.

And in the general election which ensued in May, when the Liberal vote slumped badly, the seemingly impregnable ‘man for Montgomeryshire’ unexpectedly lost his seat to the Conservative candidate Delwyn Williams by a margin of 1,593 votes. A ninety-nine year Liberal tenure of the seat thus dramatically came to an end – to the intense chagrin of the party faithful in Wales. Apart from the four years which followed his defeat (1979 to 1983), and again at the 2010 general election (when Lembit Opik lost the seat to the Conservative Glyn Davies), Montgomeryshire has elected Liberal or Liberal-affiliated candidates ever since 1880. Shortly afterwards Emlyn Hooson entered the House of Lords as life peer Baron Hooson of Montgomery and Colomendy in Denbighshire, at once becoming prominent in the affairs of the Upper House, where he was to prove active in improving the Mental Health Act, urged police reforms and spoke on law reform and drug trafficking.

Emlyn Hooson was also strongly opposed to the British pursuit of the Falklands War in 1982. Speaking in the Lords on 20 May, he was outspoken:

My Lords, it is with the greatest regret that I must dissociate myself from the support for the Government expressed by my noble Leader and friend Lord Byers. I find it impossible to support him. I am totally against any military escalation in the present situation, and I speak not as a pacifist but as one expressing quite the opposite viewpoint. I have for years been a defence spokesman for

my party. ... I believe we are, as a country, embarking on a route which could take us into the kind of extremism which the United States found in Vietnam. ... I am against the military escalation of the present situation because, first, I do not think it is in this country’s interests; secondly, I do not believe it is in the interests of the Falkland islanders; and thirdly, I do not think it is in the interests of the free world. ... I am bound to say that I have been dismayed by the wave of emotionalism that has gone through this House this afternoon.¹⁴

Hooson remained a prominent Liberal Democrat and public figure in Welsh life until his death. He was for many years his party’s spokesman in the Lords at various times on Welsh affairs, legal affairs, agriculture and European affairs. He served as president of the Welsh Liberal Party from 1983 until 1986. When the Liberals merged with the SDP in 1988, he backed Alan Beith for the leadership against the less cautious figure of Paddy Ashdown. Hooson was, predictably, to give full support to the establishment and development of the National Assembly for Wales set up in 1999. Both as a lawyer and a politician, he was strongly enthusiastic in his pursuit of civil liberty issues, urging a Freedom of Information Act from 1985. During his later years, his position on Europe softened: he was anxious to overcome ‘the baleful influence of the Eurosceptics’ among the Tories. Speaking ‘as one who represents a minority culture’, this Welsh-speaker said, ‘It seems to me that aggressive and self-glorifying nationalism is still one of the great curses of our century’.¹⁵

Among his numerous business interests were his chairmanship

On the day of his funeral, many hundreds of mourners lined the streets of Llanidloes to pay their respects to a man described as ‘a great servant to the people of Montgomeryshire’.

of the Trustees of the Laura Ashley Foundation, 1986–97, and his assiduous membership from 1991 of the Severn River Crossing Plc. He continued to farm at Pen-rhiw farm, Llanidloes, and lived at Summerfield Park, Llanidloes. He always encouraged help for small businesses in Wales. He had made in the mid-1950s a concerted effort to save Gwasg Gee, one of the most important Welsh language printing presses and based at Denbigh in north-east Wales, which was responsible for the publication of large numbers of Welsh books and the influential Welsh newspaper *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*. He was also constantly loyal to the Llangollen International Eisteddfod which he served as president between 1987 and 1993, and he supported a multitude of societies in Montgomeryshire and beyond. Lord Hooson had a close interest in the cultural and musical life of Wales, and was president of the National Eisteddfod of Wales at Newtown. In 1966 and the following year, he was made an Honorary White Bard of the National Gorsedd of Bards.

Having suffered increasing ill health during recent years, Emlyn Hooson died on 21 February 2012. On the day of his funeral, many hundreds of mourners lined the streets of Llanidloes to pay their respects to a man described as ‘a great servant to the people of Montgomeryshire’. The funeral service was held at China Street chapel, Llanidloes and was followed by a procession to the local cemetery.¹⁶ He was a first cousin (and political opponent) of Tom Hooson, the Conservative MP for the Brecon and Radnor division, who died in 1985. A large archive of his papers is in the custody of the Welsh Political Archive at the National Library of Wales.

The tribute of Kirsty Williams, leader of the Welsh Liberal Democrats, at the time of Lord Hooson’s death, eloquently sums up his immense contribution:

Emlyn Hooson was respected in the House of Lords and the wider political community for his passionate liberalism, his love of Wales and his sharp intellect. Not only will he be remembered for his high profile legal work, he will also be remembered for

Sources

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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 *Cambridge News*, 7 March 2012.
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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

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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.*

REVIEWS

A Well-Rounded Life

John Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life* (Jonathan Cape, 2014)

Reviewed by **Bill Rodgers**

IN THE FINAL chapter of this absorbing and perceptive book, John Campbell describes Roy Jenkins' last political initiative in trying to persuade the new prime minister, Tony Blair, to commit himself to proportional representation. When Blair became the Labour leader in 1995, Jenkins hailed him as 'the most exciting Labour choice since the election of Hugh Gaitskell' forty years earlier. As Campbell says, he saw Blair as the man to forge a united moderate, progressive front and 'realise the thwarted ambition of the SDP.' But that was not to be. Blair rejected the outcome of the Independent Commission on the Voting System, chaired by Jenkins. And 'The Project', the bridge between the prime minister and Paddy Ashdown, the Lib Dem leader, never became a route to political partnership.

For Roy Jenkins there had been two peaks and two troughs in his career between his arrival in 1948 at the House of Commons at the age of 28 and his appointment in 1993 aged 73 to the Order of Merit which Campbell calls the seal of Jenkins' status as part of 'the great panjandrum of the British Establishment'. During the 1960s, Jenkins had been a young, reforming home secretary (sometimes said to be his greatest achievement) and then a chancellor of the exchequer who had pulled around the Labour government after the 1967 devaluation. When Labour lost the 1970 election and George Brown his parliamentary seat, Roy Jenkins was elected the deputy leader of the Labour party. The old 'conscience and reform' Gaitskellites seemed to be coming back to power. If Jenkins could work reasonably well with Harold Wilson, he would become his successor and, in due course, prime minister.

But within less than two years, in an extraordinary transformation of fortunes, this expectation

fell apart. Roy Jenkins resigned his deputy leadership and a fissure opened in the Labour party over Europe. A cartoon in Campbell's book shows Wilson and Jenkins together and Jim Callaghan hiding behind with the caption saying, 'Heir today, gone tomorrow ...?' Jenkins spent four more years in parliament including a further stint as home secretary but when Wilson resigned, Callaghan was elected the Labour leader with Jenkins in third place, below Michael Foot. As Campbell says, this marked the end of Jenkins' 'dwindling hope of the premiership.' It remains to be seen whether Jenkins would ever have reached No. 10, given the crumbling and divisive Labour party of the late 1970s.

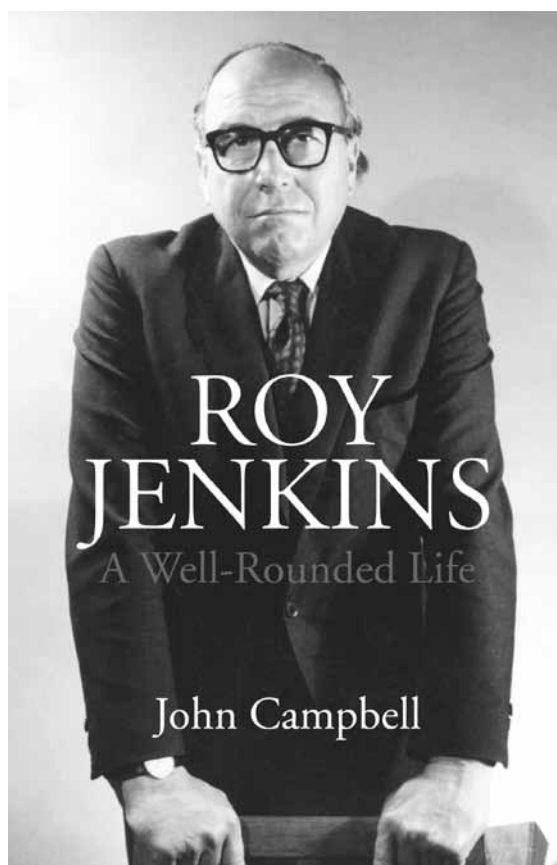
As it was, he chose to give up his long parliamentary career to become the president of the European Commission. John Campbell says that once he had made up his mind to go to Brussels, Jenkins felt liberated by the prospect of escaping the drudgery and dishonesty of domestic Labour politics. Given that not much more than thirty pages of Campbell's book cover Jenkins' presidency, I would recommend that a student of this period read Jenkins' 600 pages of his own *European Diary 1977–1981*. But summing up, Campbell says that Jenkins could claim that he was the godfather of the euro but in hindsight he 'must bear some of the blame for foisting a flawed vision on the continent before it was ready for it.'

Shortly after Jenkins had been installed as president of the Commission I called on him at his new Brussels home. He glanced ruefully at the half-empty red despatch box, a memento of his years as chancellor. There were no manuscript notes lying on the table, and the telephone did not ring. We talked about domestic politics but only in a desultory way. Few of his former parliamentary colleagues expected

him to return from exile to British politics.

It was the outcome of the general 1979 election – when he did not vote – that provoked Jenkins' change of mood and led to his Dimbleby lecture, 'Home Thoughts from Abroad' of November 1979. The language of the lecture was hardly a battle cry but it struck a sympathetic note for those who were despairing between Tony Benn's far-left Labour and Margaret Thatcher's doctrinaire Toryism. When the Gang of Four came together early in 1981, it was mainly Jenkins who brought the so-called political virgins into the new centre-left SDP. When Jenkins fought a by-election at Warrington, a working-class northern town, the sketch writer Frank Johnson said, 'the surprising news' was that 'people rather liked Mr Jenkins.' Far from a remote grandee, he was energetic, relaxed and sociable and never talked down to the voters. By November after Shirley Williams had won Crosby, the polls were showing that the SDP/Liberal Alliance was overtaking both the Labour party and the Conservatives, reaching over 50 per cent.

In March 1982 Jenkins fought another by-election and won



Glasgow Hillhead. John Campbell says that 'On a personal level Jenkins' victory at Hillhead was perhaps the high point of his political life.' He was now to be seen as prime minister designate and he pencilled-in a putative Alliance Cabinet including David Steel as home secretary and leader of the house, Shirley Williams as foreign secretary and me, to my pleasure, as chancellor. This was the second peak of Jenkins' career – but all too soon followed his second trough.

He was elected leader of the SDP but with a much smaller margin over David Owen than had been expected. He found difficulty in adjusting to the Commons because for many years he had spoken with gravitas and authority to a respectable House. But now it was a less disciplined place, with Labour and Tory MPs determined to make his life as hard as possible. In addition, as Campbell puts it, on television Jenkins 'looked and sounded old, flabby and long-winded': nor was he good at 'the quick-fire exchange of pithy soundbites' in which David Owen and David Steel excelled. In the middle of the 1983 election, the Liberal hierarchy tried, although unsuccessfully, to replace Jenkins with Steel as the Alliance leader.

In perspective, the 1983 election result was far from a disaster for the SDP–Liberal Alliance. Its share of the vote was 25.4 per cent (against the previous Liberal high-water-mark of 19.3 per cent in 1974), only 2.2 per cent short of Labour at 27.6 per cent. Nearly 8 million votes had been cast for either of the two Alliance parties and it could be seen as a remarkable achievement. But that is not how it felt. With David Owen pressing for his immediate resignation, Jenkins accepted the verdict, remaining in the House of Commons until he was defeated at Hillhead in 1987.

A few weeks earlier, Jenkins had been elected Chancellor of Oxford University. When he was installed in June, he wrote that 'Nothing in my life has been given me greater pleasure.' It was, says John Campbell, the perfect retirement for him. But far from retirement, Jenkins continued to enjoy his well-rounded life for another fifteen years. In some ways, Jenkins' political career had been a parallel to R. A. Butler's, as Butler had been chancellor of the

John Campbell has written a fine book fully reflecting both on Roy Jenkins' distinguished public career and his intimate personal style and life.

exchequer, a liberal home secretary and, briefly, foreign secretary. In retirement, Butler became Master of Trinity College, Cambridge and wrote an elegant personal memoir. But this was nothing compared with Jenkins' busy social life and writing nine books, and a tenth – about Franklin Delano Roosevelt – published after his death, making twenty-two in all. His books on Gladstone and then on Churchill were outstanding, building on his experience in writing *Asquith* (1964), the royalties of which had enabled him to buy his modest but comfortable country house in East Hendred, Oxfordshire, which he made his principal home.

In writing *Asquith* and drawing on Asquith's love letters to Venetia Stanley, he came up against the formidable Violet Bonham Carter who did not approve the publication of these matters. Very differently, Jennifer Jenkins, his wife – also formidable – has allowed John Campbell to write freely about her husband's adolescent sexual relationship with Tony Crosland and his affairs with his adult girlfriends. All of this can be found in the impressive, comprehensive

index at the end of the 818 pages of Campbell's book.

I first met Roy Jenkins in July 1951 when he interviewed me for an appointment. So 'Jenkins' became 'Roy' for more than fifty years. I was very fond of Roy and I thought of him as my elder brother in politics. Sometimes we shared our holidays in Tuscany and in later years we talked regularly on the telephone on Sunday morning. On the last occasion we met, shortly before Christmas 2002, my wife and I enjoyed lunch with Roy and Jennifer at one of his favourite country pubs. Clearly he was unwell and due to enter hospital after the holiday season but I was dismayed when his son Charles telephoned me on the morning of Sunday 5 January 2003 to say that Roy had died. After a gap of ten years, John Campbell has written a fine book fully reflecting both on Roy Jenkins' distinguished public career and his intimate personal style and life.

Bill Rodgers (Lord Rodgers of Quarry Bank) was a member of the 'Gang of Four' who founded the Social Democratic Party in 1981. He led the Liberal Democrat peers from 1997 to 2001.

Minded to slay national ignorance

James Dixon, *Out of Birmingham: George Dixon (1820–98), 'Father of Free Education'* (Brewin Books, 2013)

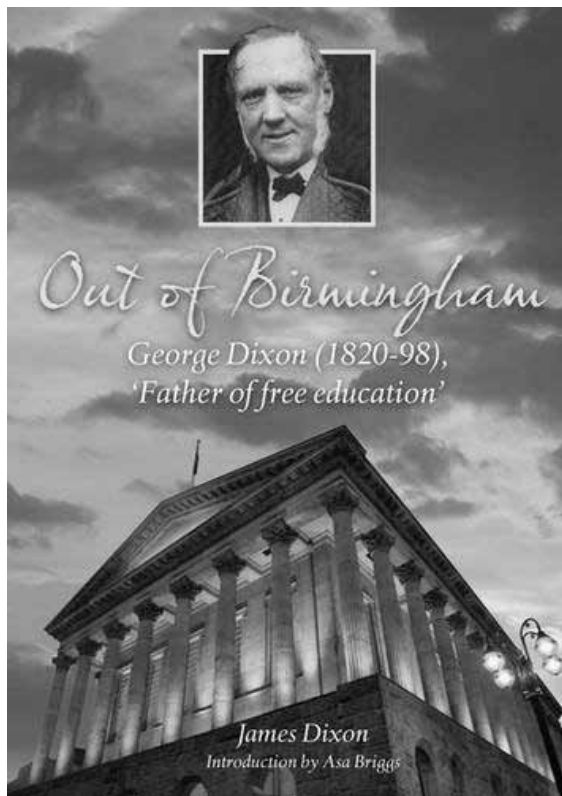
Reviewed by **Tony Little**

WHEN TONY BLAIR chose 'education, education, education' as the mantra for his government's priorities, he unintentionally echoed George Dixon's 'educate, educate, educate', while also demonstrating the enduring importance of state schooling within political debate more than 140 years after the passage of the Gladstone administration's 1870 Education Act. That act enabled the provision of government elementary schooling, a field that till then had been largely a matter for private enterprise, charities and the churches.

The 1870 Act is usually, and rightly, credited to W. E. Forster who introduced the bill to the House as the appropriate junior

minister. But Forster was not acting in a vacuum. Vigorous campaigning had created the environment in which the government felt compelled to take action and campaigning had also fashioned the choices and compromises by which the government modified its proposals; compromises which dictate that we still have church schools and that education has largely been a responsibility of local authorities despite the depredations of Blair, Gove and Laws.

George Dixon was pre-eminent among those crusading for education to be provided by the nation for all children whatever their family income. Dixon is now largely forgotten, or at least largely forgotten outside Birmingham, the



town where he made his life and reputation. This is in part because the archival material is limited, in part because of his personality and, perhaps in the largest part, because other prominent Birmingham figures have hogged most of the limelight.

The Victorian Liberal Party was built on Whig families who supplied a bedrock of administrative capabilities, buttressed by Peelite endeavour and earnestness, and Radical campaigning enthusiasm. Dixon was a typical product of this milieu. Of the middling sort, he received a (Leeds) grammar school education before making his fortune in (overseas) trade through a partnership in Rabone Bros. of Birmingham. In his youth he was a friend of the Brontës. Business brought him into contact with prominent commercial, Liberal families such as the Rathbones of Liverpool and marriage connected him with James Stansfeld. Dixon's growing commercial success took him to Canada and the Antipodes, journeys which imbued him with a lifelong enthusiasm for colonial emigration as an answer to British poverty. Success also brought him the chairmanship of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce.

As with so many of his contemporaries, success also brought a determination to benefit his local

community. Dixon lived in one of the nicer parts of Birmingham but his daily walk to work took him through rougher districts and regularly confronted him with the poverty of large numbers of his fellow citizens and with the groups of ill-dressed and uneducated children spending their days hanging round the streets for want of better opportunities. Generous with his money, Dixon was also generous with his time. A prominent member of Birmingham Liberal Association, probably the best organised, Radical, electoral campaigning organisation of its time, he became a local councillor in 1863, mayor in 1866 and a local MP in 1867.

But it was those ragged children to whom his life was devoted. Following a series of meetings organised by Dixon, a Birmingham Education Society was formed whose members contributed to provide schools and pay pupil fees. But Dixon and his colleagues were ambitious, arguing for state-funded compulsory primary schooling and established a National Education League to promote the campaign with Dixon as the chairman. In Victorian Britain, this proved highly controversial for two reasons. Firstly, it cut across the work of the Anglican Church who provided the bulk of such primary schooling as existed but lacked the resources to build schools for all. Secondly, little in Victorian politics escaped contagion from religious differences and the solution advocated by the NEL was for state secular education with religious teaching provided separately and privately. Dixon was himself an Anglican but many of his activists were Nonconformists who had the strongest possible objections to the education provided by Anglican schools and to the use of their taxes to fund such a denominational education.

James Dixon paints a picture of his ancestor George as that greatly undervalued politician, a reasonable man ready to recognise limiting practicalities and willing to compromise for the sake of progress; a man who could chair and manage committees. Without such persons government becomes impossible, but political fame favours a different type. Unfortunately for Dixon, Victorian Birmingham also nurtured one of the best examples of that charismatic alternative – the

man who could set out demands, unlimited by practicalities, and could provide the inspirational oratory to make followers believe the vision. That man, Joe Chamberlain, rather than George Dixon is the man who is remembered as embodying Victorian Birmingham. Chamberlain made Dixon's leadership of the National Education League almost insufferable and also forced Dixon to give up his parliamentary seat to provide Joe with a safe berth. The continuation of the Nonconformist campaign even after the passing of Forster's act was a significant contributory factor in Gladstone's defeat of 1874.

James Dixon's book sets out the complex story of the campaign for state primary education and of the disputes between the two men. But he goes much further. The Forster act proved the salvation of the church schools but it also provided enterprising local authorities with the opportunity to provide elementary education for all who wished it. And Birmingham was nothing if not enterprising. The rest of the story is of Dixon's achievements as chairman of the Birmingham School Board, a post in which he succeeded Chamberlain and held for most of the rest of his life. Despite Chamberlain's best efforts Dixon continued to try and defuse the denominational controversy. He exploited ambiguities in the legislation to extend education into what would now be considered the secondary sector and promoted higher standards and qualifications for teachers. Through his own generosity and that of his extensive acquaintances a high school education was instigated for Edgbaston girls. Following the 1884 Reform Act, Dixon resumed his parliamentary career and although he opposed Gladstone in the home rule crisis, this neither upset his position on the Birmingham School Board nor stopped him sharing London accommodation with the Gladstonian Stansfeld. He pursued his own line on education issues even when he differed from fellow Liberal Unionists or the Unionist government. To the end he fought for compulsory free education and it is at least debatable whether he rather than Chamberlain left the greater legacy to his city and his nation.

As James Dixon makes clear, any biographer of the 'Father of Free

Education' is handicapped by the destruction of family archives during the Second World War and the personal positions of George Dixon often have to be inferred rather than documented. However, the author has made extensive use of local newspapers and other publications in which the campaigns were much more extensively recorded and debated than could be expected from today's degraded press. Despite the author's best efforts, the casual modern reader familiar with contemporary education may still struggle with the significant difference between secular and non-sectarian education but he will come

away with a greater admiration for Dixon's persistent, patient, practical campaigning, toleration and dedication. Along the way he will learn much about the organisation and centrality of the Birmingham Liberal Association which provided the foundation for Chamberlain's fame.

Appropriately, royalties from the sale of this well produced and well-illustrated book go to the Prisoner's Education Trust to further George Dixon's work.

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

appointment as Home Secretary. While such upsets were relatively rare (Winston Churchill losing his seat at Manchester North-west in 1908 is another celebrated example), Hawkins shows that fear of by-elections frequently constrained prime ministers' room for manoeuvre in making ministerial appointments.

Kathryn Rix's article on by-elections and party organisation between 1867 and 1914 highlights the increasing professionalisation of by-election campaigns during this period. Her description of late-Victorian and Edwardian by-elections will seem very familiar to modern campaigners: extensive drafting in of outside help, the opportunity for agents to share expertise and introduce new campaigning techniques, tension between outsiders and local candidates and activists. There is a further contemporary resonance in the discussion of the role of 'auxiliary organisations' intervening in election campaigns. The 1883 Corrupt Practices Act had excluded third-party campaigning from candidate's election expenses. This created a situation where, for example, at the 1908 Peckham by-election a range of organisations, including the Tariff Reform League, the Coal Consumers Association, the Sporting League and the suffragettes

A history of by-elections

T. G. Otte and Paul Readman (eds.), *By-elections in British politics 1832–1914* (Boydell, 2013)

Reviewed by **Iain Sharpe**

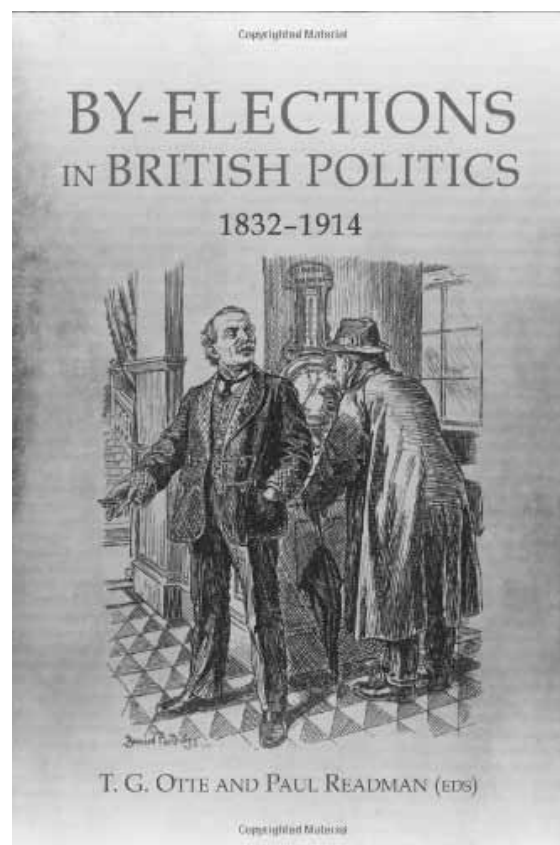
BY-ELECTIONS HAVE AN ICONIC status in modern Liberal history, whether as a harbinger of revival, as at Torrington or Orpington, or a much-needed sign of resilience, as with Liverpool Edge Hill or the recent contest at Eastleigh. They have proved less interesting to academic historians: until now there has been just one full-length volume on the subject, a collection of essays edited by Chris Cook and John Ramsden covering the period between the First World War and the 1970s.¹ So this work fills a significant gap in the study of British politics, tackling the years between the Great Reform Act and the outbreak of the First World War.

Like Cook and Ramsden's volume, this is a collection of essays by a range of authors rather than a single monograph. The editors have adopted neither a strictly chronological nor a thematic approach, but a hybrid of the two, which can be enriching by giving different perspectives on the same period, but can also lead to duplication and omission, in particular a bias towards the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. Nonetheless, individually and collectively these essays make a strong case for the importance of by-elections in the development of British party politics during the nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries, the more so as they were often the best way of gauging the state of public opinion between general elections.

In the opening contribution, Philip Salmon argues that by-election contests between 1832 and 1860 helped to strengthen voters' party loyalty. With most constituencies at the time electing two MPs and with no secret ballot, many voters split their votes at general elections between candidates of rival parties. By-elections forced them to 'plump' one way or the other. Salmon demonstrates using detailed statistical analysis that having come down off the fence at the by-election voters often retained their newfound allegiance and at the subsequent general election voted for two candidates of one party rather than one of each.

Angus Hawkins discusses what to modern eyes is a strange phenomenon, ministerial by-elections. Until 1919 MPs had to seek re-election when appointed to ministerial office. Often such by-elections were uncontested, but, as Hawkins shows, at times of particular crisis or controversy they could lead to embarrassing defeats for newly appointed ministers. The most famous case was Lord John Russell losing his South Devon seat in 1835 when seeking re-election after his



campaign for the Conservative candidate, spending between them far more than the 1883 Act's limits allowed the candidate to spend. It is a problem that is still with us, as the controversy over the Coalition government's attempt to legislate on the issue has shown.

Unsurprisingly, given the two editors' previous work, questions of patriotism and foreign policy feature strongly, rightly so as the role of such issues in elections has been neglected by previous historians. Geoffrey Hicks looks at by-elections during Disraeli's 1874–80 administration. He concludes that the swing against the government began before Gladstone started his great campaign against the Bulgarian atrocities, suggesting that this was not decisive in shifting public opinion against the Conservatives.

T. G. Otte considers the role of foreign policy in by-elections between 1865 and 1914. He highlights how Conservatives sought to exploit the perceived weakness of Liberal foreign and defence policy under Gladstone. This was often a successful tactic, although it depended on there being a clear current issue on which the Conservatives could play the patriotic card. For example, during Gladstone's first administration, the Conservatives won a series of by-election victories after campaigning on Britain's alleged lack of military preparedness at the time of the Franco-Prussian war. Occasionally the boot was on the other foot: in by-elections between 1897 and 1899 the Liberals gained some advantage by portraying the foreign policy of Lord Salisbury's government in the Far East as weak. Surprisingly, Otte skips over the most clear-cut case of a patriotic issue decisively affecting the course of by-election results, namely the outbreak of war in South Africa in October 1899, which reversed the trend of swings to the Liberals, and saw voters rally to the Unionist government, which won a landslide victory in the 1900 'khaki' general election. (To be fair this is discussed briefly by Paul Readman and Luke Blaxhill elsewhere in the volume.)

In opposition after 1905, the Unionists attacked the Liberals with some success over naval defence, although they found it harder to attack the diplomacy of the foreign secretary Sir Edward

Grey, who consciously pursued 'continuity' of foreign policy between the two major parties. I am inclined to disagree with Otte's judgement that 'it was impossible ... for the Liberals to convert Sir Edward Grey's high standing in Europe in 1912–14 into hard domestic currency'. While the Liberals could not outflank the Unionists in terms of defence spending and assertive diplomacy, Grey's image of putting country before party shielded the Liberals from accusations of lack of patriotism.

The essay by Readman and Blaxill on 'Edwardian by-elections' covers the period from the late 1890s to 1914, and concludes by addressing the perennial question of the Liberal party's electoral prospects at the outbreak of the First World War. From a Liberal Party perspective they paint a less positive picture than recent historians have done, seeing the electoral position in 1914 as being one of underlying Conservative strength and Liberal weakness. They project a Unionist parliamentary majority of sixty-two at a possible 1915 general election. An increased number of Labour candidates might have converted this into a Conservative landslide.

While I agree that the notion of Conservatism in 1914 being in permanent crisis has been overstated, there are problems with the analysis presented here. Readman and Blaxill put forward their projection based on by-elections of 1913–14, while pointing out the strong correlation between previous general election results and by-elections during the twelve months that preceded them. But in the normal scheme of things,

the final year before the general election would have been those before not after August 1914 – a general election was not due until late 1915. So there was much still to play for. If Sir Edward Grey had achieved 'peace with honour' from the Balkan crisis, if a compromise solution had been found for Irish home rule, if Lloyd George's land campaign had proved popular, and if the benefits of the 1911 National Insurance Act had begun to be appreciated, the Liberals might have expected a significant boost in their fortunes. On the other hand, if the government had refused to enter the war and stood aside while Germany overran Belgium and much of France, the Liberals might indeed have suffered a catastrophic defeat in the face of Unionist attacks on their weakness against German aggression.

I was surprised that the authors do not discuss Ian Packer's 2011 article on by-elections between 1911 and 1914, the more so as Dr Packer is both a contributor to this volume and explicitly thanked by the authors for commenting on this chapter. He concluded that 'it is probably only safe to say that the 1915 election result was still in the balance in August 1914, and that it would have been a closely fought contest'.² Precisely because we cannot know what the course of British politics would have been had the country not entered a European war in August 1914, I am inclined to share this more tentative conclusion.

This illustrates, however, that anyone reading this volume will be left with much to think about, arguments to agree and disagree with, and their understanding of

Liberal Democrat History Group online

Website

See www.liberalhistory.org.uk for details of our activities and publications, guides to archive sources, research resources, and a growing number of pages on the history of the party. (Please note that we are currently upgrading our website, and there may be some delay in making all content available.)

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Victorian and Edwardian politics enriched. In their introduction, the editors refer to Charles Dickens' portrayal of a parliamentary by-election in *The Pickwick Papers* at the fictional town of 'Eatanswill', and conclude with the comment 'A visit to Eatanswill always repays'. On the evidence of this volume that is very true.

Iain Sharpe is an administrator at the University of London and a Liberal

Democrat councillor in Watford. His University of London PhD thesis was entitled 'Herbert Gladstone and Liberal Party revival, 1899–1905'.

- 1 Chris Cook and John Ramsden, *By-elections in British politics* (Macmillan, 1973).
- 2 Ian Packer, 'Contested Ground: Trends in British By-elections, 1911–1914', *Contemporary British History*, 25(1), 2011, pp. 157–73.

Servant of the party

Sir Hugh Jones, *Campaigning Face to Face* (Book Guild Ltd, 2007)

Reviewed by **David Shutt**

THIS IS A splendid book, a reminder for many of us not just of the Hugh Jones era in which he served as Secretary General of the Liberal Party but of those final years of the party, including the time of the Alliance and ultimate merger with the SDP. An earlier volume (*Diplomacy to Politics: By Way of the Jungle*, Memoir Club, 2002) deals with his time in the Diplomatic Service; this book starts with his time from 1973 to 1977 as director of the English Speaking Union in England and Wales. He had his struggles dealing with so many volunteers, but I am sure that put him in good stead for dealing with the perhaps rather different volunteers he found in the Liberal Party!

Hugh-Jones had been born into Liberalism, 'nourished by Lloyd George and the *News Chronicle*'. He had had an opportunity to take on the Head of LPO role ten years earlier, but it was in March 1977 (as a 53 year old) that he took up the post. Rather sensibly he spent several months prior to his commencement going round the country getting to know the party. He started whilst 'Thorpe Affair' matters were still troubling us, but in the early days of David Steel's leadership. He was straight in to the party side of coping with the Lib-Lab pact. The speed with which that pact was settled reminds me of the speed with which arrangements were made in our coalition agreement in 2010, so unlike the coalition

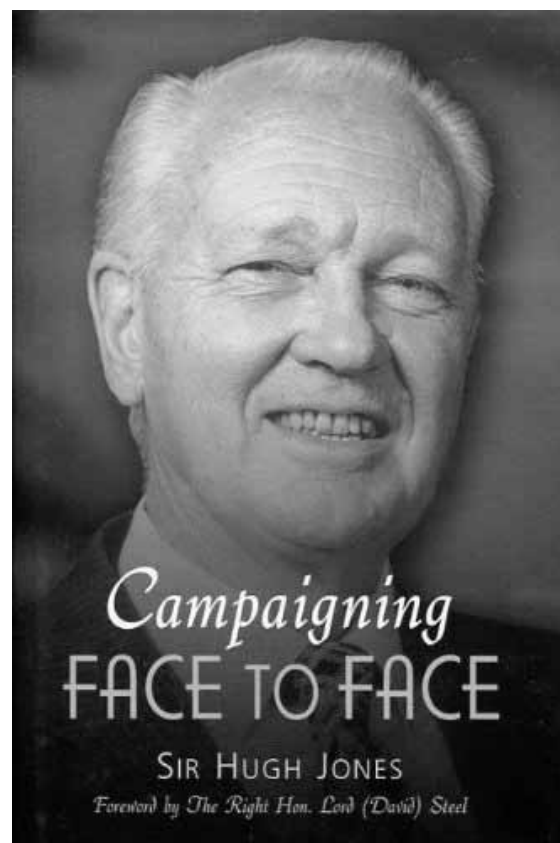
building elsewhere in Europe. He was forever troubled by the lack of resources available to the party in the run up to the expected election in October 1978 and the eventual election of May 1979.

For me the most interesting part of the book was Hugh-Jones's assessment of the difficulties he had with dealing with the Joseph Rowntree Social Service Trust Limited (now the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust Ltd) as the Liberal Party's major donor. Hugh was frustrated that all his dealings had to be via the leader, who had a direct line to Pratap Chitnis, the trust's chief executive. Hugh was told not to approach the trust direct. During all this time, I was on the other side of the fence as a JRSST director. Hugh-Jones's problem was that, apart from two Rowntree family members, those of us who had recently been recruited to serve as directors were mainly Liberal Party members and candidates who had our own ideas as to the useful ways money could be spent. We had two MPs on the board, Jo Grimond and Richard Wainwright, as well as Pratap, who had himself had Hugh-Jones's job eleven years earlier than him. Hugh-Jones may well have felt he had little influence, we in turn often felt we were offered what seemed to be a Chitnis-Steel deal.

Reading the book reawakened memories – especially of the huge contribution made by people like Joyce Rose, Gruff Evans and Geoff

Tordoff. Indeed the book covers a panoply of people and places. I only spotted one error and that was Hugh-Jones's reference to the Huddersfield and Bolton pacts (before Hugh's time – 1950 to 1959) being with Labour rather than with the Tories as was the case.

Following the 1979 election, the next party issue was the arrival of the SDP and ultimately the seats negotiations (splitting the seats between the Liberal Party and the SDP for the 1983 election). This was a tortuous and time-consuming business, and the book offers a blow-by-blow account of those often unhappy events. Hugh-Jones served through that 1983 election, where he had to use to the full his diplomatic as well as his political skills. He formally retired in October 1983, but stayed with the cause as a volunteer and one of the party's treasurers (no doubt because his own experience as Secretary General had acquainted him with the difficulties of working with a lack of resources) until the autumn after the 1987 election. Hugh was often referred to in an endearing way as 'Uncle Hugh Jones' and unlike many who both preceded and followed him, when he left as the head of our professional service it was of his own volition.



A Liberal Democrat History Group fringe meeting

ELECTION 2015 IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Join us for the Liberal Democrat History Group's regular post-election analysis of the general election campaign, the vote and its aftermath, and the implications for the Liberal Democrats. Further details and speakers to be announced; keep an eye on our website and sign up for our email list (see page 46).

Speakers to include **Phil Cowley** (Professor of Parliamentary Government, University of Nottingham and co-author of *The British General Election of 2010*).

6.30pm, Monday 13 July

Lady Violet Room, National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, London SW1

The party story is what will interest most of us but the book goes on to record Hugh-Jones's speaking tours in the USA, his assistance to the National Liberal Club and his retirement time in the Wiltshire village of Avebury where all his life skills were needed.

The main conclusion for me is that he served the Liberal Party well.

David Shutt Lord Shutt of Greetingland has been Director and Chairman of the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust. He was Deputy Chief Whip in the House of Lords 2010–12.

Turnout may have been higher and political party membership considerably higher in the post-war boom years, but the reality of politics back then was a long way away from making it a period we should simply praise by comparison with today.

Despite the far greater number of members available to deliver leaflets or knock on doors, outside of election time this was often all but unknown, even in target wards and marginal seats. It is hard to see why an age when political parties were larger yet much of the time did nothing to communicate with the public should be eulogised by comparison with smaller parties, making more use of non-members and in touch far more often. As Kyrle writes in this volume:

The custom at the time [the late 1960s] was to fight an election campaign over a period of about three weeks, attend the count, pay the election expenses within the time limit required by law and then spend the rest of the year raising the money to pay for it and start putting some money by for the next election. There was no concept of 'political campaigning'.

Compared with his previous volume in this series – *Part 1: Southampton 1958–1965* – Part 2 is fairly short; but the brief main text is supplemented by plenty of appendices which contain the sorts of details that entertain, such as reproductions of press stories and leaflets (including one with a story disassociating the local Liberals from recent activities by the Young Liberals!). This sort of recording and preservation of the tenor of local politics is invaluable because it is also the sort of material that most often slips between the cracks of history, beyond the reach of future historians.

Though very much a history, the main lessons – such as targeted activity and building up your organisation – are ones which are still very much applicable to twenty-first-century campaigners armed with computers and smartphones, making this not only an enjoyable history but also a handy reminder of the core tenets of effective political campaigning.

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.

The Liberals in Hampshire: Martin Kyrle's reminiscences

Martin Kyrle, *The Liberals in Hampshire – a Part(l)y History Part 2: Eastleigh 1965–72: out in the suburbs something stirred!* (Sarsen Press, 2013)

Reviewed by **Mark Pack**

THE SECOND IN Martin Kyrle's planned trilogy on the history of the Liberals and then Liberal Democrats in Hampshire, *The Liberals in Hampshire – a Part(l)y History Part 2: Eastleigh 1965–72: out in the suburbs something stirred!*, concentrates, as the title implies, on elections in Eastleigh Borough itself. It was here that, after many attempts, his wife became the first Liberal councillor to be elected to that council, setting the ball rolling for a pattern of electoral success that

has now seen the party successfully transfer the seat to three different MPs in a row and run the local council for many decades.

Such coalface histories of local politics in that era are all too rare. But those that do exist – such as the one written about that other area of extended Liberal and Liberal Democrat electoral success, *A Flagship Borough: 25 Years of a Liberal Democrat Sutton Council* – share a common warning about eulogising politics as it used to be.