

it is a Liberal philosophy. Liberalism is an enormously complex philosophy of which liberty is just one element. In libertarianism, liberty has been exaggerated and blown up to eclipse the other core components, such as a belief in the power of progress.

There was also a question concerning to what extent the panel thought that the current government was a social democratic one? 'Decreasingly' was the simple answer. Shirley Williams

argued that Blair's government had no determination to narrow the gaps in society, and could not be considered a Liberal government either, as it had no commitment to liberty, as demonstrated by its profound centralising tendencies. Conrad Russell reminded the meeting that the Liberal Democrats' commitment to creating a level playing field was also a powerful tool to help deliver equality and to preserve liberty and should not be undervalued.

Archive sources

The Thurso papers at the Churchill Archives Centre

by Katharine Thomson

The papers of Archibald Henry Macdonald Sinclair, 1st Viscount Thurso of Ulbster (1890–1970) broadly consist of 214 boxes of constituency, parliamentary and Liberal Party correspondence of the 1920s and 1930s. Overall the papers date from 1908 to 1951.

Lord Thurso, or Archie Sinclair, as he was generally known, was born on 22 October 1890, the son of Clarence Granville Sinclair. After being educated at Eton and Sandhurst, he entered the Army in 1910, but began his political career in 1919, when he became Personal Military Secretary to Winston Churchill, the Secretary of State for War. When Churchill moved to the Colonial Office as Secretary of State for the Colonies, Thurso went with him, as his Private Secretary, from 1921–22, and in 1922 became the Liberal MP for Caithness and Sutherland, a seat which he was to hold until 1945. Later in the 1920s Thurso held the post of Temporary Chairman of Committees, House of Commons (1925–30) and also worked as a

member of the Empire Marketing Board (1927–30).

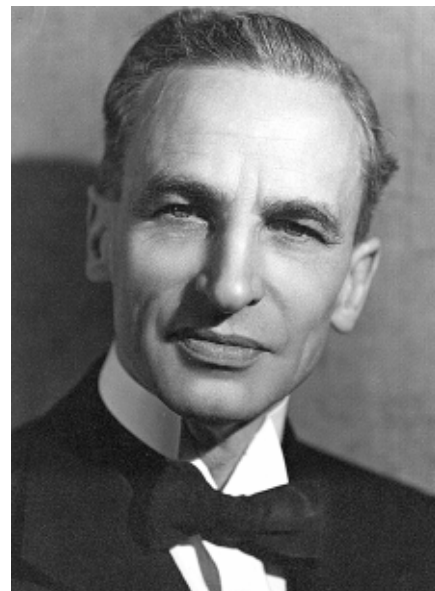
Thurso's growing standing in the Liberal Party was shown when he was made Liberal Chief Whip in 1930, and in 1931 he received his first ministerial position when he became Secretary of State for Scotland, a post which he held for just over a year. By 1935, Thurso had become Leader of the Liberal Parliamentary Party, and was to remain so for the next ten years until the end of the war. During the war years, he also returned to government, serving as Secretary of State for Air from 1940–1945. Lord Thurso died on 15 June 1970.

Within the Thurso Papers, there is a considerable amount of official, political and constituency correspondence, also some speeches, and roughly twenty boxes of material on the Liberal Party and Scottish Liberal organisation. There is virtually no wartime material, but Section IV of the papers does contain correspondence (arranged alphabetically by correspondents' names) and press cuttings from 1945 on into the 1950s. A section of papers

transferred from the Scottish Record Office form a separate and coherent group, consisting of papers of 1923–37 relating to the Scottish Office, the Scottish Board of Health and Thurso's period as Secretary of State for Scotland. The papers in the first box of Section I are also particularly noteworthy as they include Thurso's correspondence with Winston Churchill from 1915 to 1920.

The papers came into Churchill Archives Centre through the good offices of the 2nd Viscount, in several batches between April 1972 and September 1973. The collection had incurred two major misfortunes before its transfer to Cambridge. During the war, the bulk of the Thurso papers that were being stored in Liberal Party headquarters in London were destroyed by an incendiary bomb. After the war, a large portion of the remaining papers were destroyed in a fire that broke out at Thurso East Mains where they were being kept in a room above the laundry. Most of the papers that were rescued from this second blaze were severely damaged both by the flames and by water from the firemen's hoses. Section VI of the collection contains the charred remains of this accident which are too fragile to handle, whilst those damaged files which have already been repaired by the Conservator have been placed in their appropriate places within the collection.

Archie Sinclair (Lord Thurso)



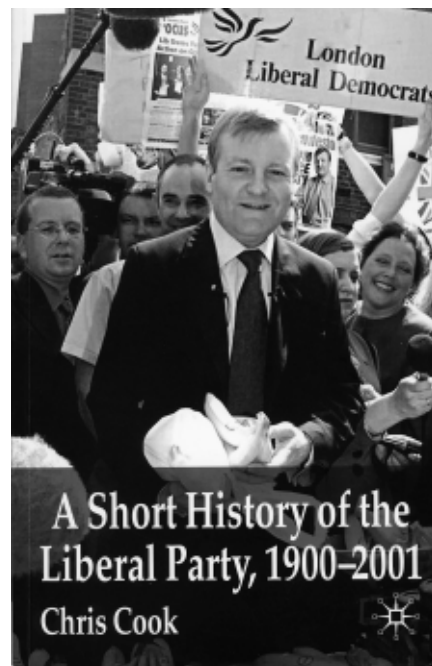
In Viscount Thurso's own lifetime, he was asked by the Scottish Record Office (in 1966) if he would deposit there the papers relating to his tenure of the office of Secretary of State and these papers were consequently deposited in Edinburgh early in 1972. At the same time, Viscount Thurso's son began the transfer of the residue of his late father's papers (the 1st Viscount had died in June 1970) to Churchill College. These papers are now Sections I and II.

In January 1973 the Scottish Record Office agreed to transfer their Thurso papers, relating to his time as Secretary of State for Scotland, to Churchill College, having first xeroxed them. This collection was catalogued in the National Register of Archives (Scotland) Survey 189 (Additional) and comprises Section V of the Thurso collection.

By the spring of 1973, Viscount Thurso's secretary, Miss Cynthia

Metcalf, was sorting and listing the papers that were to be deposited at Churchill College in May and September that year as Sections III and IV.

An online catalogue to the Thurso Papers is available on the A2A web-site at www.a2a.pro.gov.uk/. The collection itself is open for consultation by researchers using Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge: individual closures of files are indicated in the catalogue. Churchill Archives Centre is open from Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm. A prior appointment and two forms of identification are required. Please see our website at www.chu.cam.ac.uk/archives/ for further details, including a list of further collections relating to the Liberal Party, such as the papers of the Dilke family, Sir Dingle Foot, Lord Gladwyn, Reginald McKenna and Sir Edward Spears.



election achievements. If it had covered all the other elements as thoroughly as this, it would be an excellent source – and also, of course, a good deal longer. As it is, it is really quite unbalanced, lacking, in particular, any real consideration of Liberal policy and ideology (although this is rectified a little in its material on recent years).

The choice of the book's starting date is puzzling, as 1900 is in no way a significant date in Liberal history. In fact, this is rather misleading, as the first two and a bit chapters (out of twenty) cover the events of the nineteenth century, mainly starting in June 1859 with the famous meeting in Willis' Rooms which saw Whigs, Radicals and Peelites combining to bring down Derby's Government. That date is normally held to mark the origin of the modern party. In fact, although it is rather short on what Liberals stood for and what Liberal governments actually did, this part of the book provides a pretty decent summary of pre-twentieth century Liberal history.

But as the book gets more detailed, more and more errors and irritations creep in. Events and people are mentioned without any explanation of what or who they were – for example, the Lloyd George Fund is referred to several times without us being told where it originated (the sale of political honours); Violet Bonham Carter

Reviews

Too short a history

Chris Cook: *A Short History of the Liberal Party 1900 – 2001* (Palgrave, 2002, 288 pp.)

Reviewed by **Duncan Brack**

The best thing one can say about the latest edition – the sixth – of Chris Cook's *A Short History of the Liberal Party* is that it exists. There is no other up-to-date history of the Liberal Democrats and its predecessors (despite the title, the book actually covers Liberals, SDP and Liberal Democrats) apart from John Stevenson's rather thin, frequently inaccurate and now dated *Third Party Politics Since 1945* (Blackwell, 1993). Chris Cook and his publishers are to be congratulated on bringing out successive editions at increasingly frequent intervals (three editions in the last ten years).

But I can't help wishing it was rather better. A good party history, it seems to me, ought to include a description of the party's leading personalities, its internal structures and ways of functioning, key elements of its strategy (or lack of one) at crucial moments, and party philosophy and policy. It should show how it related to the outside world (i.e. what difference it made), its underlying bases of support in the electorate, and, of course, its electoral record.

This book really only scores well on the last point, Liberal psephology, where it provides a comprehensive record of local, by- and general