Sinclair’s instincts were sound, even if he never quite succeeded in imposing his strategy.

Martin Pugh was Professor of Modern British History at Newcastle University until 1999 and Research Professor at Liverpool John Moores University 1999–2002. His latest book is The Pankhursts (Allen Lane, 2001) and he is currently completing a book on fascism in Britain between the wars.


2. For some indiscretions see Cambridge University Library: Templewood Papers RF3, p. 16; Ziegler, King Edward VIII, p. 209; Barnes and Maddlemas, Baldwin, p. 979.


6. Daily Worker, 4 December 1936, Los Angeles Times, 18 November 1936.

7. Daily Mail, 4, 5, 7 December 1937; Daily Express, 4, 7 December 1936.


11. PRO PREM 1457, Cabinet meeting Notes, 4 and 5 December 1936.

12. PRO PREM 1457, Cabinet meeting Notes, 4 December 1936.


15. Times, 5 December 1936; Daily Express, 5 December 1936.


22. New Chronicle, 3 December 1936.


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How did you come to fight Cardigan?

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Huw Lloyd Williams lost Cardigan for the Liberals in 1970, and in 1972 I stood again for selection and was not opposed. I made sure that time that my friends were on the executive to support me. I was determined to rebuild Cardigan as a Liberal seat. In 1973 I persuaded a large number of Independents to stand as Liberals. They took nine seats. Although the Independents still had the largest majority the Liberals were by far the largest political group in the county. They were the largest Liberal group in Wales at the time. We remained the largest political group on the council until I was defeated in 1992 – perhaps also the largest Liberal group in Wales for that period.

**INTERVIEW**

**Lord Geraint of Ponterwyd**

Interview by Russell Deacon


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How did you defeat Labour in the seat?
Cardigan is naturally a Liberal seat. It has an Independent tradition which means that the people there don’t readily support either Labour or the Tories. In 1974 Elystan Morgan (the sitting Labour MP) was unpopular: he was seen as a traitor because he had moved away from Plaid Cymru (he’d left them in 1965). He was also against the Welsh School in Aberystwyth. Therefore the Plaid Cymru supporter to back me in order to get him out. This pushed the vote of the Plaid Cymru candidate, Clifford Davies, out. He gave me enough support to win the seat. The Cardigan Liberal campaign team also worked very hard to bring a Liberal back into the seat.

Why were you a Liberal and not a Welsh Nationalist?
I was a Welsh nationalist and a Liberal as well. There was no need to join Plaid Cymru with those credentials. Liberalism was in my blood and that of my family. My grandmother was nearly thrown off her farm for voting Liberal in the 1880s by the Conservative landlord. I never thought of being in any other party.

What happened after you were elected, in the 1970s?
In October 1974 Elystan Morgan tried to regain his seat but failed, and I increased my percentage of the vote. I could then concentrate on being an MP. One of the best things of the 1970s was the 1977 Lib-Lab Pact. I always supported the Pact, even though Emlyn [Hooson] was later in favour of ending it. I took up the agricultural spokespersonship partnering Labour’s John Silkin, whom I got on really well with. I was able to persuade him to get the government to recognise the Farmers’ Union of Wales (FUW), which I had been a founder of. Roderic Bowen had always been against this idea – something that helped him lose the seat in 1966.

Although many in Ceredigion said they wouldn’t vote Liberal again, because we had supported Labour, they changed their mind in time for the 1979 general election, when I kept the seat with a smaller majority. In that election Emlyn Thomas, the Conservative candidate, came second with almost 30 per cent of the vote. Thomas had been general secretary of the Welsh Liberals in 1969, based in Aberystwyth, and was someone who I’d known well. He operated an office with a staff of two. The office flopped and Thomas lost his enthusiasm after a year. The result was that he later defected to the Conservatives and fought against me in 1979.

Also in 1979 we fought the devolution referendum. We worked very hard but knew that it was lost as the Conservatives had been using it to attack the government and we couldn’t fight against that. We were too closely linked to them.

What happened in the 1980s?
In 1979, as a result of the fall-out from the Lib–Lab Pact and the referendum result, Emlyn [Hooson] lost his seat. I was then the sole Liberal MP in Wales. I was both the leader of the Welsh party and agriculture spokesman. It was very hard: you ended up speaking everywhere. I was glad, therefore, when Alex [Carlile] won Montgomeryshire back in 1983. It got even better in 1985 when Richard [Livsey] won Brecon & Radnor and there were then three Liberal MPs in Wales.

After the election had ended I pushed for the establishment of S4C (Welsh Channel 4). The Conservatives had gone back on an earlier promise to set it up. We put a lot of political pressure on them but it was Cledwyn Hughes (former Labour Welsh Secretary) who had the most influence.

The 1980s saw the arrival of the SDP in Wales. I was always a Liberal and I was keen that SDP members became Liberals. I therefore wanted the merged party to be called after its Liberal name but I lost when they called it the Social and Liberal Democrats. I was proved right, however, when the following year, 1989, we changed our name again to Liberal Democrats.

Why did you lose Cardigan?
I knew I had lost my seat, because my campaign team was weak. They thought that they’d win but I knew that in my heart that this wasn’t going to be the case. Everyone seemed convinced we’d win except me. Cynog Dafis (Plaid Cymru) was able to more than double his vote from the previous election. My key supporters who had won the seat for me in 1974 had by then died off. The seat is winnable again for us though. Mark Williams has brought the vote back up; we’ll get the seat back again.

What did you do then?
After going into the Lords I became Lord-in-Waiting to Her Majesty the Queen – the first Liberal to hold the position for a century. I am the Queen’s representative for foreign heads of state. I have met President Moi of Nigeria and the Sultan of Brunei.

Dr Russell Deacon is a lecturer at the Centre for Humanities at the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff.