

**Jaime Reynolds**

examines the life of the Liberal Member of Parliament for Bermondsey 1923–24 and Ashford 1929–31, and a leader in the ‘tithe war’ of the 1930s: Reverend Roderick Kedward (1881–1937).

# ‘THE FIGHT



# FIGHTING PARSON'

In December 2002 Simon Hughes unveiled a plaque at Bermondsey Underground Station in tribute to Dr Alfred Salter, a much-respected radical Member of Parliament and tireless campaigner for health and social improvement in the borough in the early decades of the twentieth century. Less remembered is Salter's chief political adversary in the early 1920s, the man who defeated him at the general election of 1923: the Reverend Roderick Kedward. Yet Kedward also dedicated his life to combating social deprivation in south London and was a hugely popular local figure, whose funeral cortege through the streets of Bermondsey in 1937 was attended by a crowd of thousands. And while Salter was a left-wing socialist, Kedward was a Liberal, the last to be elected in this area until Simon Hughes's victory in 1983.

Kedward's achievements in Bermondsey are not the only reason for remembering his contribution to Liberal history. He was a charismatic and colourful figure who typified two important strands of the inter-war Liberal cause: urban social Liberalism, and rural nonconformist protest. In 1929 in Ashford, Kent, he pulled off one of the most stunning wins scored by a Liberal at any general election. During the 1930s he was the leading figure in the rural revolt against payment of tithes, a campaign of civil disobedience and demonstrations

in which Liberals played a prominent part.

Roderick Morris Kedward was born at Beachbrook Farm, Westwell in Kent, a stone's throw from the present-day Eurostar station at Ashford, on 14 September 1881, one of fourteen children of William Wesley Kedward and Eliza (née Morris), originally from Herefordshire, who moved to Kent in the 1870s and continued farming there. The family farm of 129 acres seems to have provided a good living, sufficient to have the children privately educated. This was a heavily agricultural area, one of the best hop-growing areas in the country.

The Church of England and the Tory party dominated the rural areas, but in the Wealden parishes nonconformity and Liberalism were strong.<sup>1</sup> The Kedwards were firm Methodists and Liberals and four of their sons were to become Wesleyan ministers. Roderick became a Sunday-school teacher and local preacher while still in his teens, and spent some time at the Mission Home in Rochdale, a headquarters of the Methodist evangelist movement led by Thomas Champness.<sup>2</sup> Kedward himself soon became a travelling evangelist. He caused a furore when, after refusing to stop preaching illegally on a village green, he was briefly imprisoned in Worcester gaol, charged with obstruction and refusal to pay a fine. After protests by the local Methodists the governor asked him to leave voluntarily, but he

refused to do so until the Home Office had issued a warrant ordering his release and declaring him innocent of any offence. He became a minister in 1903 after training at Richmond College and served at Lydd, Kent, for four years while continuing to tour the country, recruiting converts to Methodism under the auspices of the Connexional Home Mission Committee. These were years of revival in the Methodist church, fuelled in part by the nonconformist opposition to the 1902 Education Act and the revival of the movement in Wales.<sup>3</sup>

Kedward married Daisy Annie Fedrick in 1906. They had three sons and three daughters. In the 1920s messages to the voters from Daisy Kedward featured prominently in her husband's election literature.

In 1908 Kedward was appointed as minister of three Wesleyan congregations in the slum area of Sculcoates in Hull, a Methodist stronghold. It was there that he gained the title of 'the Fighting Parson', after beating off a drunken, wife-battering docker. It was said that 'ever afterwards Mr Kedward was treated with the greatest respect in that part of the city'. His 'muscular Christianity' also extended, it seems, to intervening to prevent bailiffs evicting his parishioners. One of Kedward's main tasks in Hull was to whip up support for the construction of a new Methodist Central Hall. This was opened as the King's Hall in October 1910,

**Picture: Kedward (holding placard) and his daughter at a tithe protest at Beechbrooke Farm, 1935.**

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with a weekly congregation of some two thousand people, and one of the largest Sunday schools in the country. The establishment of such 'Central Halls' in urban centres, acting as a focus for both religious and social welfare activity, formed a key element in the attempts by the Methodists to reverse the decline in their support that started before the First World War.

Kedward involved himself in local government in Hull as a member of the Board of Guardians, where he campaigned against the practice of forcing vagrants to work at stone-breaking when they were given shelter in local Poor Law shelters. To expose this scandal, Kedward disguised himself as a tramp and spent a day in the workhouse, returning later to show his bruised and blistered hands, and shame the authorities into ceasing the practice.<sup>4</sup> According to his later election propaganda, he was also twice selected to represent the 'artisans' of Hull in industrial disputes.

Despite his Protestantism, Kedward was a vociferous advocate of Irish Home Rule. On one occasion, when due to speak for the cause in Londonderry, the house where he was staying was attacked by an 'Orange mob' who broke several windows. Nevertheless Kedward went ahead with the meeting where, according to his later election propaganda, 'his invincible courage quelled even the most violent of his antagonists and there, right in the heart of Orangedom, he delivered a powerful speech in support of Irish freedom'.<sup>5</sup>

He became a popular figure in Hull and soon after the outbreak of the First World War the soldiers of the East Yorkshire Regiment petitioned the War Office for Kedward to become the chaplain of one of the Hull 'Pals' battalions formed in 1914 and attached to the 31<sup>st</sup> Division in June 1915. This unusual request was granted. In December 1915 he was stationed with the division in Egypt where it was defending the Suez Canal. In March 1916 the division

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was transferred back to the Western Front where it suffered horrendous casualties in the assault on Serre at the start of the Battle of the Somme in July 1916.<sup>6</sup> Kedward's health broke down soon afterwards, doubtless aggravated by the horrors of war that he later admitted to having experienced. He spent three months in a field hospital before being invalided out of the army in October 1916 with trench fever. He remained a highly popular personality with the troops and served as president of the ex-Soldiers and ex-Sailors Federation for three years after the war. His empathy with the trials of the front-line soldiers was evident in his later attacks on the Labour government for failing to live up to its promises to abolish the death penalty and introduce appeals for court-martialled 'deserters'.<sup>7</sup>

Kedward's first attempt to enter Parliament, as Liberal candidate for Hull Central in the 'coupon' election of December 1918, was a failure. He lost to a couponed Conservative by a mile in a seat that the Liberals were to capture at a by-election a few months later and hold into the early 1920s.<sup>8</sup>

By that time Kedward had taken up the post of minister at the South London Methodist Mission based at the Bermondsey Central Hall on Tower Bridge Road. The South London Mission had been founded in 1889 to propagate Wesleyan Methodism in the slums of Bermondsey and the surrounding areas of Southwark and Camberwell. In 1900 a vast Central Hall was opened with room for congregations of two thousand worshippers. It also served as a welfare, cultural and educational centre for the district. The superintendent from 1909 to 1918 was Reverend Dr John Scott Lidgett (1854–1953), regarded by some as the greatest Methodist preacher since Wesley, who went on to serve as the first president of the unified Methodist Conference in 1932. Scott Lidgett was an exponent of the Methodist Forward movement

that justified Methodists taking up social concerns on theological grounds and, as an active Liberal, also served as an alderman on Bermondsey Borough Council and from 1905 to 1928 as a member and alderman of the London County Council, where he led the Progressive group from 1918 to 1928.<sup>9</sup>

Kedward continued this tradition of Methodist social and Liberal political activism after succeeding Lidgett as superintendent of the Mission at the end of the First World War. He was a member of Bermondsey Borough Council from 1920–25, serving as Chairman of the Finance Committee, and also sat on the Board of Guardians.

Bermondsey was one of the poorest and most deprived boroughs in London, with large stretches of old and dilapidated Victorian cottages and ill-lit and unsanitary tenements. It contained some of the worst overcrowding and highest mortality rates in the capital. It was overwhelmingly working class, with an estimated middle-class population of only 2.4 per cent and not a single middle-class street in the entire borough. The main sources of employment were the Surrey Docks, Thames riverside work of various kinds, the centuries-old tanning and leather-dressing industry, street trading, and, for women, domestic service, charring and making clothes. Health problems, alcoholism (only Shoreditch had a higher number of pubs per capita) and extreme poverty were rife.<sup>10</sup>

In the 1920s and even into the 1930s, the political battle in such deprived areas of south and east London was generally between the ascendant, and locally usually leftist, Labour Party and socially progressive Liberals, often with significant nonconformist or sometimes Jewish backing.<sup>11</sup> Before the First World War Bermondsey had mostly been a solidly Liberal seat with only occasional Tory victories. The new Bermondsey West seat was a rare Asquithian Liberal victory in the 1918 general

election when the sitting MP, H. J. Glanville, held the seat comfortably against a Lloyd George Coalition Liberal and Dr Alfred Salter, the Labour candidate.<sup>12</sup> Glanville retired in 1922 and Kedward was selected as Liberal candidate in his place. This was the first of three tough contests between Kedward and Salter.

The saintly Salter was a formidable opponent. A prize-winning medical student, he had dedicated himself to practice in the Bermondsey slums where, after serving as a Progressive (Liberal) on the LCC and Bermondsey Borough Council, he helped form the Bermondsey Independent Labour Party in 1908 and stood as an ILP candidate in a parliamentary by-election in 1909. He was a Quaker, pacifist, republican and prohibitionist. During the First World War he had been a conscientious objector. His wife Ada was also a Labour pioneer, serving as Mayor of Bermondsey in 1922, the first woman Labour mayor in the country.

Salter's appeal to the voters captured well the millenarian vision of the Labour Party's radicalism in the 1920s. He declared that 'frankly I am in politics to abolish the existing system'. The Labour Party's aim was to win a parliamentary majority 'so that peacefully, constitutionally and in the orderly British fashion we may effect the transition from the tottering, crumbling, worn-out capitalist state to a juster and better Social Order'. He was not backward in identifying the Labour Party with God's work:

I derive my politics from my religion. I believe that Jesus Christ came here to tell men ... how the Kingdom of Heaven might be established on earth. Jesus Christ ... taught us certain principles, which if applied to our personal, social and collective life, will make a new world, and will redeem mankind from the present hell which the ignorance, folly and wickedness of statesmen and peoples have created. I believe that the Labour Party is

essentially endeavouring to put these principles into practice ...'

Compared with this, the Reverend Kedward's appeals to religion were moderate.<sup>13</sup>

In 1922 Salter more than trebled the Labour vote to win the seat against a divided opposition. Kedward, standing as an Asquithian Liberal against a Lloyd Georgeite, gathered up the majority of the Liberal vote, and an unofficial Conservative came in fourth.<sup>14</sup>

Salter's victory prompted the anti-Labour forces to unite behind Kedward for the 1923 general election. As a Liberal-Labour straight fight the issue of free trade versus protection that dominated the election elsewhere was less of a litmus test in Bermondsey West. Kedward stood for free trade, but declared that it was 'not enough in itself', and called for a constructive social programme of housing and infrastructure investment, training and education, extension of health and unemployment insurance and wider old-age pensions. Salter's attitude to the tariff issue was: 'We know how bad things are today under Free Trade. Under Protection they would be worse.'

It was a rowdy campaign. The Liberals put out a leaflet claiming that two of their meetings had been broken up by Labour supporters. Labour retorted with leaflets accusing the Liberals of lying and Kedward of 'whining and snivelling about interruptions'.<sup>15</sup> Despite a small further increase in the Labour vote, Kedward won the seat for the Liberals.<sup>16</sup> The Salter camp attributed their defeat to personal attacks and the 'Turkey vote': during the campaign the South London Mission had distributed 3,628 Christmas turkeys 'with Mr Kedward's compliments', compared with only half that number the previous December.<sup>17</sup>

In the 1924 Parliament Kedward spoke a few times, mainly on constituency and ex-servicemen issues, and he also seems to have taken a firm Gladstonian line



Roderick Kedward, 'The Fighting Parson'; scenes from the Tithe War protests; Kedward election logo.

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on sound public finance. He was one of thirteen Liberal rebels to vote with Conservatives in protest at the Labour government's decision to cancel the order preventing George Lansbury's Poplar Board of Guardians from exceeding the cap on outdoor relief.<sup>18</sup>

The pact with the Tories and loud anti-communist propaganda directed against the Labour Party were not enough to save Kedward in the Liberal debacle at the 1924 general election. Salter won back the seat with a swing of nearly 10 per cent as the Labour vote surged by over 3,000, drawing in both new and ex-Liberal voters.<sup>19</sup> The assault on Labour over the Russian loan and the Zinoviev letter appeared to have had little impact, perhaps because of the lack of middle-class voters in the constituency. The Liberals put out a leaflet blaming their defeat on the wealth of the Labour machine, its continuous 'Socialistic propaganda' and its control of the local council and relief committees and claimed that Kedward had been subjected to false allegations, personal abuse and intimidation.<sup>20</sup>

It was true that the local Labour organisation was crushing the Liberals. By 1925 Labour had established the monopoly of power in Bermondsey that was to last for over fifty years.<sup>21</sup> The 1929 election confirmed Bermondsey West as a safe Labour seat with over 60 per cent of the vote, while the Liberals fell back to just over 20 per cent, a little ahead of the Conservatives. Salter managed to hold his seat in the Labour collapse of 1931 (one of only five London Labour MPs to do so) and remained an MP until his death in 1945. By the late 1930s Labour had some 3,150 members in West Bermondsey – 25 per cent of their voters. Between 1945 and 1964 Bermondsey was a virtual 'one-party state'. As one pro-Labour observer later wrote: 'with the exception of the Communist Party, and the short-lived and unstable tenants' associations organised in private tenements, there were no other community organisations, tenants'

organisations, amenity groups or pressure groups outside the Labour Party.<sup>22</sup> The independent Liberal cause was extinguished to revive only in the 1980s when Simon Hughes won his famous by-election victory.<sup>23</sup>

Kedward evidently understood that West Bermondsey was unlikely to return him to Westminster after 1924. Perhaps he felt too, after his bruising fights with Salter, that to continue high-profile political activity would compromise his religious and social work in the borough. He transferred his political attention to his home town of Ashford in Kent. On the face of it this was even less promising territory for a Liberal. Ashford had been solidly Tory since the constituency was formed in 1885 and had stayed Conservative even in the Liberal landslide of 1906. The Liberals had not contested the seat between 1910 and 1924, when their candidate came in a distant runner-up with 22 per cent of the votes, 38 per cent behind the Conservative.<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, Kedward won the seat at in 1929 in perhaps the biggest upset of that general election with a swing of over 20 per cent.<sup>25</sup> None of the other Kent seats showed anything like this Liberal surge. Doubtless Kedward's local connections, popularity and campaigning flair were important factors in his victory. His granddaughter recalled that 'as a child attending worship in the various country chapels, my grandfather's reputation was such, that I basked in a kind of warm glow every time our connection was mentioned! People genuinely loved him.'<sup>26</sup> His Bermondsey election battles, during which he produced a range of leaflets and letters to the voters, a very professional local newsheet and eye-catching publicity material, showed him as being every bit as effective as modern Liberal 'community politicians'. He also benefited from the fact that Ashford was one of the hotbeds of the growing protest movement against the payment of tithes, a

cause he energetically took up. It was to become the focus of the latter years of his political career.

The ancient but declining practice of collecting tithes in the form of a proportion of crops harvested was converted by the Tithe Act of 1836 into fixed cash payments that were effectively a tax on land rather than produce. The revenues went mainly to the Church of England to pay for the upkeep of the rural clergy, although some went to secular recipients such as certain Oxford colleges. The burden of tithes was unevenly distributed, with some land free of tithes, and land traditionally used to grow corn or hops subject to higher rates. The tithe was naturally a bone of contention with nonconformist farmers, whose grievance was taken up by the Liberal Party. In the 1880s a 'tithe war' in Wales had helped to bring the young Lloyd George to prominence and fuelled the calls for the disestablishment of the Welsh Church that were finally enacted in 1919.

The conflict subsided between 1891, when landlords were made liable for the payment of the tithe, and 1920–21, when farmers again became liable at the same time as wartime production subsidies were removed and the agricultural depression of the inter-war period began. Many small farmers who had bought farms in the short-lived boom after 1918 not only now faced collapsing food and land prices but also, to their surprise, found themselves liable to pay tithes. The penalty for non-payment was distraint of goods, in other words the seizure and auction of crops or farm animals. The burden of the tithe was felt particularly in south-east England, and especially in the corn- and hop-growing areas of Kent and East Anglia.

From the mid 1920s a movement of protest and passive resistance to the tithe gathered strength, led by the National Tithe-payers Association (NTA). Although non-party and non-sectarian, the NTA attracted significant support from nonconformist Liberals. In

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the 1920s the Liberals remained a force in many rural areas and at the 1923 election, and to a lesser extent in 1929, were the main beneficiary of the protest vote in the countryside. Kedward became the leading spokesman for the NTA in Parliament, and in 1931 unsuccessfully attempted to introduce a Tithe Remission Bill.<sup>27</sup>

In the 1931 Liberal split Kedward sided with Sir John Simon and defended Ashford as a Liberal National. He had never been an ardent free trader and no doubt recognised that he stood little hope of holding his seat without Conservative support. He was one of a number of radical non-conformists whose social Liberal outlook was no barrier to their choosing the Liberal National camp. However, Kedward was too radical for the Ashford Tories, who objected to his record of frequent voting for the Labour government, and above all his identification with the anti-tithe campaign. The critics were led by Sir Auckland Geddes, a former minister under Lloyd George, and Edward Hardy, chairman of the Ashford Conservative Association, who attacked Kedward's support for 'lawless attempts' to defeat payment of tithes. In the absence of a Labour candidate, the Tories decided to stand against Kedward, who was thus one of only three Liberal National MPs to face Conservative opposition. The tithe issue seems to have counted against Kedward who was defeated by a wide margin.<sup>28</sup> Paradoxically the anti-tithe campaign included Conservatives amongst its prominent supporters, including later the chairman of the neighbouring Canterbury Conservative Association.<sup>29</sup>

Following his defeat Kedward threw himself single-mindedly into the anti-tithe movement. In 1932 he became president of the NTA, remaining in that post until his death in 1937. He resumed his youthful career as a 'peripatetic agitator', touring the country whipping up resistance. As Carol Twinch, the historian of the 'tithe

war' puts it, 'during the years 1931 to 1935 the tithepayers' mood generally was one of angry defiance against the Church such as had not been witnessed in rural Britain for a very long time'.<sup>30</sup> Kedward's flair for publicity was evident in the NTA's passive obstruction of distraint raids on farms. One such confrontation took place in 1935 when Kedward's farm in Kent was raided for non-payment of tithes to Merton College. Twenty-one pigs, eight cows and two calves were seized, but no bids received in the subsequent auction. An effigy of the Archbishop of Canterbury was burnt and a pig sold by the Tithepayers Association for £20.<sup>31</sup>

Both wings of the Liberal Party stood formally aloof from the campaign, but it received loud support from Lloyd George and individual support from Simonite MPs, in particular Edgar Granville, J. Morris Jones and Viscount Elmley. The *Liberal News Chronicle* and *The Star* also backed the protests. Kedward returned to the Liberals and stood as candidate in a by-election in Ashford in March 1933. Lloyd George came to speak for him and was given a tumultuous reception. However the Liberals again lost,<sup>32</sup> a defeat that Lloyd George, in a letter to Kedward, attributed to the failings of Herbert Samuel's leadership:

The result of the election must have been a great disappointment to you as it was to all of us, but I am convinced that no one else could have done nearly as well as you did. You put up a first-rate fight. You are the only man who would have polled 11,000 votes for Liberalism in a Kentish constituency. I am afraid that it means that for the time being Liberalism is down and out in the English constituencies. Its fortunes have been mishandled very badly during the last two years. We rallied 5,300,000 voters to our flag in 1929. I doubt now whether we could gather together one-third of that number. There is, of course, a reaction in the world against Liberal principles. That is

**Kedward  
threw him-  
self single-  
mindedly  
into the  
anti-tithe  
movement  
... he  
resumed  
his youth-  
ful career  
as a 'peri-  
patetic  
agitator',  
touring the  
country  
whipping  
up resist-  
ance.**

what always happens in a panic. People everywhere are frightened and are calling for dictatorships.<sup>33</sup>

However it was clear that the anti-tithe cause was only a limited vote-winner for the Liberals, even with Kedward as candidate. This was largely because of its all-party character. Even Mosley's British Union of Fascists tried to jump on the bandwagon and nineteen blackshirts were arrested in an extended 'siege' at Wrotham in Suffolk in 1934. Its appeal was also limited to farmers. The farm-workers' trade union, linked with Labour, was lukewarm.

Following a Royal Commission, a new Tithe Act in 1936 converted the tithe into an annuity redemption payment, integrated into the tax system, which would phase out the tithe altogether over sixty years. Kedward and the NTA opposed this and 130 MPs, including almost all the Liberal MPs, voted against.

Kedward died following a sudden illness (a duodenal ulcer) on 3 March 1937. The tithe movement subsided soon afterwards. His pivotal role was commemorated in the Tithe Memorial, erected by the A20, just outside his home village of Hothfield:

In memory of Roderick Morris Kedward, President of the National Tithepayers Association 1931-37, MP for Ashford 1929-31. Born 1881. Died 1937. This stone is a token of gratitude for the splendid service he rendered in the tithepayers' cause and of admiration of his character. This site forms part of Beachbrook Farm where he was born and where he suffered repeated distraints of tithe.<sup>34</sup>

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- 1 See P. Harris, *Forty Years in and out of Parliament* (London, 1947), p. 31 for a description of the constituency before 1914. Harris was candidate for Ashford in 1906.
- 2 Thomas Champness (1832-1905), a

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- leading nineteenth-century Methodist evangelist preacher and founder of *Joyful News*.
- 3 C. Twinch, 'Roderick Morris Kedward (1881–1937)', *Bygone Kent*, Vol. 24, no. 11 (November 2003), pp. 642–51.
  - 4 *Methodist Recorder*, 20 October 1960
  - 5 1922 election leaflet, 'R. M. Kedward – By One of his Admirers' Southwark Local Studies Library
  - 6 <http://www.1914-18.net/31div.htm>. See also the novel *Covenant with Death* by J. Harris (1961) which describes the raising and slaughter of the 31<sup>st</sup> Division.
  - 7 *Bermondsey Election News 1924: How the Labour Party deserted*. Southwark Local Studies Library
  - 8 Result: Sykes (Coalition Conservative) 13,805 (80.1 per cent); Kedward (L) 3,434 (19.9 per cent), turnout 54.9 per cent, C majority 10,371 (60.2 per cent).
  - 9 John D. Beasley, *The Bitter Cry Heard and Heeded – The Story of the South London Mission 1889–1989* (South London Mission, London, 1990); Rev. W. Spencer, *Glory in the Garret* (Epworth, London, 1932); A. Turberfield, *John Scott Lidgett – the Archbishop of British Methodism?* (Epworth Press, Peterborough, 2003). The main Central Hall was demolished in 1967.
  - 10 Sir H. Llewellyn Smith et al., *New Survey of London Life and Labour Vol iii Social Survey 1– Eastern Area* (P. S. King, London, 1932) p. 357 60.
  - 11 Other working-class Liberal strongholds in the 1920s and 1930s included Lambeth North, Southwark North, Bethnal Green South-west and North-east, Shoreditch and Whitechapel.
  - 12 Result: Glanville (L) 4,260 (40.6 per cent), Scriven (CoL) 2,998 (28.5 per cent), Salter (Lab) 1,956 (18.6 per cent), Becker (Ind) 1,294 (12.3 per cent), turnout 48.5 per cent, L majority 1,262 (12.1 per cent).
  - 13 *Election Address of Dr Alfred Salter, 6 December 1923; and leaflet: 'Back to Sanity: Vote for Kedward, A Worker for the Workers', 1923*, Southwark Local Studies Library
  - 14 Result: Salter (Lab) 7,550 (44.6 per cent), Kedward (L) 5,225 (30.9 per cent), Scriven (Nat L) 2,814 (16.6 per cent), Nordon (Ind C) 1,328 (7.9 per cent), turnout 64.6 per cent, Lab majority 2,325 (13.7 per cent). Scriven received official Conservative endorsement.
  - 15 Liberal leaflet: *Fair Play* and Labour leaflets *Foul Play versus Fair Play* and *Foul Play: that is a lie*. Southwark Local Studies Library
  - 16 Result: Kedward (L) 9,186 (52.5 per cent), Salter (Lab) 8,298 (47.5 per cent), turnout 66.1 per cent, L majority 888 (5.0 per cent). There was a definite Liberal–Conservative pact, see C. Cook, *The Age of Alignment – Electoral Politics in Britain 1922–1929* (Macmillan London 1975), p. 160.
  - 17 F. Brockway, *Bermondsey Story – the Life of Alfred Salter* (Geo Allen & Unwin, London, 1949), p. 118.
  - 18 C. Cook, *The Age of Alignment*, p. 235–6.
  - 19 Result: Salter (Lab) 11,578 (57.2 per cent), Kedward (L) 8,676 (42.8 per cent), turnout 75.0 per cent, Lab majority 2,902 (14.4 per cent).
  - 20 SLSL, *Bermondsey Liberal Association leaflet*, November 1924.
  - 21 They held the Parliamentary and London County Council seats and dominated Bermondsey Borough Council and the Board of Guardians. The composition of Bermondsey Borough Council over the decade was as follows:
- | 19--                                   | 19 | 22 | 25 | 28 |
|--|----|----|----|----|
| Labour                                 | 24 | 35 | 48 | 48 |
| Progressive (Liberal)                  | 27 | 5  | 0  | 0  |
| Electoral Association (anti-Socialist) | 0  | 10 | 6  | 6  |
| Independent                            | 1  | 4  | 0  | 0  |
- 22 S. Goss, *Local Labour and Local Government – A study of changing interests, politics and policy in Southwark from 1919–1982* (Edinburgh, 1988), p. 41.
  - 23 Salter held the seat in 1931 by ninety-one votes against a Conservative and a Communist. Labour had very comfortable victories over Liberal Nationals in 1935 and 1945 and a Liberal also stood in 1945 winning just 8 per cent of the vote.
  - 24 Result: Steel (Con) 15,159 (60.4 per cent), Humphrey (L) 5,487 (21.8 per cent), Noble (Lab) 4,473 (17.8 per cent), Con majority 9,672 (38.6 per cent), turnout 70.4 per cent.
  - 25 Result: Kedward (L) 15,753 (46.0 per cent), Steel (Con) 14,579 (42.6 per cent), Follick (Lab) 3,885 (11.4 per cent), L majority 1,174 (3.4 per cent), turnout 75.3 per cent.
  - 26 Letter from Georgia Reed to the author, 16 June 2004. I am grateful for Georgia Reed and Prof. H. Roderick Kedward for sharing information with me on their grandfather. They have confirmed that apart from a few photographs, press cuttings and the quoted letter from Lloyd George, none of their grandfather's political papers have survived – 'he was rather secretive about his later life and didn't keep any biographical material'.
  - 27 On the tithe war see further: C. Twinch, *Tithe War 1918–1939 – The Countryside in Revolt* (Media, Norwich, 2001); and on the historical background see E. J. Evans, *The Contentious Tithe – the Tithe Problem and English Agriculture 1750–1850* (London 1976).
  - 28 A. Thorpe, *The British General Election of 1931* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991), p. 175. Result: Knatchbull (Con) 20,891 (58.7 per cent), Kedward (L Nat) 14,681 (41.3 per cent), Con majority 6,210 (17.4 per cent), turnout 75.9 per cent.
  - 29 The president of the NTA in 1931 was Viscount Lymington, a Tory MP. Other Tory supporters included R. A. Butler.
  - 30 Twinch, *Tythe War*, p. 81.
  - 31 *The Star*, 5 March 1937.
  - 32 Result: Spens (Con) 16,051 (47.7 per cent), Kedward (L) 11,423 (33.9 per cent), Beck (Lab) 6,178 (18.4 per cent), Con majority 4,628 (13.8 per cent), turnout 70.9 per cent.
  - 33 Twinch, *Tythe War*, p. 126.
  - 34 [http://www.historic-kent.co.uk/vill\\_h.htm](http://www.historic-kent.co.uk/vill_h.htm). It was moved to the new Ashford cattle market in the 1990s.

# REPORTS

## Liberals and organised labour

Fringe meeting, March 2005, Harrogate, with David Powell and Keith Laybourn  
Report by **Chris Gurney**

**W**ith the 2005 general election not too far in the future, Liberal Democrats gathered in a packed-out Charter Suite in the conference

hotel in Harrogate for a scintillating discussion from two academics about the relationship between the Liberal Party and organised labour. The loss of support from