

THE SLOW DEATH OF

by
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OF LIBERAL WALES

1906 – 1979

Many parts of the United Kingdom can claim a strong Liberal heritage. In some areas such as the West Country, Liverpool and Scotland, Liberalism once dominated, then disappeared rapidly but has since come back in sizeable strength. The case of Wales is somewhat different. Liberalism survived here in considerable vigour for several decades after it had almost vanished elsewhere in Britain; in a number of Welsh constituencies it provided post-war British Liberalism with some of its best opportunities for recovery. In the event, however, there was no significant revival, and this article therefore looks at the main reasons behind what can justly be described as ‘the slow death of Liberal Wales’.

How Liberal was Wales?

In 1906 the Welsh Liberals achieved an electoral feat in Wales that had never been seen before and has never been seen since. Thirty-three of Wales’s thirty-four parliamentary seats were taken by MPs who took the Liberal Whip in Parliament.¹ The Liberals had MPs in every constituency in Wales. It took seven decades for

this record to be fully reversed; by the general election of May 1979 there was not one seat in Wales which the party could claim had been held continuously since that great Edwardian landslide. Although the same was also true for the Liberals of both Scotland and England, Liberal strength in Wales was much stronger and the process of attrition in Wales much slower than anywhere else. Table 1 shows that Liberal strength in Wales was far in excess of any other region of the United Kingdom in 1906. It was the only part of the UK to hold a significant Liberal presence in the post-war election of 1945 right up until the 1959 general election.

Without the Welsh Liberal presence of the immediate post-war era it is difficult to see how the wider Liberal Party in Britain could have survived. On 7 March 1950, a former Liberal MP acknowledged Welsh Liberalism’s importance in the House of Commons; Winston Churchill, in replying to the Liberals upon an issue of policy, said:

I must guard myself carefully against any suggestion of uttering what are called blandishments to the nine representatives of the Liberal Party, most of whom

we see in their places under the guidance so generously provided by the Principality of Wales.²

In the late 1940s and 1950s the Welsh Liberal MPs were so closely tied up with keeping the national party alive that there was little time for any clear distinctions between the development of Liberalism in Wales and that occurring elsewhere. Yet at the same time in Wales Liberalism was rapidly fading, in part aided by the fact that its MPs were also having to dedicate so much time to ensuring the survival of the national party.

The strength of Welsh Liberalism

The Welsh historian K.O. Morgan noted of Liberalism in Wales between 1880–1914 that it ‘permeated Welsh life at every point during this period. Every major transformation in Welsh life owed something to it.’³ As we noted at the start the ultimate evidence of Welsh Liberal domination occurred in 1906 when the Welsh Liberals gained a massive 97 per cent of all Welsh parliamentary seats. From the opening up of the franchise via the Electoral Reform Acts of the nineteenth century,

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THE SLOW DEATH OF LIBERAL WALES 1906 – 1979

Table 1: Percentage of Liberal seats held by region in the general elections of 1906, 1945 and 1959

	1906	1945	1959
County of London	64	0	0
Rest of the South of England	69	1.6	0.5
North of England	66	1.1	1.2
Midlands	67	0	0
Wales	97	17	8
Scotland	82	0	1.4
Northern Ireland	16	0	0
University	0	14*	n/a

* University of Wales seat

Source: David Butler and Gareth Butler, *Twentieth-Century British Political Facts 1900–2000* (Macmillan 2000), pp. 240–41

Welsh Liberalism had developed to cover virtually every shade of political opinion present in Wales. Stuart Rendel, the first Chair of the newly formed ‘Welsh Parliamentary Party’ in a speech on 28 June 1892 to his constituency at Newtown, defined the nature of the Welsh Liberal MPs:

There is undoubtedly a Welsh Party, that Party is not made of one pattern of man, any more than it is made up on men of one height, or one age; it has diverse elements which contribute to its strength, aye and its unity. The creation of a Welsh Party is an accomplished fact.⁴

Across Wales voters could see that:

Liberals were Welsh nationalists. The Liberals inspired the Welsh nationalist political group *Cymru Fydd* (The Wales To Be). It was supported by Tom Ellis and David Lloyd George, and for a time, Welsh Liberals even referred to themselves as the Welsh National Party in the House of Commons.⁵ They drew their massive political support from the very same North, Mid- and West Wales constituencies that now elect mainly Plaid Cymru MPs.

Liberals were the friends of the working classes (urban and rural). For working-class political aspirations the Liberals provided the disestablishment of the church in Wales, agricultural reforms,

Lloyd George’s People’s Budget, the exemption of working men’s clubs from Sunday closing laws and the repeal of the anti-trade union law. These all appealed to those working-class voters who would later endorse Labour in such vast numbers.

Liberals were the friends of the capitalists. For the politics of the businessmen there was the pro-capitalist and free-trade talk of the Liberal industrialists of Cardiff, Newport and Swansea. ‘Capitalist’ Liberal MPs such as shipping-line owner Sir W H Seager (Cardiff East), chemical industrialist Sir Alfred Mond (Swansea West and later Carmarthenshire) and coal mine and railway owner David Davies (Montgomeryshire) helped gain the anti-socialist vote.

Whilst this ability to represent all people in Wales was maintained, the Welsh Liberal hegemony could continue. The glue that for a long time held the different Liberal strands together concerned their opposition to what Welsh Liberal demonology referred to as the ‘Unholy Trinity’⁶ – the brewers (temperance) the bishops (disestablishment of the church) and the squires (tenant land reform). Another part of the bond of unity was the issue of free trade, of particular importance in the elections of 1906 and 1923. Free trade was, however, a two-edged sword that in 1931 also brought the party disu-

nity and subsequently a permanent split.

Who were Welsh Liberals?

From the late 1880s onwards Welsh Liberal parliamentary representation consisted of mainly Welsh-born non-public-school-educated men drawn either from the legal profession or from business. They were also mainly nonconformist in religion and had become considerably more nationalist in outlook than their predecessors.⁷ After the Second World War, Welsh Liberal MPs were to come predominantly from backgrounds connected with the legal world. Although the most famous Welsh Liberal MP David Lloyd George was a solicitor, Liberal MPs were normally barristers-at-law. Of the nine Welsh Liberal MPs elected between 1945 and 1979 five were barristers. Between 1951 and 1974 only barristers-at-law represented all Welsh Liberalism in the House of Commons. Many failed candidates also came from the same background, notably Martin Thomas QC,⁸ Sir Alan Talfan Davies QC⁹ and Winston Roddick QC.¹⁰ Even today three of the five Welsh Liberal Democrat peers are still barristers.¹¹

The reason why barristers dominated the Welsh party to such a large degree was that in a party that was always limited in funding and fundraising they had their own resources.¹² In addition when it came to both getting selected and the campaign trail their court appearances had ensured that they were great public speakers. The downside of having MPs who were also practising barristers was that their legal careers were built at the expense of their political work. The problem of the ‘part-time MPs’ became an issue which the political opposition was only too happy to highlight at election time. This was particularly true for Cardigan’s Roderic Bowen whose opponents always referred to him as the part-time MP.

The causes of the slow death of Liberal Wales

Four main reasons can be identified for the slow death of Liberal Wales.

1) *The end of the electoral pact with Labour*

The first major cause of Liberal seat losses started two decades before Welsh Liberalism reached its zenith. In 1885 the first Labour/Liberal (Lib-Lab) candidate in the UK, William Abraham (known as ‘Mabon’¹³), was elected in the Rhondda constituency. Mabon, a miners’ agent, was elected with a majority of 867 votes (12.6 per cent) over the Liberal candidate Frederick Lewis Davies. Despite Mabon taking the Liberal whip, therefore not technically depriving the Liberals of a seat, he did provide the first clear example of a candidate standing under a Labour banner being able to defeat a Liberal in a straight fight.¹⁴ His dominance of the Rhondda was also aided by the fact that no Liberal candidate ever stood against Mabon after his election in 1885 until his death in 1922.

The direct threat of the Labour Party to Welsh Liberalism took a while arriving. In 1900 there were just two direct contests between Liberals and the Independent Labour Party, in the Gower and in Merthyr Tydfil. Keir Hardie was elected in Merthyr Tydfil but John Hodge in the Gower did not gain enough support even from his own party during the election to beat the Liberal candidate.¹⁵ For a while after this, direct competition between Liberals and Labour was kept to a minimum, due to the secret pact negotiated between Herbert Gladstone, the Liberal Chief Whip, and Ramsay MacDonald, Secretary of the Labour Representation Committee.

The co-operation between Labour and Liberals had the benefit for Labour of making them, after 1906, the second largest

political party in Wales.¹⁶ This cosy relationship ended in the general election of January 1910, when the Lib-Labs became fully-fledged Labour candidates as a result of the Miners’ Federation affiliating to the Labour Party. In the elections of 1910, however, the legacy of the electoral pact still held sway, and only a few seats, such as Gower, Swansea Town and Mid-Glamorgan, saw direct Labour – Liberal contests in the December 1910 election. In these seats, with the exception of the Gower, the Liberals secured substantial majorities over their Labour opponents. This was, however, to be the last election in which the pact or its legacy held sway. By 1912, even in Merthyr Tydfil, where Lib-Labs had worked so well together, plans were afoot to end the pact. As the next election was on the horizon the Merthyr Liberals abandoned the unofficial electoral agreement not to stand a candidate against Keir Hardie.

The Welsh working-class tradition of voting Liberal aided by the Liberals embracing some socialist ideals in welfare policy enabled Liberalism to remain firmly in control of the electoral situation prior to the First World War (see Table 2). Only five seats were technically lost to Labour by the Liberals at the time of the

December general election of 1910 (see Table 3), and only in the Merthyr Tydfil and Gower seats were these losses not the result of Lib-Labs transferring fully over to the Labour Party. In December 1910 the Liberals still held as many seats as they had in 1900, and with the exception of Radnor all had majorities of close to 10 per cent or more. Despite this Liberal command of the Welsh political scene the seeds had been sown for Labour’s political growth. Their growth was now to be rapid and in the next decade they would challenge the Liberals directly for the political dominance of Wales.

2) *The First World War and the inability of Welsh Liberals to adjust to the competition from socialism*

The First World War had a dramatic impact on Welsh Liberal fortunes. Many of the Liberal pacifists and idealists left the party forever over issues related to the war. Later on the party split between those who supported Prime Minister David Lloyd George and those who stayed with former Prime Minister H. H. Asquith. Wales stayed firmly in the Lloyd George camp, due mainly to his own personal dominance and background in Welsh Liberalism. Such was Lloyd George’s supremacy in Wales that

Table 2: The Welsh Liberals’ electoral record 1900–10

Election year	Percentage of Welsh seats won	Percentage of votes	Percentage of seats contested
1900*	77	53.4	97
1906*	97	52.5	100
1910 (Jan)	79	51.1	88
1910 (Dec)	76	47.6	91

* Includes Lib-Labs

Table 3: Liberal losses to Labour 1900–10

Seat	Year of Loss	Reason
Merthyr Tydfil (first seat)	1900	Won by Independent Labour Candidate
Glamorgan South	1910 (Jan)	Lib-Lab became Labour
Glamorgan Rhondda	1910 (Jan)	Lib-Lab became Labour
Gower	1906	Won by Lib-Lab candidate over Liberal
Monmouthshire West	1910 (Jan)	Lib-Lab became Labour

THE SLOW DEATH OF LIBERAL WALES 1906 – 1979

when Asquith's post-1924 general election committee, chaired by Sir Donald Maclean, went across Britain hearing complaints and gathering suggestions to restore Liberalism, its efforts to penetrate Wales were rebuffed by Lloyd George. Maclean was simply informed that the Welsh could sort out their own house without outside interference.¹⁷ Similarly, when Asquith lost his own seat in 1924 and was offered the possibility of a safe seat in Wales he declared to C.F.G. Masterman that 'I'd sooner go to hell than Wales'.¹⁸

Only a few Welsh MPs such as Llewellyn Williams (Carmarthen Boroughs) and David Davies (Montgomery), who had fallen out with Lloyd George during the war, did not follow him into coalition with the Conservatives. Others who had crossed Lloyd George found themselves denied the Coalition 'Coupon' during the general election of 1918. One instance concerned the twin constituencies of Arfon and Eifion, which were being merged into a single constituency of Caer-nafonshire (county). The Arfon MP, Caradog Rees, stood down allowing the Eifion MP Ellis W. Davies to be adopted as the new Liberal candidate. Lloyd George, however, was totally opposed to Davies and instead gave the 'Coupon' to his supporter C.E. Breeze. Davies consequently then stood as an Independent Liberal and came third to Breeze with Labour coming second.¹⁹ This Lloyd George-inspired bitterness continued to lead to internal Liberal party feuds in Wales, including the infamous Cardigan 1921 by-election where Liberal fought Liberal as the only candidates in the contest.

The advance of socialism, however, proved in the short term to be a greater threat to Liberals in industrial Wales than disunity within their own ranks. The miners' trade union leaders distanced themselves from the Lib-Lab party of Mabon with its close links to Liberalism.

They moved on to syndicalism and then to communism as their ideology,²⁰ something which Liberalism could never endorse. With the electoral pacts over, the 1918 'Coupon' election saw the Labour Party take almost a third of the seats in Wales, whilst the Coalition Liberals took just over half. In the next general election (1922) the position was reversed, with Labour now holding more than half the seats. Even when the Liberals contested virtually every seat in Wales in 1929 they failed to gain more than a third of the Welsh vote (see Table 4).

At the same time as Labour was advancing electorally the Welsh Constituency Liberal Associations, especially in the industrial south, were collapsing entirely or at the best becoming inactive shadows of their former selves, as Liberal activists drifted over to the Labour camp. As the historian C.P. Cook noted:²¹

Many constituencies on the eve of the 1923 election presented a dismal sight: thus, in November 1923 the Cardiff Liberals possessed no agent, no executive and no offices within the city. At Merthyr, the Liberal organisation had collapsed; it was equally non-existent at Newport. In Abertillery neither Liberal nor Conservative had done any propaganda work in the last twelve months. Likewise, nothing had been heard of the Liberals in the Bedwelty division; although Bedwelty produced an eleventh-hour Liberal in 1923, none had appeared in the constituency before then.

Whilst Liberalism in South Wales was disappearing a new generation of Welsh politicians was emerging. *Cymru Fydd*²² had produced a group of radical Welsh Liberal MPs of whom Lloyd George was the most prominent. A generation later, young miners, railwaymen and steelworkers were studying at a new centre of political change, the Labour College (1919–28). They embraced the view of the Welsh MP Keir Hardie, who believed that the Celtic nations of Britain 'were peculiarly suited to a socialist form of society'.²³ These new 'Red Radicals' cited the Welsh co-operative pioneer Robert Owen and his disciple R. J. Derfel, the apostle of community socialism, as inspirations to their own socialism.²⁴ The radical Welsh Liberal MPs such as Tom Ellis, David Lloyd George and Frank Edwards were also seen as models for this new breed of politicians.²⁵ The new 'Red Radicals', including James Griffiths,²⁶ Idris Cox,²⁷ Ness Edwards,²⁸ Aneurin Bevan²⁹ and Morgan Phillips,³⁰ were to play as important a part in shaping the Labour Party as Sir William Harcourt, David Lloyd George and Clement Davies did the Liberal Party.

Initially these 'Red Radicals' in the Labour Party came from outside the Liberal movement. Over time, however, they were to be joined by those who left the Liberal movement itself. One of the first defections was that of the Liberal radical nationalist MP of pre-war years, E. T. John (East Denbighshire). John was a

Table 4: The Welsh Liberals' electoral record 1918–29

Election year	Percentage of Welsh seats won	Percentage of votes	Percentage of seats contested
1918 (Coalition)	53	39.3	61
1918 (Liberals)	6	9.7	25
1922 (Coalition)	25	26.7	58
1922 (Liberals)	6	7.6	33
1923 Liberals*	33	36.9	89
1924 Liberals	31	31.1	69
1929 Liberals	27	33.6	97

* Includes one Independent Liberal win in Ceredigion

Table 5: Liberal losses to socialism and the consequences of the break-up of coalition government

Seat	Year of Loss	Seat	Year of Loss
Aberavon	1922	Llanelli	1922
Aberdare	1918	Merthyr Tydfil	1922
Abertillery	1918	Neath	1922
Anglesey	1918 (1)	Newport	1922 (by-election)
Bedwellte	1918	Pontypool	1918
Caerphilly	1918	Pontypridd	1922 (byelection)
Carnarfonshire	1922 (2)	Swansea East	1922
Ebbw Vale	1918	Wrexham (3)	1922

(1) Regained by the Liberals 1923 – 1951

(2) Regained by the Liberals 1923 – 1945

(3) Regained by the Liberals 1924 – 1929, 1931 – 1935

passionate Liberal Welsh nationalist who then became a Labour Welsh nationalist – the prototype for the Labour Welsh nationalist candidates whom a generation later would defeat the North West Wales Liberal MPs.

A generation on from E.T. John one of these Labour-defeated Liberal MPs in turn defected to the Labour Party, in what was perhaps the most damaging blow ever to occur to North Wales Liberal fortunes. On 26 April 1955, amongst much publicity, Megan Lloyd George announced her conversion to the Labour Party. Megan had always insisted she was a ‘radical’. She, together with her fellow Welsh radical, Emrys Roberts, and every other Parliamentary Liberal radical, had lost their seats by 1951. As the electorate no longer seemed ready to endorse any Liberal radical MP for a place at Westminster, for Megan and some other Liberal radicals, joining Labour was no longer a problem. She declared that: ‘in the changed situation of today it is only in the Labour Party that I can be true to the radical position’.³¹

With the Welsh Liberal radicals removed, the Welsh Liberal Party came under the control of those who had little time for socialism. The Reverend W.F. Phillips, part of Liberal nonconformity, had summed up their thoughts about Labour and socialism in 1913:

What is Socialism? Socialism is a social revolution which is to

unseat the King, to destroy the family, to deny individuals their freedom, and to expel God from his creation and His Son from the life of humanity.³²

Even up until the mid 1960s many remaining Welsh Liberals continued to regard ‘Socialism as akin to Satanism’.³³

The Liberals failed to compete with the radical and revolutionary appeal of Labour had to the working classes. Many of the working-class voters in South and North Wales had come in from England and had little connection with the Chapel or much sympathy for Welsh nationalism and its aspirations. Whilst Liberalism offered incremental change, Labour offered the revolutionary quick fix. The miners and steelworkers were in the mood for a revolutionary change, which their leaders saw as taking place either through Communist revolution or at the very least the Labour Party. At the same time Labour built up its campaigning presence in all Welsh constituencies.³⁴ As a result the working-class vote was increasingly sucked into Labour’s grasp. Even knowing how to behave with their former political allies was a dilemma for Welsh Liberals. On 22 April 1924, Lloyd George summed up the dilemma to his Caernarfonshire constituents when he said:

If we dare to criticise the Labour Government then we are visited

with ‘peevish resentment’. Liberals are expected to be the oxen to drag Labour over the rough roads of Parliament for two or three years, and at the end of the journey, when there is no further use of us, we are to be slaughtered.³⁵

Sir Alfred Mond wrote to Lloyd George in 1923 that Labour was coming to regard the South Wales coalfields as ‘the Eldorado of their Utopian hopes’.³⁶ Lloyd George’s attempts deal with socialism was to try to radicalise Liberal policy through his rural and industrial policies, the Yellow and Green Books. This did not, however, result in success at the ballot box and only succeeded in driving Sir Alfred Mond (Carmarthen) and other anti-socialist elements of his own Welsh party directly into the arms of the Conservatives or, later on, to the National Liberals.

The legacy of the First World War, the rise of socialism and the collapse of the coalition government helped the Liberals lose a massive sixteen seats in Wales (see Table 5). The Labour leader James Ramsay MacDonald’s victory in Aberavon in 1922 was symbolic of the passing of South Wales from Liberal into Labour hands. Here he pushed the Coalition Liberals, who had previously held the seat, into third place behind the Conservatives. Whilst some of those seats lost in 1922, such as Anglesey, Carnarfonshire and Swansea East, were regained again, most were not.

THE SLOW DEATH OF LIBERAL WALES 1906 – 1979

3) *The splits within the Liberal Party and the failure of the Welsh party machine*

After the impact of the Labour Party on Liberal electoral fortunes, continued and new splits within the Liberal Party were to help remove a substantial number of the Liberals' remaining seats. The first major divide, between Asquithian and Lloyd Georgite Liberals, did not cause much of a problem in Wales, and ended in 1923.³⁷ Eight years later a new civil war, with more severe repercussions, broke out, as the 1929–31 MacDonald Labour government broke up over the problems caused by the Great Depression. The problems of whether to support socialism or seek to defeat it split the right of the Liberal Party from the left in Wales and elsewhere. In September 1931, Sir John Simon left the party with nineteen other right-wing Liberals. A further split between Lloyd George and the remaining Liberals who followed Sir Herbert Samuel, led to three Liberal factions fighting the 1931 general election, though in Wales all the Liberal factions combined only fought 20 of the 36 seats (they had fought 35 as a combined party in 1929).

Across Wales the splits between the Simonites, who now stood as Liberal Nationals, and the Samuelites, who stood as Liberals, was to cause havoc in the Liberal Associations. The leading North Wales Liberal and friend of Lloyd George, Thomas Waterhouse, stated that in Flintshire:

We have too many Whigs left in the Liberal Party. We want a radical programme and to go forward with courage. The great word 'Liberal' has been prostituted by men like Sir John Simon with their 'Liberal Nationals'. The Liberal Nationals were out to destroy the Liberal Party. Their intention at the next election is secured with Conservative votes. To-day we are fighting from within the party to Radicalise it ... we want rid of all the Liberal

Nationals first, and all the Whigish element afterwards, and the sooner they go the better.³⁸

Both the Flintshire Liberals and other North Wales Liberal Executives, such as Denbighshire, refused to endorse the Liberal National candidates. Apart from the fall in the number of contested seats, however, the civil war of the 1931 general election had no immediate impact; there were no Liberal National – Liberal contests in Wales. In 1935, however, splits opened up in Welsh Liberalism which would never be healed. One example was in Denbigh where the Liberal National Dr J.H. Morris Jones wrote of the selection:

The Liberal feud in Denbigh intensified ... After a boisterous two hours' meeting my friend (former Denbigh Coalition Liberal MP John Cledwyn (J.C.) Davies) was adopted as the Liberal candidate by sixty-six against forty-two. When the atmosphere had become a little calmer, I said: 'The vote has gone against me in this room. I shall now appeal to the electors.' All my forty-two supporters, including the Chairman, my agent, Mr Sydney Watkins, and other officers remained behind. We formed ourselves into an Election Committee. The fight was on. The Conservatives meeting the next day unanimously endorsed my candidature.³⁹

Morris-Jones won his Denbigh seat with a 5043 (14.5 per cent) majority over Davies. Three other Welsh Liberal Nationals – Frederick Llewellyn-Jones (Flintshire), Lewis Jones (Swansea West) and Clement Davies (Montgomeryshire) – won their seats without Liberal opposition. Only Montgomeryshire eventually returned to the Liberal fold. Flintshire was finally lost when the Liberal Party Constituency Executive fell out with the popular incumbent MP Llewellyn-Jones over his decision to join the Liberal Nationals,

only to reunite with him again but too late for his reselection in the 1935 general election; the Conservatives then won the seat. Lewis Jones stayed at Westminster for another decade, but in 1945 he lost his Swansea West seat and failed to regain it in 1950. Jones therefore became the last 'Liberal' MP for a seat in South Wales until Jenny Willot gained Cardiff Central in the May 2005 general election.

Clashes between Liberals and Liberal Nationals proved to be the most destructive for the post-war Liberal Party in Denbigh. As noted earlier, Morris-Jones beat the Liberal candidate by 5043 votes in 1935, as the Conservative vote went directly to him – an outcome which was repeated in 1945, when Morris-Jones beat the Liberal candidate E.H. Garner Evans into second place. At the next election Garner Evans himself defected to the Liberal Nationals and Conservatives and beat the Liberal Glyn Tegai Hughes by just 1209 votes (2.7 per cent). This close contest made Denbigh the only National Liberal⁴⁰ – Liberal marginal seat in the country. Right up until the general election of 1959 the National Liberal and Conservative candidate in Denbigh was able to take enough Liberal votes to ensure that they could not reclaim their former seat. Until its demise in the boundary changes of 1983 Denbigh remained the best example of the Welsh Liberal phoenix refusing to rise from the ashes of North Wales Liberalism.

There was to be one further footnote to the Liberal Nationals' toll of Welsh Liberal seats. In 1945 Gwilym Lloyd George (Pembroke) stood as a 'Liberal National and Conservative' and did not leave the wartime coalition government, like his fellow Liberal and Labour MPs. Although Gwilym continued to receive copies of the Liberal whip until 1946 and fought under the 'Liberal and Conservative' banner in 1950, with a great emphasis on the 'Liberal' part of

After the impact of the Labour Party on Liberal electoral fortunes, continued and new splits within the Liberal Party were to help remove a substantial number of the Liberals' remaining seats.

Table 6: The Welsh Liberals' electoral record 1935–50

Election year	Percentage of Welsh seats won	Percentage of votes	Percentage of seats contested
1931 (Coalition)	11	6.9	11
1931 (Liberals)	11	14.6	31
1931 (Lloyd George)	11	6.6	11
1935 (Liberal National)	8.3	4.1	8.3
1935 (Liberals)	19.4	18.3	36
1945 (Liberals)	19.4	15.2	48
1945 (Liberal National)	8.3	4.8	11
1950 (Liberals)	14	12.6	58
1950 (National Liberal and Conservative)	2.7	6.4	17

Table 7: Liberal losses to splits or defections within the party

Seat	Year of Loss	Reason
University of Wales	1923 (1)	Two Liberal factions split the vote – Labour wins the seat
Cardigan	1923 (2)	Independent Liberal wins seat
Carmarthen	1926 (3)	Liberal defects to Conservatives
Pembroke	1945	Liberal defects to Liberal National
Denbigh	1931	Liberal National wins seat
Flint	1931	Liberal National wins seat
Montgomery	1931 (4)	Liberal National wins seat
Swansea West	1931	Liberal National wins seat
Carmarthen	1957	Liberal defector to Labour wins seat

(1) Regained by Liberals 1924–50

(2) Independent Liberal became Liberal 1924–66, 1974–92, 2005 – present

(3) Regained by Liberals 1931–35, 1945–57

(4) Liberal National becomes Liberal 1942–79, 1983 – present

his nomination, he never again attended a Liberal parliamentary meeting.⁴¹ Another Welsh constituency had been lost to Welsh Liberalism. In 1938 his father had predicted that 'Gwilym will go to the right and Megan to the left',⁴² and just a few months after his own death this prophecy was beginning to come true.

The Liberals lost nine seats in Wales as a direct result of splits within the party (see Table 7). Although seats like Cardigan, Carmarthen, Montgomery and the University of Wales would come back into the fold, the others would not.

One additional factor involving divisions within the party needs to be touched upon – the divide between the North and South Wales Liberal Federation which continued from their foundation in the late 1880s to their dissolution in 1966. In the

1890s the South Wales Federation rejected the opportunity to unite with the North Wales Federation as one mass Welsh party under *Cymru Fydd*. After this rejection there was little trust between the two federations and although they were nominally under the Welsh Liberal Council, and then the Liberal Party of Wales' umbrella, both went their separate ways on matters of policy and campaigning. Both federations would issue contradictory statements and policies throughout their existence, much to the frustration of Welsh Liberal MPs. The South was also particularly reluctant to put forward candidates in elections, preferring instead to bide its time for the 'right candidate or right moment' on which to spend its sparse resources.⁴³

As a result of rivalries and poor electoral ambitions, in 1959 the Liberals contested under a quarter

of the Welsh seats; in 1964 this proportion went up to one third, but it fell back again in 1966 to just over a quarter. In contrast to the Liberals, in 1966, Labour and the Conservatives were now contesting all Welsh seats, and even Plaid Cymru fought over half. Such a poor record of electoral competition, combined with the loss of Cardigan in the general election of 1966 and the failure once again to regain Carmarthen in the 1966 by-election, spurred the remaining Liberals to end the reign of the Welsh Federations, and they were united together under the federal Welsh Liberal Party banner in September 1966. Although this did not end internal party differences, it did make them considerably less public and helped bring the number of Welsh Liberal candidates for the 1970 general election up to just over 50 per cent.

4) *The arrival of Plaid Cymru and the withering away of the remaining Welsh Liberals*

In 1931 eight Welsh Liberal MPs (other than Liberal Nationals) remained. Four Samuelites were elected: R. T. Evans (Carmarthen), Rhys Hopkin Morris (Cardigan), Ernest Evans (University of Wales) and H. Hadyn Jones (Meirionnydd). Of these seats, the University of Wales seat was to stay with the Liberals until its abolition in 1950. Carmarthen, Meirionnydd and eventually Cardigan were to fall to Labour and later on to Plaid Cymru. The loss of seats in Carmarthen and Cardigan was aided by the withdrawal of the Conservative agreement not to contest these seats, which channelled anti-socialist votes back to the Conservatives.

The rise of Plaid Cymru posed something of a puzzle to Welsh Liberals. In the late nineteenth century the leading Welsh Liberal MP Henry Richard had seen Liberalism and Welsh nationalism as going hand in hand. As K.O. Morgan noted: 'To a marked degree, Liberalism and nationalism were fused, and in a real sense

THE SLOW DEATH OF LIBERAL WALES 1906 – 1979

Table 8: Welsh Liberal seats lost to Labour due to the ending of two-party contests which in turn fell to Plaid Cymru

Seat	Year of loss	Fell to Labour	Fell to Plaid Cymru
Anglesey	1951	1951 (1)	1987 (2)
Caernarfon Boroughs	1945	1945	1974
Cardigan	1966 (3)	1959	1992
Carmarthen	1957	1957	1966
Merionnydd	1951	1951	1974

(1) Fell to Conservatives in 1979

(2) Regained by Labour at Westminster in 2001 but held by Plaid Cymru in the Welsh Assembly election of 2003

(3) Regained by Liberals 1974–92 and 2005

Table 9 : In these seats Welsh Liberals lost due to the ending of two-party contests

Seat	Year of loss	End of two-party contest or unopposed seat
Cardiff East	1922	1910 (January)
Swansea West	1923 (1)	1910 (December)
Flint	1924 (2)	1924
Brecon and Radnor	1924 (3)	1924
Pembroke	1924 (4)	1923
Montgomeryshire	1979 (5)	1951

(1) Regained by Liberals 1924–29, Liberal Nationals 1931–45

(2) Regained by Liberals 1929–31, Liberal Nationals 1931–45

(3) Regained by Liberals 1985–92, 1997 – present

(4) Regained by Liberals 1929–50

(5) Regained by Liberals 1983–present

Table 10: The Welsh Liberals' electoral record 1951–79

Election year	Percentage of seats won	Percentage of votes	Percentage of seats contested
1951 (Liberal National and Conservative)	3	3.3	6
1951 (Liberals)	8	7.7	25
1955 (Liberals)	8	7.3	27
1955 (Liberal National and Conservative)	3	3.2	11
1959 (Liberals)	6	5.3	22
1959 (Liberal National and Conservative)	3	3	8.3
1964 (Liberals)	6	7.3	33
1966 (Liberals)	3	6.3	28
1970 (Liberals)	3	6.8	53
1974 (Liberals) [Feb]	6	16	86
1974 (Liberals) [Oct]	6	15.5	100
1979 (Liberals)	3	10.6	78

the Liberals were the party of Wales and the reason for its growing national consciousness'.⁴⁴

Liberals therefore felt initially that Plaid Cymru was a benign force, which followed the same course of the nationalism they

had followed for generations.⁴⁵ There were even some attempts to form a Liberal – Plaid Cymru alliance in the late 1950s and 1960s.⁴⁶ As Plaid contested more seats in Welsh-speaking Wales their presence began to cause

more concern and they became much more of a perceived threat to the Liberal vote. When Plaid Cymru's Gwynfor Evans contested Meirionnydd in 1945 he gained 2448 votes (10.8 per cent), more than twenty times the newly elected Liberal MP Emrys Roberts' 112 (0.4 per cent) vote majority. At the time, Liberals viewed Plaid Cymru's votes as coming straight off their own, and when Plaid failed to stand in seats it was felt that their vote would automatically go to the Liberals. Welsh Liberals, after all, also had a pedigree as a 'Welsh Nationalist Party' and were at the heart of Welsh political movements such as the Campaign for a Welsh Parliament. In 1951 Plaid Cymru did not stand in Meirionnydd but the Liberal MP Emrys Roberts still lost the seat to Labour. The Plaid vote went directly to Labour as nationalist voters supported a socialist Labour Party rather than a nationalist Liberal Party. After the election Jo Grimond wrote to Emrys Roberts: 'I thought that with no nationalist standing you were safe. It seems to have been a most cruel stroke that Labour should have gained the votes.'⁴⁷ One Liberal member, however, laid the blame for the defeat directly at the Liberal Party's own door:

It's all very well blaming Plaid Cymru, but the truth is that we have not kept our organisation in order. We did less work than any other parties between elections and therefore a lot of blame should be placed on the Liberals of Meirionnydd, myself included.⁴⁸

The Liberals pulled themselves together in Meirionnydd and for the next three elections were within a whisper of taking the seat from Labour. In the 1970 general election Plaid Cymru's Dafydd Wigley took the second position, ahead of the Liberals, followed in 1974 by Dafydd Elis Thomas taking the seat for Plaid Cymru. The Liberal opportunity

in Meirionnydd disappeared forever with Thomas's victory.

Ironically, it was events in Meirionnydd that were also to cost the Liberals their seat in Cardigan. Towards the end of 1964 Elystan Morgan, who had previously stood for Plaid Cymru, defected to the Labour Party. The Liberals viewed his departure from Merionnydd as an indication that Plaid would not stand at the next election, giving them a chance to gain Plaid votes and retake the seat.⁴⁹ Plaid did find another candidate, however, and the defector Morgan went instead to contest Cardigan as the Labour candidate. Here the Liberal MP Roderic Bowen had fallen out with his parliamentary colleagues over whether he should become the Speaker. He had been grooming himself for this position for a number of years, which only added to his constituency reputation as something of an 'absentee landlord' MP; by 1964 he had reduced the former Liberal stronghold to a Liberal – Labour marginal.⁵⁰ Elystan Morgan was to remove Bowen from political life for good by 523 votes (1.7 per cent) in 1966. Although eight years later the 'Welsh Nationalist' Liberal Geraint Howells was to win the seat back from Labour it was once again lost in 1992, this time to Plaid Cymru. The seat remained a two-party competition between Plaid Cymru and the Liberal Democrats – the only such former Liberal seat in Welsh-speaking Wales to do so – and was regained for Liberalism by Mark Williams in 2005.

Three other Liberal MPs held seats in Welsh-speaking Wales as members of the Lloyd George 'family group' in 1931: David (Caernarfon Boroughs) Megan (Anglesey) and Major Goronwy Owen (Caernarfon), who had married Gwilym's sister-in-law. Caernarfon Boroughs and Caernarfon were lost in 1945 and Anglesey in 1951. In these seats, or their successor seats, within a decade of their loss the Liberals were no longer able to mount an effec-

tive challenge to Labour. In time all these seats were to fall to Plaid Cymru.⁵¹ For a time there seemed a chance of regaining Conwy, where the Welsh-speaking 'Welsh Nationalist' Liberal candidate, the Reverend Roger Roberts, pulled the Liberals firmly into second position behind the Conservatives between 1983 and 1992. In the event, however, the seat was to fall to Labour at the general election of 1997 and to Plaid Cymru at the Assembly election of 1999, which ironically repeated the pattern of the Liberals' fate in all their Welsh-speaking seats (see Table 8).

Another problem for Welsh Liberals was that their core vote was quickly weakened by multi-party competition; the greater the competition the greater the dissolution of the Liberal vote. Some Liberal seats fell as soon as they were exposed to more than one other political party (see Tables 8 and 9). Anglesey, for instance, was won by a 1081 (4.4 per cent) majority in 1945; the 1950 election saw the intervention of the Conservatives with the Liberals still holding on, but the 1951 election saw a doubling of the Conservative vote in the seat and its loss by the Liberals to Labour. The pattern was repeated again and again in Wales; Liberals did not have enough loyal voters to sustain them in three- or four-party competitions. It was not until the 1970s that the Welsh Liberal vote began to rise again (see Table 10).

Conclusions

Liberal Wales was important to the British Liberal Party as a whole because for a long while it represented one of the most solid bastions of Liberal support. At various times it also helped provide the party's parliamentary leadership. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, although the Liberals had all but abandoned industrial South Wales, there was the hope that Liberal Wales would once again return if only in the North

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and West. This was not to occur, though Meirionnydd, Denbigh and Wrexham frequently became near-misses at general elections.

At the general election of 1966, with the loss of Cardigan, the Welsh Liberals were reduced to just one seat, Montgomeryshire. One effect of this, however, was an attempt, in September 1966, to revitalise the old Liberal Party of Wales. The feuding North and South Wales Liberal Federations were dissolved and merged into the Welsh Liberal Party. In the decades that followed the Welsh Liberals continued to fight desperately to save their party from political annihilation. Then, in 1974, the Liberals regained Cardigan, their first successful electoral fightback since 1945. In 1979, Montgomeryshire, the last Liberal seat to remain constantly in Liberal hands since 1906, fell to the Conservatives;⁵² once more the Liberals were reduced to just one seat, Cardigan. But they still retained a foothold in Wales.

Welsh Liberalism had once seemed indomitable, and indeed it was the only area of the United Kingdom where it was not totally extinguished in the twentieth century. Over the course of three-quarters of a century, 1906–79, the Welsh Liberals were squeezed between the rising tides of socialism in the form of Labour, Welsh Nationalism in the form of Plaid Cymru and the varying fortunes of the Conservatives in Wales. Internal feuds which took the anti-socialist Liberals off into the National Liberals and Conservatives further undermined the party. That it survived at all was due partially to the ability of Welsh Liberal barrister MPs, such as Alex Carlile, Clement Davies and Emlyn Hooson personally to support the Welsh party. It was also down to other politicians and Welsh party organisers, including Geraint Howells, Martin Thomas, Roger Roberts and Richard Livesey, who were cultured in the values of Liberalism and did not seek another political party to fulfil their own aspirations.⁵³ In turn

they were able to pass the Liberal baton on to a new generation of Liberal Democrat politicians who have helped to stave off the threat of imminent electoral extinction more effectively and, in 2005, to produce something of a mini-Liberal revival in the Westminster elections.⁵⁴

The decline of Welsh fortunes saw the leadership of the party pass from Wales to Scotland in the form of Jo Grimond, David Steel and Charles Kennedy, and to the West Country, in Jeremy Thorpe and Paddy Ashdown. This only highlighted the successful revival of Liberal fortunes outside Wales. The Liberal Wales of Lloyd George had indeed faded but it took three-quarters of a century to do so, far slower than anywhere else. It provided Welsh political history with the spectacle of – the slow death of Liberal Wales.⁵⁵

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The Liberal Wales of Lloyd George had indeed faded but it took three-quarters of a century to do so, far slower than anywhere else.

1 The one MP in Wales who did not take the Liberal whip, Keir Hardie, was in a two-member constituency, Merthyr Tydfil; the other member, David Alfred Thomas, was a Liberal MP.
 2 Cited in Alan Watkins, *The Liberal Dilemma* (MacGibbon and Kee, 1966), p. 57.
 3 Kenneth O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation, Wales 1880-1980* (Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 52.
 4 Graham V. Nemes, 'Stuart Rendel and Welsh Liberal Political Organisation in the Late Nineteenth Century', *Welsh History Review*, Vol 9, No 4, December 1979, p. 467.
 5 Hywel D. Davies, *The Welsh Nationalist Party: A Call to Nationhood* (University of Wales Press, 1983), p. 3.
 6 Kenneth O. Morgan, *Lloyd George, Family Letters 1885-1936* (University of Wales Press, Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 13.
 7 Kenneth O Morgan, *The Age of Lloyd George: The Liberal Party and British*

Politics, 1890-1929, George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1971), p. 119.
 8 Martin Thomas contested Wrexham five times. A founder of the Welsh Liberal Party in 1966, he held many posts in the Welsh Liberal and Federal Liberal Party. He was ennobled Lord Thomas of Gresford in 1996.
 9 Recorder at Crown Courts in Merthyr, Swansea and Cardiff. He was a passionate devolutionist and served on the Kilibrandon Commission which recommended a Parliament for Wales. He twice contested Carmarthen and then Denbigh, coming second all three times.
 10 Barrister and first Counsel-General of the National Assembly for Wales, contested Anglesey in 1970, led the general election campaigns in Wales for the Welsh Liberals in 1974 and 1979 and was a leading light in the Welsh Liberal Summer Schools.
 11 Lord Livsey and Lord Roberts being the exceptions.
 12 Lords Hooson and Thomas to author.
 13 William Abraham adopted the bardic name of Gwilym Mabon in 1869; he was subsequently known by the surname of Mabon.
 14 Kenneth O. Morgan, *Wales In British Politics 1868-1922* (University of Wales Press, 1980), p. 187.
 15 Eddie May, 'The Mosaic of Labour Politics, 1900-1918' in Duncan Tanner et al, *Labour Party in Wales 1900-2000* (University of Wales Press, 2000), p. 74.
 16 Ibid.
 17 Trevor Wilson, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party 1914-1935* (Collins, 1968), p. 318.
 18 Roy Jenkins, *Asquith* (Collins, 1964), p. 505.
 19 Cyril Parry, 'Gwynedd Politics, 1900-1920: The Rise of a Labour Party', *Welsh History Review*, Vol. 4, No.2 (1968) pp. 313-28.
 20 Davies, *The Welsh Nationalist Party: A Call to Nationhood*, p. 12.
 21 C. P. Cook, 'Wales and the General Election of 1923', *Welsh History Review*, Vol 4, No 2 (1968), p. 392.
 22 The Welsh Nationalist movement of the 1880s and 1890s that had almost united the Welsh nation under one nationalist Liberal political banner but had ended in failure and the decline in nationalist fervour for several generations.
 23 Davies, *The Welsh Nationalist Party: A Call to Nationhood*, p.10.
 24 Tanner, D, Williams, C and Hopkins, D, *The Labour Party in Wales 1900 - 2000*, University of Wales Press, 2000
 25 Ibid.
 26 MP for Llanelli, Member of the Attlee Government (1945-51) and the Wilson Government (1964-66), first Secretary of State for Wales.
 27 Editor of the *Daily Worker* 1935-37.
 28 MP for Caerphilly, Member of Attlee Government (1945-51).

29 MP for Tredegar, founder of the National Health Service and Member of Attlee Government (1945-51), hero of many Labour Socialists.
 30 General Secretary of the Labour Party 1944-62.
 31 Watkins, *The Liberal Dilemma*, p. 75.
 32 W.F Phillips, *Y Draig Goch Ynte'r Faner Goch* (Cardiff, 1913), p. 16.
 33 Glyn Tegai Hughes, Lord Hooson and Lord Thomas to author.
 34 Parry, 'Gwynedd Politics, 1900-1920: The Rise of a Labour Party'.
 35 Frank Owen, *Tempestuous Journey: Lloyd George His Life and Times* (Hutchinson, 1954), p. 678.
 36 Morgan, *Lloyd George, Family Letters 1885-1936*, p. 304.
 37 Only two Liberal seats were lost as result of the two Liberal factions splitting the vote: the University of Wales to Labour and Cardigan to an Independent Liberal. Both came back into the Liberal fold in 1923.
 38 Sian Jones, 'The Political Dynamics of North East Wales, with special reference to the Liberal Party 1918-1935' (Ph.D thesis, University of Bangor, 2003), p. 218.
 39 Henry Morris-Jones, *Doctor in the Whips' Room* (Robert Hale Limited, 1955), p. 100.
 40 The Liberal Nationals became the National Liberals in 1948.
 41 *Western Telegraph and Cymric Times*, 2 March 1950, p. 8; and Jorgen Scott Rasmussen, *The Liberal Party* (Constable, 1965), p. 11.
 42 Andrew Sweeting, 'Gwilym Lloyd-George', in Duncan Brack et al, *Dictionary of Liberal Biography* (Politicos, 1998), p. 239.
 43 North Wales Liberal Federation and related Liberal correspondence held at the National Library of Wales' political archives support this view again and again, as did the author's interviews with many former Liberals of the pre-1966 period.
 44 Kenneth. O Morgan, 'The New Liberalism and the Challenge of Labour: The Welsh Experience, 1885-1929', *The Welsh History Review*, June 1973, p. 290.
 45 Glyn Tegai Hughes (Chairman of the Liberal Party of Wales 1958-60) to author.
 46 Glyn Tegai Hughes and Lord Hooson to author.
 47 Andrew Edwards, 'Political Change in North-West Wales 1960-1974: The Decline of the Labour Party and the Rise of Plaid Cymru' (Ph.D thesis, Bangor University, 2002), p. 86.
 48 Ibid., p. 86.
 49 *The Liberal News* 15 October 1965, p. 7.
 50 J. Graham Jones, 'Grimond's Rival: Biography of Roderic Bowen MP', *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* 34/35, Spring/Summer 2002, pp. 26-33.
 51 Anglesey's Westminster political

history is mixed. It is the only Welsh seat to be held by all four main Welsh political parties since 1945: Liberal 1945–51, Labour 1951–83, Conservative 1983–87, Plaid Cymru 1987–2001, Labour 2001–.

52 A Liberal seat for nearly a century, and the seat of Liberal leader (1945–56) Clement Davies, 1929–62. The seat fell to the Conservatives due to two main factors: the unpopularity of the Lib–Lab Pact of 1977–78, and

Emlyn Hooson's enthusiastic backing of Welsh devolution, which proved to be an unpopular cause within the constituency – Lord Hooson to author.

53 Russell Deacon, 'Interview with Geraint Howells (1925–2004)', *Journal of Liberal History* 44, Autumn 2004, pp. 22–23.

54 The May 2005 general election saw the Welsh Liberal Democrats break out of their Powys Westminster

stronghold when they won Ceredigion and Cardiff Central. In the process they replaced Plaid Cymru as the official opposition to Labour in Wales, at Westminster. It was their best Welsh result since 1950.

55 For a post-war history of the Welsh Liberal Party also see: J. Graham Jones, 'The Liberal Party and Wales, 1945–79', *The Welsh History Review*, Vol 16, No 3, June 1993.

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.

Hubert Beaumont MP. After pursuing candidatures in his native Northumberland southward, Beaumont finally fought and won Eastbourne in 1906 as a 'Radical' (not a Liberal). How many Liberals in the election fought under this label and did they work as a group afterwards? *Lord Beaumont of Whitley, House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW; beaumontt@parliament.uk.*

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/projects/cobden). *Dr Anthony Howe, School of History, University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ; a.c.howe@uea.ac.uk.*

Cornish Methodism and Cornish political identity, 1918–1960s. Researching the relationship through oral history. *Kayleigh Milden, Institute of Cornish Studies, Hayne Corfe Centre, Sunningdale, Truro TR1 3ND; KMSMilden@aol.com.*

Liberal foreign policy in the 1930s. Focusing particularly on Liberal anti-appeasers. *Michael Kelly, 12 Collinbridge Road, Whitewell, Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim BT36 7SN; mmjkelly@msn.com.*

Liberal policy towards Austria-Hungary, 1905–16. *Andrew Gardner, 17 Upper Ramsey Walk, Canonbury, London N1 2RP; agardner@ssees.ac.uk.*

The Liberal revival 1959–64. Focusing on both political and social factors. Any personal views, relevant information or original material from Liberal voters, councillors or activists of the time would be very gratefully received. *Holly Towell, 52a Cardigan Road, Headingley, Leeds LS6 3BJ; his3ht@leeds.ac.uk.*

The rise of the Liberals in Richmond (Surrey) 1964–2002. Interested in hearing from former councillors, activists, supporters, opponents, with memories and insights concerning one of the most successful local organisations. What factors helped the Liberal Party rise from having no councillors in 1964 to 49 out of 52 seats in 1986? Any literature or news cuttings from the period welcome. *Ian Hunter, 9 Defoe Avenue, Kew, Richmond TW9 4DL; 07771 785 795; ianhunter@kew2.com.*

Liberal politics in Sussex, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight 1900–14. The study of electoral progress and subsequent disappointment. Research includes comparisons of localised political trends, issues and preferred interests as against national trends. Any information, specifically on Liberal candidates in the area in the two general elections of 1910, would be most welcome. Family papers especially appreciated. *Ian Ivatt, 84 High Street, Steyning, West Sussex BN44 3JT; ianjivatt@tinyonline.co.uk.*

Liberals and the local government of London 1919–39. *Chris Fox, 173 Worplesdon Road, Guildford GU2 6XD; christopher.fox7@virgin.net.*

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.*

Life of Wilfrid Roberts (1900–91). Roberts was Liberal MP for Cumberland North (now Penrith and the Border) from 1935 until 1950 and came from a wealthy and prominent local Liberal family; his father had been an MP. Roberts was a passionate internationalist, and was a powerful advocate for refugee children in the Spanish civil war. His parliamentary career is coterminous with the nadir of the Liberal Party. Roberts joined the Labour Party in 1956, becoming a local councillor in Carlisle and the party's candidate for the Hexham constituency in the 1959 general election. I am currently in the process of collating information on the different strands of Roberts' life and political career. Any assistance at all would be much appreciated. *John Reardon; jbreardon75@hotmail.com.*

Student radicalism at Warwick University. Particular the files affair in 1970. Interested in talking to anybody who has information about Liberal Students at Warwick in the period 1965–70 and their role in campus politics. *Ian Bradshaw, History Department, University of Warwick, CV4 7AL; I.Bradshaw@warwick.ac.uk*

Welsh Liberal Tradition – A History of the Liberal Party in Wales 1868–2003. Research spans thirteen decades of Liberal history in Wales but concentrates on the post-1966 formation of the Welsh Federal Party. Any memories and information concerning the post-1966 era or even before welcomed. The research is to be published in book form by Welsh Academic Press. *Dr Russell Deacon, Centre for Humanities, University of Wales Institute Cardiff, Cyncoed Campus, Cardiff CF23 6XD; rdeacon@uwic.ac.uk.*

Aneurin Williams and Liberal internationalism and pacificism, 1900–22. A study of this radical and pacifist MP (Plymouth 1910; North West Durham/Consett 1914–22) who was actively involved in League of Nations Movement, Armenian nationalism, international co-operation, pro-Boer etc. Any information relating to him and location of any papers/correspondence welcome. *Barry Dackombe. 32 Ashburnham Road, Ampthill, Beds, MK45 2RH; dackombe@tesco.net.*