



Parnell's realisation that Ulster was going to be the Achilles' heel of the Nationalist movement. Hence the importance of assuaging and managing public opinion through the press. This dimension to his politics is examined by Felix Larkin in an excellent chapter on the *Freeman's Journal* and Myles Dungan's work on *United Ireland*, which shed new light on areas which deserve further analysis. By contrast, the last two chapters – on the 'March of the nation' speech and the 1890 manifesto – do not add much to what we knew already, perhaps because the documents under discussion do not allow for any new in-depth analysis, but also because McCartney yields to the temptation of a rather sentimental conclusion about what the loss of Parnell meant to Ireland and how his 'sacrifice' was to no avail in terms of securing home rule. However, surely the failure of the 1893 Home Rule Bill was caused primarily by deeper and more complex

factors, such as the democratic deficit afflicting the UK at the time (the House of Lords' veto powers), and secondarily by the opposition of the Ulster Unionist minority, which neither Gladstone nor Parnell did enough to appease.

On balance this book helps to establish the case for a deep and multi-layered affinity between Liberalism and Irish Nationalism, though with all the differences which derived from each operating in a different country with a distinctive cultural make-up and economic and social priorities. That, despite the affinities and the moderation of the proposals under discussion, the two parties failed to secure home rule remains one of the greatest political tragedies in the modern history of these isles.

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relationship between self-governing units within the same sovereign state (p. 35).

Given the importance of Christianity for Victorian liberalism, the chapter on religion is also very relevant to the interests of the present journal. From Travers' account three conclusions emerge. One is the strength of Parnell's Protestantism, which for him was a source of identity and cultural attitudes and mattered more than many historians had previously assumed. The second was his refusal of sectarianism and willingness to accede to Roman Catholic demands in the field of education (the 1906 Liberal government was to follow his example when they granted a charter to the Catholic University of Dublin in 1908). And, finally, his commitment to personal liberty, exemplified by his decision to support Charles Bradlaugh, the atheist MP who refused to swear by the Bible and demanded to be allowed to take a secular oath in order to be admitted to the House of Commons. By the same token, in the last five years of his life, Parnell championed the religious freedom of the Protestant minority in a future home rule Ireland. His responsiveness to their concerns reflected also

First biography of William George

Peter Rowland, *Lloyd George's Tada – the one father he never knew!* (PublishNation, 2014)

Review by **Dr J. Graham Jones**

THE AUTHOR, a former civil servant now retired, is best known to *Journal* readers as the distinguished author of a massive single-volume biography of Lloyd George (Barrie and Jenkins, 1975), a tome whose sheer size tested the skill of the bookbinder to its limits, but which has generally stood the test of time as an authoritative, detailed study. He is also the author of two comprehensive volumes on the Liberal governments of 1905–14 and a host of other works, fiction and non-fiction alike.

Recently Peter Rowland has applied his investigative skills to perusing and recreating the life and career of William George (d. 1864), Lloyd George's father, who died prematurely while his children were still infants and his wife Betsy was pregnant for the fourth time, and hitherto rather a shadowy, elusive figure in the Lloyd George chronicles. The study has been published to mark the 150th

anniversary of his death in June 1864. Previously the only authors to devote any attention to him were Herbert du Parcq in the first volume of his multi-volume biography of Lloyd George published in 1912, and, much more recently, Dr W. R. P. George in his pioneering study *The Making of Lloyd George* (Faber, 1976).

Peter Rowland has certainly left no stone unturned in tracing the history of his hero, and has made widespread use of the William George (Solicitor) Papers purchased by the National Library of Wales in 1989 and the papers of Dr W. R. P. George donated there by his family after his death in 2006. A cause of some puzzlement, and indeed great concern, is that some of the valuable source materials used by Dr George in his researches in the 1970s seem to 'have apparently disappeared' (p. xiii). One hopes that they may some day reappear. The story

here pieced together from highly disparate sources, many of these patchy and incomplete of necessity, is amazingly fully recreated and unflinching interesting. There has been much detective work and some conjecture in recreating the life story of an elusive figure. Considerable use has been made of the census enumerators' returns for the nineteenth century.

One of the author's scoops in this book is the revelation of the existence of William George's first wife, Selina Huntley, a chronic invalid who died in December 1855 at the age of only 36 (see pp. 167–70). Her premature death, long anticipated, left her grieving husband free to remarry and thus 'probably changed the history of the world' (p. 170). There are other curious twists in this story too. William himself was, we are told, 'a heaven-sent replacement' for an older male sibling, also called William, who had died at the age of three in February 1818 (see p. 28). History repeated itself. As was known before now, David Lloyd George, born 17 January 1863, was also a 'replacement' for an older David, born to the same parents in September 1860, and who tragically survived for only twelve hours, dying from 'Suffocatio' in the language of the day, his birth and death registered at Criccieth in a single notification by the grieving father William (p. 198). Neither Lloyd George nor his brother William ever knew of the existence of their elder brother, but the family researches of Dr W. R. P. George revealed his existence to the world in 1976.

The dogged researches of Peter Rowland have unearthed so much fascinating material. There are

reasonably full accounts of William George's ancestry and family background, sparse details of his education (very little is actually known, but he may well have attended the Haverfordwest Free Grammar School), and his early occupations. The main documentary source for this period is 'a Student's Journal' in which William George kept various notes between 1839 and 1842 (see chapter 4). Its contents are listed here in appendix II (pp. 272–78). In 1840–41 William George was able to gain admission to an early training college at Battersea established by pioneering educationalist Dr James Kay where he evidently became 'the star pupil' of the day, to such an extent that he then secured a teaching appointment at the Ealing Grove School run by Lady Byron. Here, however, he was not, it would seem, 'abundantly happy', and, sadly, began to suffer from the ill health which plagued him for the rest of his days and to brood constantly on the necessity to acquire a suitable wife. In April 1843 he moved to teach at Newbold. This book includes many valuable observations on mid nineteenth-century education and opportunities in Britain.

William George's subsequent movements and the state of his health are chronicled in successive chapters. After a period of recuperation from recurrent ill health, he opened his own school at Haverfordwest in 1853, and married his first wife, the ill-fated Selina Huntley, in April 1855, a union destined to last for just eight months. Even so, William's grief was intense, his loneliness intensified to such an extent that it propelled him into departing for pastures new at

Lloyd George's Tada

- the one father he never knew!



Peter Rowland

Wakefield and then Pwllheli. His reading matter (of which a great deal is known), always close to his heart, and his evolving religious views are analysed in some detail in this study. Whereas the first wife Selina was, it would seem, 'an intelligent, resourceful woman, apparently skilled in business techniques' (p. 187), the second, Betsy Lloyd, born at Llanystumdwy, near Criccieth, in October 1828, was 'a quiet, unobtrusive lady who went about her business efficiently but whose remarks ... have gone largely unrecorded' (p. 193). Personal details about her are vague, her early life enveloped in some uncertainty. All Lloyd George enthusiasts are long familiar with an oft-published photograph of her taken in the 1890s

LIBERAL HISTORY QUIZ 2015

Answers to the questions listed on page 26

- | | | | |
|--|-------------------------|----------------|---|
| 1. Leon Brittan | 6. Ulbster | 12. Russell | 18. Asquith |
| 2. Birmingham | 7. Solihull | 13. Grey | 19. Lord Hartington, Duke of Devonshire |
| 3. Rosebery | 8. 1966 | 14. Melbourne | 20. Simon Hughes and Chris Huhne |
| 4. As a requirement of the will of his uncle in 1871 | 9. MacLennan | 15. Palmerston | |
| 5. Samuel | 10. <i>The Reformer</i> | 16. Gladstone | |
| | 11. Thorpe | 17. Davies | |

A Liberal Democrat History Group evening meeting

EUROPE: THE LIBERAL COMMITMENT

How and why did the Liberal Party, SDP and Liberal Democrats all end up as the strongest supporters of Britain's membership of the European Economic Community and its successor institutions? Has it helped or hindered the party's political achievements? Have developments in Europe since the EEC's founding Treaty of Rome in 1958 reflected the party's European faith?

In this year of a probable referendum on Britain's membership of the EU, discuss the historic Liberal commitment and record with **Sir Graham Watson** (Liberal Democrat MEP 1994–2014) and **Lord William Wallace** (Liberal Democrat Foreign Office minister in the coalition government, 2010–15). Chair: **Baroness Julie Smith**.

7.00pm, Monday 1 February 2016 (after the History Group's AGM at 6.30pm)

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

and 'showing an elderly lady in a mop-cap with a tentative smile on her lips', appearing (like so many of her generation) much older than her sixty or so years (see p. 188). But do any others exist?

Ill health compelled William to surrender his headship, and the married couple made for Highgate, Llanystumdwy, where their first child was born (and died) in 1860. Later destinations included Newchurch and then, at the express invitation of J. D. Morell, Manchester, birthplace of David Lloyd George – at 5 New York Place, Chorlton-upon-Medlock. During this period, William corresponded regularly with his brother-in-law Richard Lloyd at Llanystumdwy, his gossipy,

informative letters now constituting a rich source for the historian and biographer. But, yet again, ill health cruelly intervened, necessitating retirement from teaching and migration to Bulford in Pembrokeshire, where William George died on 7 June 1864, probably at the age of 42. 'Come, Richard' telegraphed his distraught widow Betsy within days to her brother Richard Lloyd at Highgate. Although he had previously never ventured far from home and had probably never left Caernarfonshire, the cobbler of Llanystumdwy wasted no time in travelling south to Pembrokeshire to collect his sister, pregnant with another son as it turned out (and born the following 23 February), niece and

nephew, and bring them home. The rest, as they say, is history.

Appendixes discuss the thorny question of William George's precise date of birth; cover the contents of his 'Student's Journal' [now the William George (Solicitor) Papers 7943 at the NLW]; print the text of J. D. Morell's appeal, June 1858, on behalf of the British School at Pwllheli; and provide details of the initial meeting, shrouded in some secrecy, between William George and his second wife Betsy (or Elizabeth) Lloyd, mother of David Lloyd George.

The story has been lovingly and painstakingly recreated by a master craftsman who includes every scrap of the evidence which he has collected

and discusses its broader historical significance. It reads almost like a novel. David Lloyd George did not really remember his father and knew very little about him, but he profited considerably from perusing the library of books that his father had collected and left behind. If he could have read this book, he would have understood so much more fully his roots and his origins and he would undoubtedly have respected his father's memory, and possibly the teaching profession too, much more fully.

Dr J. Graham Jones was formerly Senior Archivist and Head of the Welsh Political Archive at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

Your History Group needs you!

The Liberal Democrat History Group was set up in 1988 to promote the discussion and research of topics relating to the histories of the British Liberal Democrats and its predecessor parties, the Liberal Party and the SDP, and of liberalism more broadly. We publish the *Journal of Liberal History* and a range of books and booklets, organise regular speaker meetings, maintain a Liberal history website and provide assistance with research.

We need new people to help us run the History Group. Several of our current Committee members have served for many years and are now looking forward to a break. In addition, we aim to expand our social media presence and build up a team of bloggers to draw historical analogies to current political developments. The Committee meets about every two to three months, and much work is carried out by sub-groups (for instance on publications or on the website), which can often be done remotely.

Please consider putting your name forward for the Committee at our AGM on 1 February (see above) or volunteering for specific tasks. Contact the Chair of the History Group, Tony Little (tonylittle@cix.co.uk) if you'd like to discuss this further.