For the study of Liberal, SDP and Liberal Democrat history

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Journal of Liberal HISTORY

Madam Mayor

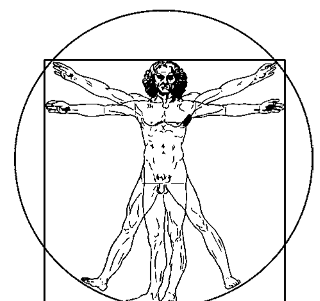
Jaime Reynolds
Madam Mayor The first wave of Liberal women in local government leadership 1918–39

Michael Meadowcroft, Roy Douglas
Coalition and the 2015 election

Graham Lippiatt
Community politics and the Liberal revival Meeting report

Neil Stockley
Catastrophe: the 2015 election campaign and its outcome Meeting report

Chris Huhne
British Liberal Leaders New History Group book reviewed



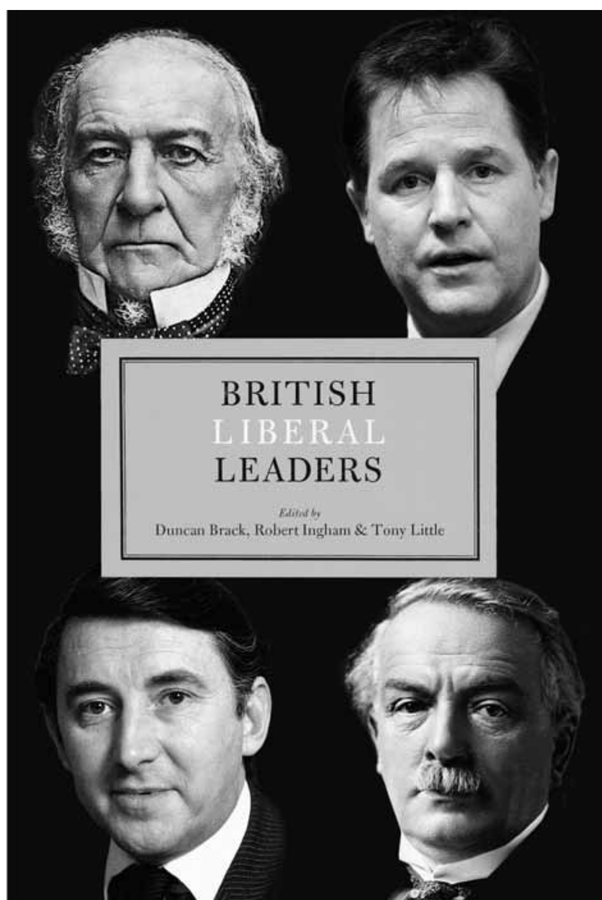
Liberal Democrat History Group

New from the Liberal Democrat History Group

British Liberal Leaders

Leaders of the Liberal Party, SDP and Liberal Democrats since 1828

Duncan Brack, Robert Ingham & Tony Little (eds.)



As the governing party of peace and reform, and then as the third party striving to keep the flame of freedom alive, the Liberal Party, the SDP and the Liberal Democrats have played a crucial role in the shaping of contemporary British society.

This book is the story of those parties' leaders, from Earl Grey, who led the Whigs through the Great Reform Act of 1832, to Nick Clegg, the first Liberal leader to enter government for more than sixty years. Chapters written by experts in Liberal history cover such towering political figures as Palmerston, Gladstone, Asquith and Lloyd George; those, such as Sinclair, Clement Davies and Grimond, who led the party during its darkest hours; and those who led its revival, including David Steel, Roy Jenkins and Paddy Ashdown. Interviews with recent leaders are included, along with analytical frameworks by which they may be judged and exclusive interviews with former leaders themselves.

'The leaders profiled in this book led the Liberal Party, SDP and Liberal Democrats through the best of times and the worst of times. Some reformed the constitution, led the assault on privilege and laid the foundations of the modern welfare state. Others kept the flame of Liberalism burning when it was all but extinguished. I am humbled to follow in their footsteps and learn from their experiences.'

Tim Farron MP, Leader of the Liberal Democrats

'Political leaders matter. They embody a party's present, while also shaping its future. This is particularly important in the values-based Liberal tradition. The essays in this book provide a fascinating guide to what it took to be a Liberal leader across two centuries of tumultuous change.'

Martin Kettle, Associate Editor, The Guardian

'Important reading for those interested in leadership and Liberal history.'

Chris Huhne, Journal of Liberal History

British Liberal Leaders is available at a special discounted price to subscribers to the *Journal of Liberal History*: £20.00 instead of the normal £25.00. Copies can be purchased:

- Via our website, **www.liberalhistory.org.uk**; or
- By sending a cheque (made out to 'Liberal Democrat History Group') to LDHG, 54 Midmoor Road, London SW12 0EN (add £3 P&P).

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Liberal Democrat History Group

The Liberal Democrat History Group promotes the discussion and research of topics relating to the histories of the Liberal Democrats, Liberal Party, and SDP, and of Liberalism. The Group organises discussion meetings and produces the *Journal of Liberal History* and other occasional publications.

For more information, including historical commentaries, details of publications, back issues of the *Journal*, and archive and other research sources, see our website at: **www.liberalhistory.org.uk**.

Chair: **Tony Little**   Honorary President: **Lord Wallace of Saltaire**

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LIBERAL HISTORY NEWS WINTER 2015–16

Shirley Williams retires

On 17 December 2015, Tom (Lord) McNally , former Leader of the Liberal Democrats in the House of Lords, wrote as follows:

Tonight, alongside other parliamentarians, I will be marking Shirley Williams' outstanding contribution to politics over the last fifty years.

Shirley has been hugely influential in our party's history. She was one of the 'Gang of Four' MPs who founded the Social Democratic Party and was its first President from 1982 until 1987.

She held positions in government, in the shadow cabinet and in the leadership of the SDP and latterly of the Lib Dems.

In 1987 she could have stayed with David Owen outside of the Liberal Democrats. Instead she threw herself with energy into the new party. Nor was her commitment only to the big platform or the major television appearances. Often on a Friday I would ask Shirley what she was doing for the weekend, to be told that she was speaking at the AGM or annual dinner of a local party which would involve a long round trip. There can be no part of the country which Shirley has not visited nor any kind of Lib Dem function, meeting or campaign event that she has not graced with her presence.

Had she stayed with Labour in 1981 she would have certainly held high office in the Blair government. Indeed, a senior Labour figure, by no means on the right of the party, once told me that Shirley was the one defector whose loss most damaged Labour. And outside of politics she had many distinguished careers open to her. Instead she chose to roll up her sleeves and do every job the party has thrown at her, working with the poor bloody infantry of politics and fighting for the things in which she believes with eloquence and passion.

We as Lib Dems should be grateful for the fact that when she had genuine opportunities to take jobs which would have given her more influence, power and prestige, she chose to stick with us and argue her case in committees, on the conference floor and in countless face-to-face meetings with both the doubters and the committed.

Tonight we will be celebrating an exceptional career, an exceptional parliamentarian and an exceptional woman. Shirley is intending to retire from the Lords early on in the New Year, so it is right that we mark her extraordinary career and a life steeped in politics.

A biography of Shirley Williams is included in the Liberal Democrat History Group's booklet, *Mothers of Liberty: Women who Built British Liberalism*. The first edition sold out at the end of last year; the second edition will be available from March. Order via our website, www.liberalhistory.org.uk.

Liberal Democrat conference September 2015

The History Group was present at the party's first post-election conference, with our exhibition stand and fringe meeting to launch our new book, *British Liberal Leaders*. Despite (or because of) the catastrophic election results, the conference saw a record turn-out of party members, and we benefited accordingly, with a significant increase in our own membership. The picture below shows Katie Hall, Party President Sal Brinton and *Journal* Editor Duncan Brack.

Former ministers give candid interviews on their time in office

Interviews with over thirty former government ministers, including the Liberal Democrat ministers Vince Cable, Chris Huhne, Jeremy Browne, Simon Hughes, Tom McNally, Lynne Featherstone, Nick Harvey, Jo Swinson and Steve Webb were published in December by the Institute for Government.

The first project of its kind, 'Ministers Reflect' records the personal reflections of each ex-minster on what it takes to be effective in office, and the challenges they faced. The politicians answer a range of questions – from the challenges of working with the Treasury, PM and special advisors, to the pressure of media scrutiny and delivering objectives – all related to effective governance.

The archive covers a diverse range of ministerial roles in office from 2010 to 2015, including Secretaries of State and Ministers of State. More will be added over the coming months and years, and the project will continue to evolve.

Peter Riddell, Director of the Institute for Government, said:

> The 'Ministers Reflect' archive highlights what it takes to be an

> effective minister, the challenges ministers face, and what more can be done to support ministers in driving forward their policy objectives. All the former ministers interviewed offered a truly candid account of their time in office. We hope that this archive will be a valuable public resource for current and future generations of political leaders, advisers, and researchers.'

Winning an election is much different than leading the country – both require very different skill sets. Yet there are few resources which can help prepare politicians who find themselves in some of the most important jobs in government.

The 'Ministers Reflect' archive sheds some light on the personal and professional challenges ministers face, from appointment to dismissal. Every interview transcript forms part of a fully searchable online archive.

Highlights include:

Vince Cable (former BIS Secretary of State) on George Osborne:

> Relations became increasingly frayed – initially they were very good and then they decayed – partly because I was increasingly disgruntled with some of the way he was pursuing economic policy. I made it clear I didn't agree with it, particularly cuts on capital investment, and he would then retaliate by being bloody minded.

Chris Huhne (former DECC Secretary of State) on the Treasury:

> The Treasury needs to be challenged far more often. It's a department that has massive problems; its staff turnover is enormous. You know, any professional organisation that has a staff turnover like the Treasury's should really be worried … One thing I wasn't going to allow was the Treasury to cut something that was going to potentially allow most of North-West England to go up in a radioactive mushroom cloud.

Jim Wallace (former Advocate-General for Scotland):

> My view was if you were the Minister of State, with a Conservative Secretary of State, and you're Lib Dem Minister of State at Department X, then you were the Lib Dem minister for that department. I know they allocate responsibilities within the department, but you were also the Lib Dem minister that should be looking at other things in that department that weren't necessarily your primary responsibility. So that if there's coalition issues, if there's a problem, you anticipated something, you could flag it up. I'm not sure that worked quite as well as it might have done; I don't think Conservative secretaries of state always necessarily recognised that our… but there were always exceptions to that. Some were astoundingly good, but others, I must say, weren't bad, they just never thought about it.

The full 'Ministers Reflect' website can be found at **www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/ministers-reflect**.

Tell us what you think

We'd like to ask your opinion on the History Group's activities, including the *Journal of Liberal History*, our meetings, publications and online presence, and ideas you may have for future activities. Please answer the questions in our short survey at: **https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LDHG2016**.

As a reward, we'll enter the name of everyone who completes the survey in a prize draw for any of the History Group's books or booklets.

On This Day …

Every day the History Group's website, Facebook page and Twitter feed carry an item of Liberal history news from the past. Below we reprint three. To see them regularly, look at **www.liberalhistory.org.uk** or **www.facebook.com/LibDemHistoryGroup** or follow us at: **LibHistoryToday**.

December

28 December 1918: 136 'Coalition' Liberals, led by Lloyd George, and 26 Liberals, led by Asquith, are returned in the famous 'Coupon Election' though Asquith himself was not. Lloyd George remained Prime Minister despite the fact the Coalition Conservatives outnumbered his own party; he would serve as Prime Minister until 1922 when his National Liberals secured just 53 seats – fewer than Asquith's Liberals who secured 62. The 1918 election was the first held since 1910, the 1915 general election not being held due to the First World War.

January

14 January 1975: Liberal leader Jeremy Thorpe makes an unexpected visit to Salisbury, Rhodesia and spends an hour with Ian Smith, the Prime Minister of the UDI regime. He also meets the leaders of the African National Congress and regional leaders in Zambia, including President Kenneth Kaunda. This is against the background of growing guerilla activity in Rhodesia and the continuing search for a constitutional settlement.

February

2 February 1970: Death, aged 97, of Bertrand Russell, 3rd Earl Russell, philosopher, writer and mathematician. He was the grandson of Liberal Prime Minister Lord John Russell, the godson of John Stuart Mill and the father of Liberal Democrat peer Conrad Russell. Russell at times described himself as a liberal, a socialist and a pacifist. Throughout his life he was a committed opponent of war, a proponent of free trade and a supporter of anti-imperialist causes. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950.

MADAM

THE FIRST WAVE OF LIBERAL WOMEN

Largely forgotten today, a remarkable group of some two to three hundred women achieved positions of significant political influence and power in British local government in the period before the Second World War. A substantial number of them were Liberals. This article examines this first generation of Liberal women pioneers, where they came to prominence, what their social and economic background was, what political outlook they had, and why there were not more of them. Their story sheds light on an important issue of women's history in Britain: how far the campaigns of the previous decades for women's political rights and participation bore fruit in the interwar period. It also teaches us much about the character of the Liberal Party at local level during the years of decline. By **Jaime Reynolds**.

Top: Ethel Colman, Annie Helme
Bottom: Florence Keynes, Juanita Phillips

Election to the office of mayor or to the aldermanic bench[1] is taken as the yardstick of achievement of influence and power. Appointment to these offices recognised the status and capacity of the recipients, their acceptance into the local political elite, and their public profile in the community. Typically it went with service as chair or vice-chair of council committees and other important local roles in public and political bodies and organisations.

Details of all the female mayors and most of the aldermen during the period have been collected for the English and Welsh County and Municipal Boroughs, the London Metropolitan Boroughs and the Scottish burghs (which had provosts and bailies instead of mayors and aldermen). The County Councils are not included.[2] Even if not every prominent female figure in local government met these criteria, the vast majority of them are caught.[3]

Defining who amongst them was a Liberal is not always simple. Large stretches of local government at this time were non-political, or operated on a Labour-versus-the-rest basis, with candidates standing as non-party or Independents or using some other invented label.[4] The line between Liberals and Conservatives was often blurred and became increasingly so over time as the Liberal Party declined and entered into alliances with the Tories. Nevertheless the party alignment of most mayors was sufficiently clear for *The Times* and other newspapers to publish details of the new mayors listed by party every November throughout the interwar years. These lists provide the principle source for determining individuals' allegiance. Some listed by the press as Independents or 'party not specified' have also been counted as Liberals because of their known Liberal links or backgrounds. Of course the degree of Liberal commitment varied – ranging from active officers of the party to others who were only loosely connected – and over time some gravitated to the Tories or Labour.

Female participation in local government

Although women's electoral rights at Westminster level were only conceded at the end of the First World War,[5] the history of female participation in local authorities goes back a half-century before that. The right to vote and to become a member of different branches and levels of local government was granted piecemeal at various stages well before 1918.

Single women ratepayers gained the vote in local authority elections from 1869 and soon constituted between one-eighth and a quarter of the electorate.[6] They could vote for county councils from 1888. Women could be elected to the school boards from 1872, until these were replaced in 1902 by the education committees of county and county borough councils, to which women could be co-opted. They could also, from 1875, be elected to the boards of guardians that administered the Poor Law and remained

M MAYOR

N IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP 1918–1939

a separate branch of local government until 1930. Women ratepayers both married and single were allowed to vote for urban and rural district councils from 1894, as well as stand for election to them. It is estimated that by the late 1890s some 1,500 women were holding elected local office and probably some 3,000 women were elected to the various bodies between 1870 and 1914.[7] Many post-1918 women mayors and aldermen first entered local government in this way.

The key breakthrough as far as the subject of this article is concerned came in 1907. Women ratepayers secured the right to stand for election to borough councils in Britain, and thus to become mayor or alderman. Nevertheless shortly before the First World War the Local Government Board identified just twenty-four women out of 11,140 councillors.

It might have been expected that female participation in local government would mushroom after 1918, but in fact progress remained very modest. Only 278 women councillors were elected in the boroughs in 1919.[8] Anne Baldwin identifies some 950 women who were elected to London and county borough councils between 1919 and 1938.[9] Perhaps another couple of thousand were elected in the municipal boroughs in England and Wales and the burghs in Scotland. Baldwin estimates that the proportion of councillors who were women rose in London, where it was by far the greatest, from 8 per cent in 1919 to 17 per cent in 1938, but only from about 3 per cent in 1922 to 7 per cent in 1938 in the county boroughs.[10] The proportion of women councillors in the English and Welsh Municipal boroughs and the Scottish burghs was, it seems certain, even less than this.

The number of women who entered the local government elite was much smaller. Six women served as mayor or provost before 1918 and a total of 147 more as mayor during the years 1918–39,[11] plus four more as provosts in Scotland. As some of them served more than one year-long term, the total number of terms served by women was greater: 217.[12] For England and Wales this was less than 3 per cent of the overall total.[13] Furthermore, the trend was only modestly upward. Women served 61 terms in the decade 1919–28 and 157 in the decade 1929–38. Even in the best year, 1937, the proportion of women mayors in England and Wales reached only about 6 per cent.

Some ninety women aldermen who sat between the wars have been identified; about half of them also served as mayors. In addition some twenty Scottish women-bailies have been identified.

Women Liberals in local government

The majority of women active in local government before 1914 were Liberals, but many were Conservatives; very few were Labour. All six pre-1918 women-mayors[14] can be classified as Liberals.

Elizabeth Garrett Anderson was the first, in tiny Aldeburgh in 1908, followed in 1910 by Sarah Lees in the large county borough of Oldham, and Miss[15] Gwenllian Morgan in Brecon. Lavinia Malcolm served as provost of the small burgh of Dollar in Clackmannanshire from 1913 to 1919. Mary Alice Partington served as mayor of Glossop in Derbyshire from May 1916 to 1920; and Elizabeth Hannah Kenyon for Dukinfield in Cheshire between May and November 1917, both succeeding their deceased husbands.

Garrett Anderson was the first woman to qualify as a doctor and the first woman to be elected to a school board, and was one of the *grandes dames* of the women's movement. She came from a wealthy Liberal family of corn merchants. Her sister, Millicent Fawcett, was founder and leader of the suffragist movement. Sarah Lees was a fabulously wealthy widow from a mill-owning dynasty. She devoted her very long life to progressive causes and philanthropy in Oldham, where she was a lynchpin of the town's Liberal Nonconformist elite. Such was her munificence and status that her fellow local Congregationalists treated her 'as if of royal blood'.[16] The Partingtons of Glossop and the Kenyons of Dukinfield were lynchpins of Liberalism and Nonconformity their towns, running, respectively, very successful family paper-manufacture and rope-making businesses. Both families were very active in local government. Mary Alice Partington was re-elected mayor three times after completing her husband's term. Elizabeth Kenyon was mayoress to her husband seven times and to her son again shortly before her death in 1935. Miss Gwenllian Morgan's status derived from 'old wealth', her family being local landowners for more than three hundred years and prominent churchmen and philanthropists in Brecon. Lavinia Malcolm's background was more modest. Her family were tradesmen and she married a teacher. They were heavily involved in the small-town elite of Dollar, with both her grandfather and husband serving as provost before her.

The key breakthrough … came in 1907. Women ratepayers secured the right to stand for election to borough councils in Britain, and thus to become mayor or alderman.

After the First World War, Liberals continued to be prominent amongst the female local government elite, though their numbers declined as the party weakened nationally. As Table 1 shows, almost 30 per cent of women-mayors in the 1920s were Liberals and about 12 per cent in the 1930s. Looking at the terms served (Table 2), almost one-third of terms served by women in the 1920s were by Liberals and 16 per cent of the terms served in the 1930s.[17]

Amongst the aldermen, fifteen were Liberal or Liberal-inclined Independents, ten of them also serving as mayor. In all, then, some thirty-plus Liberal women held prominent office in local government between the wars.

Where did they come from?

One of the most striking features of the entry of women into local government after 1918 is its very uneven geographical spread, and this was particularly pronounced as regards our leadership cohort.

There was a marked divide between southern and eastern Britain, where many more women came to the fore, and northern and western Britain where far fewer did. In fact some 80 per cent of women-mayors came from southern and eastern England including London. Scotland was strikingly under-represented with 35 per cent of the local authorities but less than 3 per cent of the women-mayors. The same pattern is evident among women-aldermen and bailies.

The variation partly reflected the local strength of the emerging Labour Party and the extent to which it practised positive

Table 1: Women mayors by party in the 1920s and 1930s – individuals who served[18]

	Liberal	*Conservative*	*Labour*	*Independent, unspecified*	*Total*
1919–28	16	24	4	10	54
1929–38	11	32	30	20	93

Table 2: Women mayors by party in the 1920s and 1930s – terms served[19] (Figures in brackets give the number of male mayors elected)

	Liberal	*Conservative*	*Labour*	*Independent, unspecified*	*Total*
1919–28	20 (1083)	24 (1673)	3 (321)	14 (466)	61 (3543)
1929–38	25 (683)	64 (1494)	32 (693)	36 (961)	157 (3831)

discrimination in favour of women. The London region, where Labour made big gains in the early 1920s and 1930s, and where George Lansbury, Herbert Morrison and others actively encouraged the advancement of women in the party, provided nearly half of the Labour women-mayors. In the industrial districts of the north of England, south Wales and Scotland, even where Labour was strong, the culture of local Labour parties seems to have held women back. Thus outside the Home Counties, East Anglia and Midlands only two female Labour mayors were elected before the Second World War.[20] In many rural areas Labour was still very weak and the party had few mayors, let alone women-mayors.

The Liberals only partly compensated for the uneven Labour performance. In the north-west, where the party remained relatively strong between the wars, it provided seven out of the fifteen women-mayors. But in the north-east and south Wales, Liberal women-mayors were almost as rare as Labour ones The Liberals provided very few women-mayors/provosts from their strongholds in the 'Celtic fringe': the far south-west, mid- and north-Wales, and rural Scotland.

Apart from the London region, almost everywhere the bulk of female local government leaders were Conservatives or conservative-minded Independents. This reflected the domination by the Conservatives of local government between the wars, even in many working-class towns and cities in the North and Midlands. It also resulted from the widespread participation of middle-class women in the local infrastructure of church, social, charitable and political activities that flourished in many towns across the Home Counties and beyond. Activism in apolitical women's organisations such as the Mothers' Union, the Women's Institute, the Townswomen's Guild or the Girl Guides was but one step to involvement in local government and overwhelmingly such recruits were Conservatives or Independents.

The Liberal women pioneers also often came from parallel Liberal cultures: the Nonconformist churches; socially improving philanthropy, especially in the health and education fields; temperance work; and the League of Nations Union. They also came from the more political women's movement – from suffragism and the various organisations associated with the advancement of female political engagement such as the Women's Local Government Society (WLGS) and the National Union of Women Workers (NUWW) and their post-1918 successors, the Women Citizen's Association (WCA) and the National Council of Women (NCW). Often this culture was closely associated with local economic elites that continued to support the Liberals. Though in decline, where these forces remained resilient they sustained a significant Liberal presence in local government and continued to provide a route for some women to enter local politics.

What was their social and economic background?

The first wave of women that gained prominence in local government was overwhelmingly middle-class. There were also a couple of Tory aristocrats and a handful of Liberal and Conservative working-class women, joined increasingly from the 1930s by a small but growing number from the Labour Party. But the great mass was middle-class, ranging from the upper middle class with gentry or extremely wealthy industrial plutocratic backgrounds, through a large number of comfortably affluent wives and daughters of professionals, businessmen and farmers, to a growing number of working women in education, nursing, clerical and business jobs often of a lower-middle-class character.

As previously noted many of the Liberal women were connected with local Nonconformist economic and political elites, some of them very wealthy. These families, often from the north of England, were the 'success-stories' of the Victorian industrial boom. Such wives and daughters of this industrial and commercial plutocracy, often driven by deep religious commitment, dedicated themselves to philanthropy and progressive social and political causes. Sarah Lees of Oldham was very much in this mould. Her husband, a mill owner, died in 1894 when she was 52, leaving her the modern equivalent of £0.5 billion.[21] She dedicated the rest of her long life (she lived to the age of 93) to charitable and public causes, supported by her daughter Marjory who was also an Oldham Liberal councillor.

Mary Partington of Glossop (paper), Ada Summers of Stalybridge (textiles, iron and steel), Miss Christiana Hartley of Southport and Miss Ethel Colman of Norwich (food-processing), Violet Markham of Chesterfield (coal and engineering), Annie Helme of Lancaster, Alys Hindle of Darwen, Ada Edge of Lytham St Annes (textiles), and Miss Edith Sutton of Reading (seeds), were of the same type.

A few Conservatives also fell in this category, though interestingly they often had Liberal connections: Miss Janet Stancombe-Wills of Ramsgate (Wills's tobacco) was the step-daughter of a Liberal MP; Grace Cottrell of West Bromwich (insurance) ran for office as a Liberal Unionist; and Lady Hulse of Salisbury (press) was also from a Liberal Unionist family.

This elite sat above a very affluent if somewhat less plutocratic layer. Although some in

Margaret Beavan, Violet Markham, Christiana Hartley

this stratum were Conservatives, the majority of these beneficiaries of Victorian economic progress inclined to the Liberals. Liberal women-mayors who came from – or in some cases married into – this prosperous business milieu included Mary Duckworth of Rochdale and Phyllis Brown of Chester (both retailing), Miss Alice Hudson of Eastbourne (trade), Miss Maud Burnett of Whitehaven (chemicals, ships), and Miss Elsie Taylor of Batley (textiles).

By contrast, few Liberal women-mayors came from the social classes that were 'losers' from the nineteenth-century economic transformation. While many of the Conservatives were linked with the declining world of the landed elite and its various offshoots in the Church, Law and Army, and a number of the Labour women-mayors came from poor labouring backgrounds including rural ones, few of the Liberal women clearly belonged in this category. The Liberals are thus pretty much unrepresented in the small army of middle-class wives and daughters of clergymen, local solicitors and doctors and army officers that provided female local politicians in the 'spa, spire and sand' and market towns of rural England.

However several came from relatively modest middle-class and lower-middle-class backgrounds. The father of Mary Ann Edmunds (Merthyr Tydfil) was an iron merchant who later worked in various parts of the country as a manager in iron works and collieries. She lived in a large house and was known locally as 'Lady Edmunds', but seems not to have been particularly wealthy.[22] May George (Swindon) was married to an elementary school teacher, a decidedly lower-middle-class occupation. Lucy Hill (Harwich) was the daughter of a St Pancras auctioneer and married a Harwich coal merchant. The

husband of Mary Hodgson (Richmond, Yorkshire) ran a drapery shop in the town. Miss Mary Short (Eye) lived very modestly, for many years looking after her widowed father, a minor artist dedicated to civic duties whose service she continued. Finally, Elizabeth Smart (Brackley) was married to a Customs and Excise officer.

As a general rule the middle-class Liberals – like the great majority of middle-class women at the time – were not in paid employment. Quite a number of women-mayors had careers but they were almost all Conservative/Independent or Labour. The exceptions were rare. Catherine Alderton (Colchester) qualified as a secondary-school teacher, and Anne Bagley as a certificated schoolmistress, but they do not seem to have continued their careers after marriage, presumably because of the marriage-bar that applied to women in much of education. Miss Dorothea Benoly (Stepney) was a kindergarten teacher. Miss Miriam Moses (Bethnal Green) worked for a time as a nurse and became a leading social worker among poor East End Jewish children and their families.

Only a couple of the Liberal women came from a working-class or at least low-income background. Ethel Leach was the eldest of ten children of a labourer and carter and worked as a servant girl until she married at the age of 19. Annie Bagley was the daughter of a house-painter who died when she was a child. Although her mother remarried she seems to have been left to bring up the children alone and worked as an office cleaner. However they were upwardly socially mobile. Leach married into comfortable affluence and political connexions. Bagley, as already noted, qualified as an elementary school teacher, and she married a successful small businessman.

What was the political outlook of the Liberal women pioneers?

The great majority of the Liberal women pioneers were born before 1875 and so were brought up in the era of Gladstone rather than of Asquith and Lloyd George. Many shared a traditional Victorian middle-class Liberal outlook, often strongly influenced by Nonconformism. Deeply concerned about social issues, they generally saw philanthropy and voluntary work, individual effort, temperance and improved education and health as the solutions.

Miss Christiana Hartley of Southport typified this strain of Liberalism. She was born in 1872, the daughter of the self-made jam tycoon, Sir William Pickles Hartley of Colne and Southport in Lancashire. She was brought up in great wealth (Hartley's fortune ran to hundreds of millions in modern values) and fervent commitment to Primitive Methodism and philanthropy. The Hartleys gave away huge sums to social causes and to their sect and the wider Methodist church. Christiana Hartley tried hard to understand the lives of the poor, even spending some time living in a common lodging house to experience their conditions. When she became mayor in 1921 she decided to donate her salary of £500 to the unemployed, and her father matched this sum. However she turned to the Labour Party to arrange the distribution of the money, tacitly acknowledging the social distance that separated her world from the working-class. Her individualistic, religious and backward-looking view of the world was also on show in her welcoming speech to the 1922 TUC conference held in Southport:

> Why all this unrest? What ails the workers? It seems that, in the rebound from the anxieties of the war, we are all trying to get something for nothing. Too much selfishness exists; that is the result of all evil. We must not ask for the impossible.[23]

Ada Summers was another example. She was born in 1861 the daughter of an Oldham mill owner and married one of the Summers brothers of Stalybridge, ironmasters who were building up one of the largest steel-making companies in the UK. They were Radicals and philanthropists. Her husband, John Summers died in 1910 leaving her a fortune worth about £90 million in today's values. She poured money into local causes such as maternity and child welfare clinics, an unemployment centre, and the Mechanics Institute and founded a Ladies' Work Society. She was also active in the British and Foreign Bible Society. Such was her generosity that she became known as 'Lady Bountiful'. Ada Summers was one of the early women councillors, elected in 1912, and was the first post-war female mayor in 1919. She was the first woman magistrate to preside in an English court.

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Miss Ethel Colman was a third example. She was born in 1863 into the mustard family of Norwich, which in the second half of the nineteenth century had grown into a large food-processing concern with some 2,500 employees in the city, thanks to free trade and buoyant consumer demand. Her father was a Lord Mayor, a Liberal MP, and a leading Baptist. He died in 1898 leaving an estate worth several hundred millions of pounds in modern values. The family became much involved with the Prince's Street Congregational Mission, where Ethel became one of the first female deacons. The mission was the focus of the Colmans' philanthropic activity and also served as the hub for the Nonconformist business and professional elite which dominated the Liberal Party in Norwich.[24] Ethel remained a staunch Liberal, unlike her brother Russell, also a Lord Mayor, who switched to the Conservatives.

Barry Doyle, referring to the 1920s, has commented that 'although religion was itself no longer an issue at elections, the cultural world of the chapel still pervaded the Liberal Party and the culture of dissent was still essentially Liberal'.[25] As the examples above indicate, Nonconformity loomed large in the lineage and outlook of many of the Liberal women. Catherine Alderton (Colchester) was the daughter of a Congregationalist minister and was educated at Melton Mount College, Gravesend, a school for the daughters of the Congregationalist clergy. The father of Mary Hodgson (Richmond, Yorks) was a Primitive Methodist minister and that of Florence Keynes (Cambridge) a Baptist preacher who became chairman of the Congregational Union. Religion played a central role in the lives not only of Hartley and Colman but also Miss Margaret Hardy (Brighton), who was president of the national Free Church Women's

Council and Miss Clara Winterbotham (Cheltenham) who came from a renowned Baptist/Congregationalist family on her father's side but followed in the convictions of her devout Church of England mother.[26]

Beyond the moneyed elite, there were other Liberal women whose outlook owed less to Victorian individualism and more to the advanced radical and progressive ideas of the 1890s and 1900s. Ethel Leach (Great Yarmouth), though one of the oldest women in the cohort – she was born in 1850 – was among this group. Encouraged by her Radical husband, she had been drawn into local government as an early school board member and Poor Law guardian as well as becoming closely involved in secularist, suffragist, Irish home rule and Fabian circles. Catherine Alderton (Colchester) who was born in Scotland in 1869, was a progressive deeply interested in improving labour conditions for the working class and especially women. She was a strong supporter of the 1920 progressive Liberal Manchester Programme. She twice stood for parliament and was president of the National Women's Liberal Federation in 1931–32. Several of the younger women born after 1875 were progressive and stood for election under this label in London; Miss Miriam Moses (Bethnal Green), Miss Dorothea Benoly (Stepney) and aldermen Frances Warren Reidy (Stepney) and Cecilia Lusher-Pentney (Shoreditch) fall in this category.

The traditional Liberals could come across as old-fashioned and straight-laced. Miss Christiana Hartley, who refused to serve alcohol at her mayor-making celebrations in 1921, was still focused on the temperance battles of an earlier era, and Miss Maud Burnett (Whitehaven) and Miss Elsie Taylor (Batley) were also of this school. But others were more attuned to the times and socially liberal in their outlook. Among the 1930s mayors, Phyllis Brown (Chester) spoke out against corporal punishment, Miss Margaret Hardy (Brighton) poked fun at protests against wearing swimwear in the town, and Miss Miriam Moses supported birth control.

A record of support for the constitutional women's suffrage movement was common to many Liberal women in local government, whether of the older generation or the younger progressives. Some notable examples include Annie Helme who came from a very wealthy Baptist mill-owning family and was a founder and first chair of the Lancaster Suffrage Society, Catherine Alderton who was a founder of the Liberal Women's Suffrage Union in 1913, and Miss Miriam Moses who was active in the Jewish League of Women's Suffrage.

The Liberals had been less attracted to the militant suffragettes (WSPU) and only Eva Hartree (Cambridge) seems to have been a supporter. Active suffragettes were rare amongst post-1918 female politicians and especially mayors/alderman, although the Tories had one or two and Labour had a handful including some activists of Sylvia Pankhurst's East London Federation of Suffragettes.[27]

The Liberal suffragists tended to be critical of the militants. Catherine Alderton described their tactics as 'disgraceful and disreputable'.[28] Miss Edith Sutton (Reading), a Liberal until she joined Labour in the early 1920s, studiously avoided giving her support to the suffragettes. Violet Markham (Chesterfield) was unusual, however, in vigorously opposing votes for women as a member of the Women's National Anti-Suffrage League, although she reversed her views during the First World War and stood for parliament in 1918.

As the Liberals lost ground in the 1920s and '30s, anti-socialism inclined some towards the Tories. Miss Maud Burnett was a Liberal until the early 1920s, but was classified as a Conservative by *The Times* in 1928, when she became mayor. Christiana Hartley remained a Liberal, but in the absence of a Liberal candidate in Southport at the 1935 general election, she publicly supported the Conservative. Ada Edge (Lytham St Anne's) had an impeccable Radical pedigree and was married to the Radical Lloyd George-ite MP, Sir William Edge. But the family later became Liberal Nationals. Annie Bagley from Stretford where the Liberals and Conservatives fused in the 1930s was also a Liberal National.

Perhaps the biggest loss was Miss Margaret Beavan, who established a national reputation for her work in the voluntary movement for child welfare and in 1927 became a high-profile Conservative Lord Mayor of Liverpool – by far the largest authority to have a woman as a mayor before the Second World War. She had only joined the Tories in 1924 having first been elected to the council as a Lloyd George Liberal.[29]

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There were also departures to Labour. Ada Salter (Bermondsey) and Miss Florence Farmer (Stoke-on-Trent) made this shift before the First World War, while others such as Miss Mabel Clarkson (Norwich) and Miss Edith Sutton (Reading) joined Labour in the early 1920s. Miss Dorothea Benoly went over in the 1930s.

Others remained Liberal stalwarts. Miss Elsie Taylor and Miss Clara Winterbotham were still active in the party in the 1940s.[30]

However a common response to the party's decline was continuing commitment to Liberal values and causes but a detachment from active work in the party itself. Florence Keynes came from a Liberal Nonconformist background and continued to mix in Liberal circles, but like her son John Maynard Keynes, the economist, she had only a loose connection with the party. She mostly stood as an Independent in local elections, though with Liberal support. Her fellow mayor of Cambridge, Eva Hartree, was classed as a Liberal by the press but by the 1930s seems to have had little formal involvement with the party and stood for election as a Women Citizens' Association candidate. Nevertheless, she and others like her such as Lady Emily Roney (Wimbledon) were much involved with liberal causes, such as aiding refugees. The ex-suffragette, Juanita Phillips, eleven times mayor of Honiton, seems to have been another Liberal-minded woman who remained outside the party. She was classified a 'no party specified' by *The Times* and no link with the Liberals has been found. However, the Liberals were very strong in the area, she was not a Conservative (she contested an election against a well-known Tory), and her commitment to the National Council of Women and campaigning for working-class housing indicated a progressive outlook.[31]

Clara Winterbotham, Miriam Moses, Maud Burnett

Why were there not more Liberal women in local government leadership?

The same obstacles that prevented women generally from advancing in local government also faced most of the Liberal women, but with the added factor that the party was losing ground both electorally and in terms of the influence of local Liberal elites. Potential female candidates for top positions were amongst the casualties of this retreat.

Overt sexist discrimination seems to have been largely overcome after the early 1920s. Although much was made of the novelty of having a woman-mayor, voices against their nomination on the grounds that the office should be reserved for men were very rare after 1918 and very much in a minority. Subtler discrimination remained, but it was offset by the widespread acceptance that women had much to contribute to local government especially in the traditional 'female' spheres of maternity and child welfare, education and housing where many of the women pioneers chose to focus their work. Many of the female mayors accepted this limited view of their role. On becoming mayor of Lytham St Anne's in 1937, Ada Edge commented that 'while men could guide the interests of the town in most matters, women were very necessary to give their advice on matters of vital interest to women ratepayers'.[32] Moreover, it became quite fashionable to have a female mayor. Some councils saw it as a way to enhance the forward-looking image of their boroughs. As Miss Clara Winterbotham put it at her mayor-making: 'Why appoint a woman to such a position?' [Because] 'it is an excellent advertisement and it costs you nothing'.[33]

The main obstacle was more institutional: the traditional stress on seniority in assigning offices on local authorities and the lack of women coming through the electoral system and building up sufficient years to qualify. Firstly, the pool of female local councillors after 1918 was small. Too few women were nominated as candidates in winnable seats and amongst those who were elected, many withdrew, were defeated or otherwise left politics before they had come to the fore on their councils. Only a few accumulated the years of experience and seniority that moved them up the queue for senior office, and especially in large boroughs with many council members the queue could be very long. For the Liberals, as their strength declined, and for Labour while it was still weak in much of local government, the opportunities to nominate mayors and aldermen were few and far between.

These constraints were relaxed in two main cases. In the London region, as we have seen, there was a larger pool of women councillors and Labour encouraged women to advance in the party and on councils. Labour was also ready to abandon traditional seniority conventions to promote its councillors not least because the system worked to its disadvantage by enabling Conservative and Liberal veterans to dominate the aldermanic bench and inflate the strength on councils of those parties.

The second case was where individual women because of their status, ability or charisma were allowed to jump to the head of the queue. Such leapfrogging was most common where councils invited 'elite women' to take office. A number of Liberal women, well connected with wealthy and politically powerful local elites, advanced in this way. Thus Miss Christiana Hartley was on the council for only one year before becoming mayor and Miss Clara Winterbotham was mayor within three years of co-option to the council and an alderman within four. Violet Markham was first elected a councillor in Chesterfield in 1924 and was made mayor in 1927. Mary Duckworth (Rochdale), who completed her late husband's term as mayor in 1938, was not actually elected to the council until afterwards.

Ability and charisma shot the ex-Liberal Miss Margaret Beavan to the mayoralty in Liverpool over the heads of her male colleagues thanks to the patronage of Sir Archibald Salvidge, the city's Conservative boss. She was also parachuted into a Tory-held Westminster seat but was unexpectedly defeated in a vicious campaign.

However the majority had to wait their turn, which could be a long time coming in large authorities, as the example of Manchester, which had 140 members and applied the seniority rule rigorously, shows. The city was a cradle of the suffrage movement and the prominent Liberal suffragist Miss Margaret Ashton was elected as a councillor there as early as 1908[34] followed by another Liberal, Jane Redford in 1910. During the interwar period, twenty-six women sat on the council. Ten of these had their potential careers cut short by retirement or death, including Margaret Ashton who stood down in 1921. A further four had their council careers terminated by defeat including three well-qualified Liberals: Jane Redford in 1921, Miss Caroline Herford in 1923 and

Shena Simon in 1933. Two remaining councillors of the rapidly diminishing Liberal group, Sarah Laski and Mary Gibbons, elected in 1929, lacked the seniority to claim the one turn at mayor given to the Liberals during the 1930s. Other younger, promising Liberal activists – such as Miss Dorothy Porter – several times narrowly missed reaching even the first stage of being elected to the council. It was not until 1947 that Manchester had a female Lord Mayor and she was a Tory, Miss Mary Kingsmill-Jones. The only Liberal women to become mayors of large authorities were in London Boroughs (Stepney and Bethnal Green) where the entire council was re-elected every three years and where the turnover of members was high.

Small authorities offered more opportunities, or perhaps simply less competition for office. Mary Hodgson became mayor of Richmond, Yorkshire (1931 population 4,769) three years after being elected to the council. Miss Mary Short served as mayor of Eye, East Suffolk (population 1,733) eight times between 1924 and 1948.

The waning of the first wave

Mary Short was one of the very few Liberal women-mayors to serve after 1939. The party disappeared in local government in most areas after the Second World War and almost ceased to provide mayors and alderman for the next two decades. The few female exceptions were remnants of Liberal elites of an earlier era. Miss Clara Winterbotham had a final term as mayor of Cheltenham until 1946 and Miss Alice Hudson was again mayor of Eastbourne in 1943–45; they were both in their late sixties. There were also one or two remaining Liberal women aldermen such as Annie Helme in Lancaster until 1949, Mary Gibbons in Manchester until her death in 1949, and in Liverpool Miss Mabel Eills (the daughter of Burton Eills the Liverpool Liberal leader in the 1930s) until 1955. Even where the Liberals had the opportunity to nominate a woman-mayor, as in Leeds in 1942, their choice conformed to the stereotype of an elderly, non-political, elite-woman: Miss Jessie Kitson.

The party had to wait until the mid-1960s for the next generation of female Liberal leaders in local government, very different in social background and political profile; but that is another story.

The party disappeared in local government in most areas after the Second World War and almost ceased to provide mayors and alderman for the next two decades. The few female exceptions were remnants of Liberal elites of an earlier era.

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Appendix

Women Liberal mayors and aldermen 1918–1939 and some others mentioned in the text – biographical information

Abbreviations used:
Ald: alderman
BoG: member of Poor Law board of guardians
Cllr: councillor
CoE: Church of England
DBE: Dame of the British Empire
Ind: Independent
LNU: League of Nations Union
NCW: National Council of Women
UDC: Urban District Council
WCA: Women Citizens Association
WCG: Women's Co-operative Guild
WLA: Women's Liberal Association
WLGS: Women's Local Government Society
WLF: Women's Liberal Federation.
WW1: World War One
WW2: World War Two

ALDERTON, Catherine (née Robinson) (1869–1951) Colchester. Cllr 1916–28; mayor 1923–24; Essex county cllr and ald 1928–. Born Scotland; came to Colchester 1885 with her father, Congregational minister (d 1915). Educ: Melton Mount School, Gravesend, for the daughters of Congregational Ministers. Secondary teacher (maths) until she married in 1897. Her husband became head-teacher of an elementary school. One child. Active in WLF: executive member 1912–, sec 1920–, vice-ch 1923–, president 1931–32. First woman to sit on NLF executive. Known nationally as a speaker. Parliamentary candidate Edinburgh S, 1922; Hull NW 1929. A founder of Lib Women's Suffrage Union 1913. WW1: Government Reconstruction Cttee, Nation's Fund for Nurses. MBE 1944.

BAGLEY, Annie Mowbray (née Jeffrey) (1870–1952) Stretford. Cllr UDC in 1920s and borough from incorporation in 1933; ch Maternity & Child Welfare Cttee; mayor 1938–39. Born Manchester; father a house painter who died when she was a child. Mother supported family working as an office cleaner. Certificated assistant schoolmistress (1901). Husband (d 1938) was a master decorator. Liberal, Liberal National in 1930s.

BEAVAN, Margaret (1877–1931) Liverpool. Cllr 1921– (Coalition Liberal); joined Cons Party 1924; Lord Mayor 1927–28. Born Liverpool; father prosperous insurance agent. Educ: Belvedere School and Liverpool High School. Lived in USA 1890–92. Studied maths at Royal Holloway, London, not at degree level; assistant teacher in boy's school. Involved in child welfare and the Invalid Child Association (ICA), sponsored by the Rathbone family. Secretary of ICA and successful fundraiser. Founded Leasowe Open Air Children's Hospital, 1914. Organised Child Welfare Association from 1918. Unsuccessfully defended Cons-held Liverpool seat at 1929 general election. Member WCA, NCW, WCG. Known by her admirers as 'the little mother of Liverpool' and 'the might atom'; and by her opponents as 'Maggie Mussolini' and 'Queen Canute'. Often in poor health, died of bronchitis and pneumonia aged 54. Left £18,500.

BENOLY, Lydia Dorothea (1887–1969) Bethnal Green. Cllr Bethnal Green West 1925–34; mayor 1933–34. Born Clapton; parents Polish/German Jewish,

immigrants. Father doctor and East End Progressive leader. Kindergarten teacher. Progressive, Labour by 1940. Moral Re-armament supporter.

BROWN, Louisa Phyllis (née Humfrey) (1877–1968) Chester. Cllr 1920–; ald 1933–; mayor 1938–39. Born Chester; father prosperous manufacturing chemist. Scholarship student University College, London. Husband (d 1936) was solicitor and scion of the wealthy dynasty that owned Brown's department store. He was a Liberal cllr and mayor in 1920 when she was his mayoress. They were active suffragists. She was the most prominent woman Liberal in Chester between the wars.

BURNETT, Annie Maud (1863–1950) Tynemouth. Cllr 1909–21, 1926–34; mayor 1928–30. First woman elected cllr in north of England. Father (d 1896) a chemical manufacturer, Liberal and Northumberland magistrate. Her brothers were ship owners. Educ: privately and in Switzerland. Active in voluntary work and taught a CoE bible class. Sec Tynemouth WLA 1895–1910. Founded Tynemouth WLGS 1902. DBE 1918 for her war work. She stood as an Ind but was an active Lib until the 1920s. *The Times* lists her as a Cons in 1928–29. Left £3,200.

CLARKSON, Mabel (1875–1950) Norwich. BoG. Cllr 1912–23 (Lib), 1926–(Lab); ald 1932–50; High Sheriff 1928–29; Lord Mayor 1930–31. Born Calne, Wiltshire; father prosperous solicitor who died when she was three. Thereafter her widowed mother brought up family (one boy, four sisters) on private income. Educ: private school and Reading University. Poor Law guardian 1904–30. Interested in child welfare issues. Joined Lab Party 1924. Left £4,500.

COLMAN Ethel (1863–1948) Norwich. Lord Mayor 1923–24. Father J. J. Colman (d 1898) of Colman's Mustard, Lib MP, mayor of Norwich and prominent Baptist. Mother a Cozens-Hardy, also of the Norwich Nonconformist elite. Educ: Miss Pipe's School, Laleham, Clapham Park. With her sister Helen was very active in Princes St Congregational Mission, of which Ethel was a deacon and director of the Missionary Society. Liberal and suffragist. Left £125,600.

DAVIES, Sarah Evans (née Morris) (1863–1944) Welshpool, Montgomeryshire. Cllr 1919–; mayor 1928–30. Born Carmarthenshire; father a master mariner. Her brother was Liberal mayor of Birkenhead, 1902–3. Husband (d 1919) was a merchant tailor. Three sons, one killed in action 1916. Commander of Red Cross Voluntary Aid detachments Montgomeryshire during WW1. She was a Welsh bard, writing poetry under the pseudonym 'Olwen', and an educationist. Welsh Presbyterian. The first woman to ride a bicycle in Welshpool. Left £11,200.

DUCKWORTH, Mary (née Petrie) (1872–1942) Rochdale. Mayor Jan–Nov 1938; cllr Dec 1938–42. Born Rochdale; father (d 1897) owned an engineering firm, was a prominent Lib and alderman. Husband was son of Sir James Duckworth, wealthy provisions merchant, mayor of Rochdale, pillar of Liberalism and Methodism in the town and MP for Middleton. Husband succeeded him as manager of the family firm, was a parliamentary candidate twice, and mayor in 1937 when she was his mayoress. She was asked to continue his term when he died suddenly. Left £18,800.

EDGE, Ada Jane (née Ickringill) (1880–1973) Lytham St Anne's. Cllr Apr 1929–; mayor 1937–38. Maternity & Child Welfare (ch) and Health (vice-ch) Cttees. Fifth of nine children of very wealthy Keighley/Bradford mill owner (d 1911) and Primitive Methodist. Family had radical tradition – her great-uncle had led the 'physical force' Chartist revolt in Keighley in 1848. Husband (Sir) William Edge of a wealthy, Radical, Methodist, dye-manufacturing family in Bolton. He was a Lloyd-George Lib, later Lib Nat MP 1916–23, 1927–45. Died 1948, leaving £48,000. Her son, (Sir) Knowles Edge, was a leading Lib Nat in Bolton and the north-west. Lib, later Lib Nat, stood as a non-political. She described herself as a 'moderate Nonconformist' but was closely associated with the CoE parish church in Lytham.

EDMUNDS, Mary Ann (née Owen) (1863–1934) Merthyr Tydfil. BoG (ch 1919). Cllr 1913–32; mayor 1927–28. Born Llanelli; father (d 1901) iron merchant, later ironworks and colliery manager in Plymouth and Newcastle-upon-Tyne. He was active in Merthyr civic life from the 1880s, a cllr and chairman of the council 1899. Husband was a captain (d 1901). They had a son and daughter (d 1927). She began civic work after her father's death. WW1: Merthyr Recruiting Cttee (ch). Lloyd George Liberal. Left £3,900.

FARMER, Florence (1873–1958) Stoke-on-Trent. BoG. Cllr 1919–28; ald 1928–45; Lord Mayor 1931–32; freedom of borough. Father was a printer, active Lib, and ch of the local authority in Longton. She was headmistress of Longton council school, but retired in 1927 to establish a laundry business with her brother. In her youth she was active in the Lib Party. Founder and leading light of Stoke Ethical Society before 1914. Became socialist in 1900s and joined Lab. President of Stoke Lab Party 1929–31. Longstanding member of Education Cttee and on Watch Cttee where she established force of policewomen in Stoke. Unitarian. Left £19,600.

GEORGE, May (née Williams) (1882–1943) Swindon. Cllr 1921–; ald 1931–; mayor 1935–36. Born Craven Arms, Shropshire. Husband an elementary school teacher. One son: Graham Lloyd George. Left £490.

HARDY, Margaret (1874–1954) Brighton. BoG. Cllr Hollingbury 1928–; ald 1934–' mayor 1933–34. Born Brighton; by 1890s living with her widowed mother on 'private means'. Well known in the town for her social work especially amongst the young, and identified with many women's movements. MBE for her WW1 work with nursing services in France. Lib and Free Church activist, especially in the Baptist Women's Movement. President of the National Free Church Women's Council 1922–23. A Girl's High School in Brighton was named after her. Stood as an Ind and classified by *The Times* as such. Left £91,200.

HARTLEY, Christiana (1872–1948) Southport. BoG Ormskirk. Cllr 1920–32; mayor 1921–22; freedom of Colne (1927) and Southport (1940). Born Colne, Lancs; father Sir William Pickles Hartley (d 1922), wealthy jam manufacturer, philanthropist and major figure in the Primitive Methodist church. Director and ch of family firm. Patron of Southport Maternity Hospital (1932) and Nurses Home (1940) and gave Christiana Hartley Maternity Hospital to Colne 1935. CBE 1943. Hon MA Liverpool University 1943. Left £198,000.

HARTREE, Eva (née Rayner) (1874–1947) Cambridge. Cllr c 1921–42; mayor 1924–25. Born Heaton Norris, Stockport; father and grandfather were doctors. The latter was a JP and ald. Husband (d 1943) came from an affluent Cambridge family and was a grandson of Samuel Smiles, the Victorian champion of 'self-help'. He worked as a teacher and lecturer in science and engineering and as a civil servant in the Admiralty Munitions Inventions department in WW1 for which he received an OBE. They had three sons, two of whom died young and the other became a noted Cambridge Professor of Physics. She was active in many causes including the suffragette

movement, the Red Cross, the LNU and especially the NCW, of which she served as president. From the early 1930s she was very active in helping refugees from Nazi Germany and after her husband's death she moved to London, dedicating herself to this cause. *The Times* classified her as a Lib, but in the 1930s she stood for election as a WCA candidate. Left £15,500.

HELME, Annie (née Smith) (1874–1963) Lancaster. BoG. Cllr Castle ward Apr 1919–; ald 1937–49; mayor 1932–33. Ch Health and Education Cttees. Born Bradford, one of thirteen children of Isaac Smith (d 1909), a wealthy mill owner, mayor of Bradford and Baptist. Husband (d 1908) was a doctor and nephew of Sir Norval Helme, Lib MP for Lancaster, ald and leading Baptist figure. One daughter. Ch Lancaster Suffrage Society and active in WLA. Organised Citizen's Defence Cttee to campaign against the high price of milk for mothers, 1919. MBE. Left £19,300.

HILL, Lucy (née Roberts) (1865–1939) Harwich. Cllr 1921–; mayor 1923–25; 1931–35. Born St Pancras; father auctioneer, and she was living there with her widowed mother in 1901 – no occupation recorded. Married a Harwich coal merchant, twenty years older than her, in 1909. MBE. Listed by *The Times* as Liberal in 1920s and 'no party specified' in 1930s.

HINDLE, Alys (née Lawrence) (1879–1964) Darwen, Lancs. Cllr North-west ward c 1933–; mayor 1937–39. One of ten children of wealthy Chorley spinner who left £204,000 when he died in 1920. The Lawrence family were Independent Methodists, Radicals and active in civic life. Her husband was (Sir) Frederick Hindle (d 1953), a solicitor and leading figure in the Darwen Lib organisation; he was mayor 1912–13 and MP in 1923–24. They had been engaged to marry in 1913 but the wedding was called off and they eventually married in 1928.

HODGSON, Mary 'Minnie' (née Cairns) (1885–1936) Richmond, Yorkshire. BoG. Cllr 1928–; mayor 1932–34. Father was Primitive Methodist minister. Husband (d 1935) ran a family drapery business in Richmond. He was a cllr, ald and mayor 1919–21. They had three children. Party labels were not used in Richmond, but she was listed by *The Times* as a Lib. Left £6,900.

HUDSON, Alice (Alisa) (1877–1960) Eastbourne. Cllr Meads 1919–29; ald 1929–; mayor Dec 1926–28, 1943–45. Ch Finance and Watch Cttee (first woman in country to hold this office in a borough). Born Chorlton, Lancs; father was Irish and made a fortune as an East India merchant based in Manchester. He left £209,000 when he died in 1927. Her mother was German-born. She completed the term of a mayor-elect who died. She was again mayor in the 1940s after deposing the incumbent. Listed by *The Times* as a Lib, but stood as an Ind. Left £56,800.

KENYON, Elizabeth Hannah (née Darlington) (1855–1935) Dukinfield, Cheshire. Ashton BoG (ch). Cllr Dukinfield Central to 1923; mayor May–Nov 1917 in succession to her deceased husband, who

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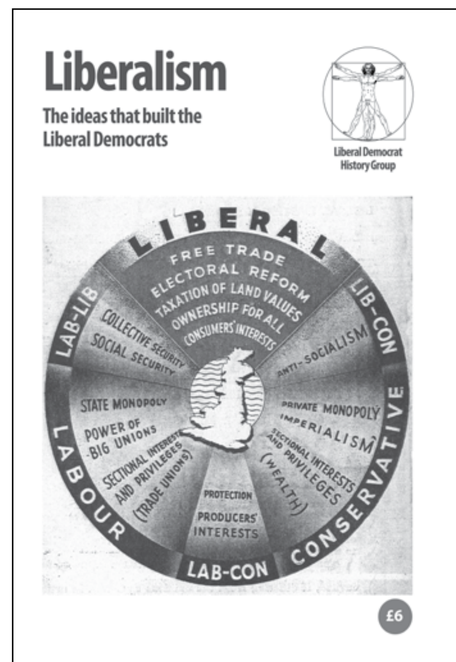

The political ideology of the Liberal Democrats draws on the philosophies of two reformist traditions, liberalism and social democracy, and possesses a distinctive approach to concepts such as freedom, equality and social justice.

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had a successful rope-making business. At the time she was president of Dukinfield Women's Liberal Association and on the executive of the National Women's Liberal Federation. Freedom of Borough 1919. She was seven times mayoress to her husband, and also once to her son in 1934–35. The Kenyons had Moravian links but were later Methodists. Left £11,200.

KEYNES, Florence Ada (née Brown) (1861–1958) Cambridge. BoG (ch). Cllr 1914–19 (defeated), 1924–; ald 1931–; mayor 1932–33. Born Cheetham Hill, Manchester; father a prominent Baptist minister and ch of the Congregational Union of England & Wales. Married John Neville Keynes, economist. Mother of John Maynard Keynes, economist. Graduate Newnham College. Sec of local branch of Charities Organisation Society. Started an early labour exchange. Poor Law guardian 1907–. A founder of Papworth Village Settlement for TB sufferers. Active in Cambridge Nat Union of Women Workers (forerunner of NCW), 1912–. Ch of its largest section representing cttee members, public servants and magistrates. President of NCW, 1929–31. First elected as Ind, but defeated as Lib 1919.

LANEY, Florence (née Hands) (1865–1935) Bournemouth. Cllr Boscombe West Jan 1918–; ald 1933. Ch Mental Health & Pension Cttee. Father a tobacconist. Husband a dyer. They had two sons, one of whom died aged 8 in 1900. Husband went bankrupt and deserted her the same year. Steam laundry manager, later dyer's district manager. Advocate of single women's pensions. Elected as Ind, but supported Lib parliamentary candidate (1918). Left £1,500.

LEACH, Mary Ethel (née Johnston) (1850–1936) Great Yarmouth. BoG. Cllr c 1919–; ald 1929–; mayor 1924–25. Born Great Yarmouth; one of ten children of a carter and general labourer (d 1896). She worked as a servant in her youth and 'received most of her education after she married'. Married an affluent Yarmouth oil merchant and ironmonger, of Irish origin, in 1869. He was twenty-four years older than her (d 1902). They had one son. Her husband was a Unitarian involved in Radical, Irish home rule and Fabian politics and with his encouragement she became involved in these circles, who met at their house. She was a pioneer suffragist in Yarmouth and nationally and one of the early women elected to a school board. In 1883 she visited the USA with the daughter of the secularist G. J. Holyoake and published a short book about her impressions. She was Helen Taylor's agent when she stood as a parliamentary candidate in 1885. An active Liberal into late 1920s. Left £18,500.

LILE, Annie (1864–1951) Hastings. Cllr St Mary-in-the-Castle Upper 1919–31 (defeated); ald 1931–46. Ch Health & Mental Deficiency, Maternity & Child Welfare Cttees. Father affluent advertising contractor with house in Bloomsbury. She lived with her younger sister (d 1930). Stood as Ind. Supported by WCA 1919. Active in Lib Assoc and WLA. Active in NCW. Methodist. Left £9,100.

LUSHER-PENTNEY, Cecilia (née Snelgrove) (1875–1939) Shoreditch. Progressive cllr, Hackney 1920–31; ald 1935–. Born Stoke Newington; father a foreman. Husband (d 1936) dispensing chemist, Progressive. Left £580.

MARKHAM, Violet Rosa (married name Carruthers) (1872–1959) Chesterfield. Member Education Authority 1899–1934; cllr 1924–; mayor 1927–28. Writer, social reformer and administrator. Father was a very wealthy owner of mining and engineering companies in Derbyshire. He was a Lib Unionist from 1886. Her mother was a Paxton, daughter of the man who built the Crystal Palace. A large inheritance in 1901 enabled her to live an independent life with a house in London. Though feminist in many of her views, she vigorously opposed women's suffrage and was active in the Women's National Anti-Suffrage League. She became a supporter of votes for women during WW1 and stood as Ind Lib candidate for Chesterfield at the 1918 general election (where her brother had been the Lib MP until 1916). She married an army officer in 1915 but continued to use her maiden name. She held a host of important public appointments between the war including vice-ch of the Unemployment Assistance Board in 1937. She published a number of books including her autobiography *Return Passage* in 1953.

MOSES, Miriam (1886–1965) Stepney. Cllr 1921–34; ald 1934–37; mayor 1931–32. Father was a German Jewish immigrant who had a successful business as a tailor and clothing manufacturer in Spitalfields. Her mother died when Miriam was in her teens and she helped bring up the family of ten children (four others had died). She worked as a nurse and youth and social worker in the East End. In 1925 she established the Brady Girls' Club which helped impoverished East End Jewish families, and she served as warden until 1958, establishing a national reputation (she was known as 'the Angel of the East End'). She succeeded her father as cllr for Spitalfields. Active in the Jewish League of Women's Suffrage and the Zionist movement. Supported birth control clinics. Ch Whitechapel & St George's Lib Assoc and considered for parliamentary candidate at the 1930 by-election. Anti-Semitic remarks were made by some Labour members and spectators at her mayor-making. Stood as Ind and Progressive. Left £7,200.

MUSPRATT, Helena (née Ainsworth) (1870–1943) Liverpool. Cllr Childwell 1920–34; ald 1934–. Father was 'gentleman of private means'. Husband (Sir) Max Muspratt (d 1934) chemicals tycoon, director ICI, Lib MP and Lord Mayor of Liverpool 1917 when she was mayoress. He left £208,000. Lloyd George Lib to 1926 when she and husband joined Cons.

PARTINGTON, Mary Alice (née Harrison) (1868–1950) Glossop. BoG. Mayor May 1916–1920; freedom of borough 1926. Father was a Glossop licensed victualler, later mineral water manufacturer and coal merchant. She married into the very wealthy Partington family who owned paper mills in Glossop and Manchester. Edward Partington (1st Baron Doverdale 1916) had revolutionised the industry by introducing the use of wood pulp. She married Herbert Partington (1871–1916) who ran the business in Glossop and was three times mayor of the town. His brother Oswald was Liberal MP for High Peak and later Shipley. He left her £142,000. They were Unitarians. She declined an invitation in 1921 to stand as Liberal candidate for High Peak but continued to be very active in the local Liberal organisation. She left £45,000.

PHILLIPS, Juanita (née Comber) (1880–1966) Honiton. Cllr 1920–; ald 1929–; mayor 1920–24, 1925–26, 1936–39, 1945; Devon county cllr. Born Chile; father (d 1896) a wealthy merchant. Husband a Honiton solicitor, grandson of very wealthy Birmingham wine merchant and mayor in 1840s. Actress. Organised suffragettes in Honiton. WW1: War Office. OBE. Campaigned for working-class housing. President of Devon NCW. Active in WVS. Elected as Ind and classified by *The Times* as 'politics not specified'. Appears not to have identified with Lib Party but contested Devon CC election against well-known Cons. Most frequent woman-mayor (eleven times) and only one in the far west of England between the wars.

REIDY, Frances Warren (née Dawson) (1881–?) Stepney. BoG. Cllr 1919–22, 1928–31; ald 1922–28, 1931–. Ch Gen Purposes and Education Cttees. Husband Jerome Reidy was Irish, an East End

doctor, Progressive cllr and mayor of Stepney 1917, when she was mayoress. Eight children, including Frankie Reidy, actress and wife of Michael Powell, the film director. Stood as Progressive; ratepayer.

RONEY, Emily (née Jones) (1872–1957) Wimbledon. Cllr 1922–; mayor 1933–35. Born Birkenhead, father an insurance officer. Husband was (Sir) Ernest Roney (d 1952), a solicitor's clerk and later successful City solicitor and yachtsman. She was known as Lady Roney. They had four children. She was particularly interested in assisting the unemployed and refugees during WW2. Listed by *The Times* as a Lib. Left £25,800.

SALTER, Ada (née Brown) (1866–1942) Bermondsey. Cllr (ILP) 1909–12, 1913–; first Labour woman mayor 1922–23; member of LCC 1925–. Born Northants; father farmer and staunch Wesleyan Methodist and Gladstonian Liberal. Educ: progressive ladies boarding school in Bedford. Left home to work in West London Methodist Mission, 1896 and Bermondsey Settlement, 1897. 1900 married Alfred Salter. Their only child died in 1910 aged 8. They were Progressive Liberals and he served as an LCC councillor 1906–10. She became increasingly involved with the Labour movement and was a founder of the Women's Labour League, 1906. The couple became Quakers and joined Bermondsey ILP in 1908. She was the first woman councillor in London. Supported Suffragettes and left-wing causes: No Conscription Fellowship and Women's International League in WW1, and Socialist League in 1930s. She refused to wear the mayoral chain on the grounds that such display was out of place in such a poor borough as Bermondsey. Dr Alfred Salter was Labour MP for West Bermondsey 1922–23, 1924–45.

SHORT, Mary (1872–1953) Eye, Suffolk. Mayor 1924–26, 1931–33, 1947–48. Her father was a minor artist, trained at the Royal Academy, and served as mayor of Eye, magistrate and county councillor. She looked after him until his death in 1921 at the age of 92. He left her £1,200. She was a keen amateur painter and published books about Eye. She served as a magistrate and county councillor also. Listed by *The Times* as a Liberal.

SMART, Elizabeth (née Bisset) (1879–1950) Brackley, Northants. Mayor 1937–38. Born Midlothian. Husband (d 1953) was a Scot also, and a Customs and Excise officer. They moved to Brackley in 1906. Six children. Listed by *The Times* as a Lib. Left £119.

SUMMERS, Ada Jane (née Broome) (1861–1944) Stalybridge. Cllr 1912–; ald 1919–; mayor 1919–21. Father (d 1896) was an Oldham mill owner. Husband was a wealthy ironmaster in Stalybridge. Later the firm expanded to Ellesmere Port and Shotton, becoming one of the largest steel manufacturing companies in Britain. He was a cllr and left £192,000 when he died in 1910. They had one daughter. His brother was Lib MP for Flint. Ada was an active suffragist, Lib and philanthropist (maternity and child welfare clinics, clinics for the poor, unemployment centre, Mechanics Institute). She founded the Ladies' Work Society and was known locally as 'Lady Bountiful'. OBE, freedom of Stalybridge, 1939. Active in the British and Foreign Bible Society. Left £66,000.

TAYLOR, Gertrude Elsie (1875–1957) Batley. Cllr 1927–; mayor 1932–34. Born Batley; father mill owner. Her half-brother Theodore C. Taylor (1850–1952) was a Radical MP until 1918 and lynchpin of Liberalism in the district for many decades. Lived on private means. Inherited a large fortune in 1928 when the man she was engaged to marry – Sir Henry Norman, a former Lib MP – died suddenly. Congregationalist. Active in temperance movement and sec of Batley Nursing Association. President of Batley WLA but stood as Ind in local elections. Left £57,200.

SUTTON, Edith (1862–1957) Reading. BoG. Co-opted to Education Cttee in early 1900s; cllr 1907–; ald 1931–; mayor 1933–34. Born Reading, eleventh of twelve children. Father built up Suttons seed business, leaving £114,500 when he died in 1897. She lived with two elder sisters, on 'private means'. She was the first woman borough councillor as she was declared elected unopposed in October 1907 before the contested elections. Active in Guilds of Help, an off-shoot of the Charity Organization Society, 1910. She was elected as a Progressive or Lib-supported Ind until 1921. She joined the Lab Party in 1922. Left £24,600.

THACKERAY, Anne Wynne (1865–1944) Oxford. BoG. Cllr 1919–; ald 1932–38. Born India; father Sir Edward Thackeray, VC, a cousin of the writer, William Makepeace Thakeray. She worked with the poor in Whitechapel, then lived in Oxford with Prof. A. V. Dicey, the political scientist, and his invalid wife. With Miss Mary Venables, a fellow suffragist, she established Cumnor House a 'home for the feeble-minded' in 1907 and they lived together in Cumnor Hill in a house designed for them by Clough Williams-Ellis. She gave her occupation as 'private secretary' (1911). She was an accomplished musician and craftswoman and mixed in composing and artistic circles. Left £6,200 to Venables.

WINTERBOTHAM, Clara (1880–1967) Cheltenham. Cllr 1918–; ald 1922–52; mayor 1921–23, 1944–46; freedom of borough 1943. Her family were wealthy and long-established local solicitors in Cheltenham and surrounding districts. They were active in civic life and were staunch Liberals. They were Baptists by tradition: her great-grandfather was a noted Baptist preacher who was imprisoned in the 1790s for sedition. They later became Congregationalists, but Clara followed her mother, who was born in Australia, as a strong Anglican. Educ: Cheltenham Ladies College and in Europe. Her father left £90,000 when he died in 1914. He had been president of East Gloucestershire Lib Association and her brother was selected as prospective candidate in 1913, but he was killed on the Somme in 1916. WW1: was a nurse in London and Cheltenham, becoming the hospital's quartermaster and a member of the town's Food and Fuel Control Cttee; awarded MBE. She was active in the Missionary Society, the NCW and the Lib Assoc (ch in 1920s, vice-ch 1930s). Invited to be parliamentary candidate for Cheltenham in 1922, but declined.

1 Aldermen made up one-quarter of the membership of a council and were elected for a term of six years by the councillors, who were elected for three-year terms.
2 There is information on the counties, including the London County Council, in Anne Baldwin 'Progress and Patterns in the Election of Women as Councillors 1918–38' (PhD thesis, University of Huddersfield, 2012).
3 Notable exceptions not caught by the criteria are Henrietta Adler (LCC) and Shena Simon (Manchester).
4 The four women-provosts in Scotland were 'Moderates', i.e. members of the Unionist–Liberal grouping which opposed Labour in most burghs.
5 From the age of thirty. Women aged 21–30 received the vote in 1928.
6 P. Hollis, *Ladies-Elect, Women in English Local Government 1865–1914* (Clarendon, 1987), p. 31: about 17 per cent of the electorate overall, but 25 per cent in 'spa, spire and sand' towns.
7 Ibid., pp. ix, 2.
8 Ibid., p. 486: 78 county borough, 142 London borough and 58 municipal borough. In addition, 46 women served on county councils.
9 Baldwin, 'Progress and Patterns', p. 141.
10 Ibid., pp. 109 and 136.

11 Excluding mayors elected in Nov. 1939 after the Second World War had already started.

12 Including two cases where women completed terms of male mayors who died in office. Provosts in Scotland had three-year terms and these have been counted as three terms.

13 Calculating some 350+ authorities in England & Wales x 20 years = 7000+ mayoral terms of office.

14 Two other women, Miss Frances Dove in High Wycombe in 1908 and Ellen Chapman in Worthing in 1914 were nominated for the mayoralty by the council leadership, but unexpectedly voted down by the full council. Dove was non-party and Chapman was a Conservative and became the first Tory woman-mayor in 1920.

15 A significant proportion of inter-war women-mayors were single women and they are identified as 'Miss' throughout the text.

16 P. Catterall, 'The Free Churches and the Labour Party in England and Wales 1918–39' (PhD thesis, University of London, 1989), pp. 263–64.

17 Liberals accounted for 31 per cent of the terms served by men in the 1920s and 18 per cent in the 1930s.

18 Calculated from lists of new mayors in England and Wales published in *The Times* on 10 or 11 Nov. each year with the addition of a Conservative and a Liberal in the 1930s who completed the term of an incumbent who died. One Labour mayor in the 1920s was incorrectly listed as no party specified and this has been corrected. Four Scots provosts not included.

19 *The Times*: as above from the lists of new mayors each Nov., with the same adjustments. Scots provosts not included.

20 Mary Mercer (Birkenhead 1924) and Mary Hart (Newport, Monmouthshire 1937).

21 See http://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/ for information and discussion on the conversion of historical wealth data into modern values.

22 M. P. Jones, 'Mary Ann Edmunds', *Merthyr Historian*, 15, 2003.

23 Quoted in W. Hannington, *Unemployed Struggles 1919–1936* (London, 1977), p. 79. Nevertheless the Congress gave her a gold medal.

24 See B. M. Doyle, 'Urban Liberalism and the "Lost Generation": Politics and the Middle Class Culture of Norwich 1900–1935' (PhD thesis, University of East Anglia, 1990).

25 B. M. Doyle, 'Business, Liberalism and Dissent in Norwich 1900–1930', *Baptist Quarterly*, xxxv (5), Jan. 1994.

26 J. Courtenay, 'Clara Winterbotham 1880–1967 – Cheltenham's First Lady', *Cheltenham Local History Society Journal*, 14, 1998.

27 Notable Conservative suffragettes were Elizabeth Rowley Frisby, Lord Mayor of Leicester in 1941, who was involved in attacks on property including burning down Blaby Station, and Lucia Foster Welch (Southampton 1928). Labour suffragettes included Miss Alice Gilliatt (Fulham 1934), Daisy Parsons (West Ham 1936) and Dorothy Thurtle (Shoreditch 1936), the latter two being active in the East London Federation.

28 *Essex Newsman*, 16 Mar. 1912.

29 I. Ireland, *Margaret Beavan of Liverpool – Her Character and Work* (H Young, 1938).

30 On Taylor, see J. Reynolds and P. Wrigley, 'Liberal Roots – the Liberal Party in a West Yorkshire Constituency 1920s–1970s', *Journal of Liberal History*, 80, Autumn 2013.

31 J. Neville, *Viva Juanita – Champion for Change in East Devon Between the Wars* (Honiton, 2014).

32 *Lancashire Evening Post*, 21 Sept. 1937.

33 *Gloucester Citizen*, 10 Nov. 1921.

34 Four women had been co-opted to Manchester council's Education Committee in 1902.

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COALITION AND TI

The last *Journal of Liberal History* (issue 88, autumn 2015) was a special issue on the 2010–15 coalition and the
page 25). Here, **Michael Meadowcroft** considers the implications of the party's targeting strategy for the

Targeting: its effect on Liberal Democrat performance in the 2015 general election

Michael Meadowcroft

My concern that the Autumn 2015 issue of the *Journal of Liberal History* would be too close to the end of the coalition, and to the general election just a handful of months earlier, to enable a rigorous analysis of governmental decisions and of the Liberal Democrats' strategy made me predisposed to be critical of the editorial decision. I was largely wrong, and the articles under the rubric 'Coalition and the Liberal Democrats' provide valuable material for the record and for further research. Remarkably, however, all these accounts of the past five years wilfully ignore the consequences on the Liberal Democrats' performance of its targeting strategy. It is a remarkable omission when, arguably, it had a pervasive and malign effect on the party's vote generally and was a major cause of the massive reduction in votes almost everywhere and of the derisory vote in many constituencies.

Put at its simplest, twenty years of targeting, under which, year by year, the party's financial and campaigning resources were concentrated on fewer and fewer constituencies (and local government wards) has left the party with just eight MPs and 8 per cent of the popular vote. Whilst vividly true in its own terms, this statement ignores a host of other factors that impinged significantly on the strategy and its effects.

The figures show clearly that the introduction of targeting prior to the 1997 general election coincided with an increase in the number of MPs elected from twenty in 1992 to forty-six in 1997; and the one was assumed to be so self-evidently a consequence of the other that the efficacy of the strategy was thereafter unchallenged and it could be applied unilaterally from the centre with increasingly draconian selection and support measures. As far as I can ascertain there was no review of the principle of the strategy and of its effects over the twenty years from its introduction up to last May's election. The disastrous results suggest that, even on its own terms, the strategy had, at best, failed to deliver and at worst it had so hollowed out the party in the 550 plus seats that were not targets that its base vote was minimal and that the party, no longer having a presence in some 85 per cent of the country, could not withstand the adverse icy wind that blew fatally as a consequence of a coalition with the Conservatives.

The consequences of continued targeting

Targeting applied to individual wards for local elections has added to the problems of maintaining a viable party. We do not just have a constituency targeted but also individual wards within other constituencies. What is more, when a previously Liberal-Democrat-held ward loses its councillors, unless it can demonstrate its massive commitment to winning it back, preferably with one of the previous ward councillors, it gets struck off the target list so that the party contracts more and more and areas that had previously had a significant number of activists are written off and lose any party presence. The City of Leeds is a good example of the problem. There is, of course, the Leeds North West constituency, brilliantly held by Greg Mulholland in May. However, in 2004, in addition to the four wards in this constituency, there were eight other target wards, six of which were won. By 2014 there were only four such wards, just two of which were won. Thus in the run up to last May's general election 75 per cent of the city was written off by

HE 2015 ELECTION

Liberal Democrats. Unsurprisingly, it triggered a range of responses, including a number of letters (see outcome of the 2015 election, and **Roy Douglas** queries the decision to enter coalition in the first place.

the party and only in Leeds North East and Leeds East, where some colleagues disobeyed central party instructions, were there even one constituency-wide election address, (they just held on to their deposit in Leeds North East.) It is no wonder that we poll derisory votes in most of the city. Perhaps the most serious consequence of such targeting is that it does not hold out the possibility of revival. If party instructions are followed, no one gets any support whatever in working sacrificially in a non-target ward with the determination to win it – as was a key method of success before the strategy.

Statistics

The national statistics for the six elections, 1992 to 2015, are revealing (see Table 1).

It would appear that applying targeting after the 1992 general election achieved what it set out to do: it traded a reduction in the party's national vote for a large increase in the number of MPs elected. However, the results in the following three elections hardly justify the risk of ending campaigning in a majority of constituencies in order to release party activists in them to go and work in the designated seats. Clearly there was still a residual perception of a widespread party presence in that the total poll remained roughly the same in 2001 and actually increased in 2005 and 2010. This had disappeared by 2015 after thirteen years of a widespread lack of local campaigning activity and faced with the adverse political circumstances of that election; but even before 2015, the trade-off of 'presence' for seats only produced eleven additional MPs over four elections – welcome to be sure but achieved at great cost. My conclusion is that there was an argument for targeting for a single election but not thereafter.

The issues

There are seven questions that need to be addressed in the light of recent elections, and particularly that of May 2015:

1. Does the party wish to be a national party with at least a minimum active presence in every constituency? If so this is incompatible with targeting as practised up to the 2015 general election. Unless there is a widespread national presence there is no point of contact for potential members, for the media, for campaigning to change illiberal local policies, or for applying national policies and campaigns locally. At the very least, the Liberal Democrats cannot be a political party making the argument for Liberalism and seeking to recruit and sustain those who have a personal allegiance to that philosophy unless there is a party locally to join and to participate in, and this applies to ensuring that there are activities for surges of new members such as after the leaders' debates in 2010 and post-election in 2015.
2. What is the value to seats that are designated as target constituencies in activity across the board? In Leeds, over the fifteen years it took to win the West Leeds seat it was certainly helpful that there was activity across the city that was commented on in workplaces and in working men's clubs etc. as well as producing a great deal of coverage in the local newspapers. Also, there is at least a minimal value in tying up activists of the other parties to inhibit them from working against the party in its key seats.
3. Does targeting produce significant extra workers in key seats? Some additional workers certainly transfer their activity to help in key seats but it is only the dedicated party members that do so, as most local activists only see a need to be involved in their own patch. Also, there is a diminishing return as the lack of local activity causes activists to become inactive.
4. Is there a value in having as large a national vote as possible? I certainly believe that there is. I would not dispute that winning seats and having a significant parliamentary presence is crucial, but the extended influence of the party's MPs, their moral authority and the political legitimacy of Liberalism is underpinned by a massive national vote. It is also important to the advocacy of electoral reform.

Table 1: Liberal Democrat performance, 1992–2015

Year	*LD votes (million)*	*LD %*	*MPs elected*
1992	6.0	17.8	20
1997	5.2	16.8	46
2001	4.8	18.3	52
2005	6.0	22.0	62
2010	6.8	23.0	57
2015	2.4	7.9	8

5. Is there a viable alternative to targeting? Historically, an example is provided by West Leeds over the long years the Liberal Party took to win it in 1983. (Incidentally, West Leeds is currently one of the many seats in which currently there is no activity whatever.) We encouraged activity in all the Leeds seats and did not seek to 'poach' key individuals from other seats; however we had special 'work weekends' and similar activities for which we asked for outside help – and got it, often from many miles away. The same tactic could be used now to designate 'special seats' to which extra effort could be encouraged and directed.
6. Is there a long-term effect of the strategy in the target seats? It is curious that there had still to be target seats – many of them the same constituencies as in 1997 – after twenty years. A concomitant danger of targeting is that it encourages a constituency to rely on outside activity rather than seeking to be self-supporting.
7. Over a period of time, the establishing of a base Liberal Democrat vote of electors who identify with Liberal values, even if inchoately, and who are predisposed to vote Liberal Democrat even when the party is unpopular, is incompatible with targeting which prevents activity to seek out and to sustain these individuals.

Conclusion

The party's targeting strategy had a positive impact on the 1997 election but not significantly thereafter. Moreover, by curtailing activity in a large majority of constituencies, it has had a malign effect on the party's general presence in the country and has diminished the party's base vote. As such it was a contributing factor to the party's poor performance at the May 2015 general election.

Michael Meadowcroft was a Leeds City Councillor, 1968–83, and Liberal MP for Leeds West, 1983–87. He held numerous local and national offices in the Liberal Party.

Can Liberals learn from history?

Roy Douglas

In the Autumn 2015 issue of the *Journal of Liberal History*, a considerable number of senior members of the Liberal Democrats gave their views of the 2010 general election and its aftermath. There appears to be substantial unanimity that the Lib Dems were wise in participating in the coalition. I contend that this view is wrong and that the Lib Dems had a better option open to them. I also contend that the action they took was rooted in a fundamentally flawed view of the proper role of Lib Dems in the political system – a view which has implications not only for the present but also for the more distant future. I shall go further and contend that unless the Lib Dems take serious and drastic action soon, they will have no future and deserve none. I base these opinions largely on the history of the Lib Dems and their predecessor Liberal Party.

I also contend that the action they took was rooted in a fundamentally flawed view of the proper role of Lib Dems in the political system – a view which has implications not only for the present but also for the more distant future.

In the House of Commons of 650 members elected in May 2010, there were 306 Conservatives, 258 Labour, 57 Lib Dems, 8 Democratic Unionists and 6 Scottish Nationalists, plus a total of 9 from Plaid Cymru, Social Democratic Labour Party, Alliance, Green and Independent put together. In addition there were six non-voters: the Speaker, who can't vote and five Sinn Fein who won't vote. Conservatives and Lib Dems together could provide – did provide – a comfortable working majority with 363 seats, against 281 for all other voting MPs.

Another option, which is occasionally discussed, was a combination of Labour and Lib Dems. This would have provided 315 seats: rather more than the Conservatives but well short of an overall majority. Whether such a combination could have been formed at all seems doubtful, because a lot of Labour people would have fought it tooth and nail. But, if it had been formed, it could hardly have been expected to last long, being highly vulnerable to minor rebellions, winter flu or small parties feeling their muscles.

A coalition in which the Conservatives were much the largest party has always led to disaster for others. That was the case in the coalition of 1918–22, even though Lloyd George had more than twice as many MPs behind him as Nick Clegg had in 2010. At the ensuing general election, the Liberals were split into two warring groups. Even if those groups could come have together (which they actually did a year later), the Liberal Party would still only have been – for the first time ever – the third party of the state. The National Democratic Party had also supported the coalition, and every one of its ten MPs was defeated. When the National Government was formed in 1931 with Liberal support, it was almost immediately dominated by the Conservatives. The Liberals in the House of Commons promptly split into two groups of almost equal size, plus a splinter of four MPs separate from both. Most members of one of the two substantial groups, the Liberal Nationals, and some of the others, eventually disappeared without trace into the Conservative ranks. A few very important former Labour MPs stayed in the government, constituting themselves the National Labour Party, which also gradually vanished.

Warned by such experiences, the post-1945 Liberal Party resisted temptations to participate in Conservative-dominated administrations. Clement Davies was offered a cabinet job by Winston Churchill in 1951 in what proved to be a remarkably benign Conservative government. Jeremy Thorpe was offered a job by Edward Heath in 1974. Both leaders consulted their colleagues and, following their advice, loyally resisted the temptation. If they had acted otherwise, it is difficult to see how the Liberal Party could have survived.

So what other options remained? 'Go it alone: a plague on both your houses' had some attractions in 2010, but it carried its own risks. A widespread view among Lib Dems at the time was that, if no coalition was formed, the Conservatives would form a minority government, behave with studied moderation for a short time, and then call another general election at which they would win an overall majority. Voters could reasonably judge that the Lib Dems were

ducking the responsibility to help deal with a very serious economic crisis, and they would lose ground – though it is difficult to believe that they would have fared as badly as they did in 2015.

Suppose, however, that Nick Clegg had greeted the 2010 election results with a speech rather like this.

> All three major parties have been disappointed by the results. We Lib Dems hoped to improve our position, but in fact have lost a few MPs. Labour hoped to retain a majority, but they are now well short of a majority. The Conservatives hoped to win an overall majority, but they have not done so. The verdict of the electors might be summed up, 'None of the above.'
>
> Yet everybody agrees that the country is in a dire economic mess and some sort of government must be formed to try to sort it out. We Lib Dems call for a genuine three-party coalition to do so, and are willing and eager to play our part in such a government. However, we are not prepared to join with the Tories to do down Labour, or with the Labour party to do down the Tories.

How would the other parties have responded? There is a theoretical possibility that they would both have accepted the suggestion and the Lib Dems could have expected credit for having suggested it. Much more likely, one or both of them would have refused. The other two parties would have had to sort out the immediate question of who was to form a minority government. It would probably have been the Conservatives, but the possibility of Labour remaining in office and awaiting defeat in the new parliament could not be excluded. In either case a new general election would probably have followed soon. The Lib Dems would have been in a position to argue in terms like these:

> In spite of the real economic crisis, the other parties prefer to play silly politics rather than attend to the problem. We have called for a three-party government, which seems to be what the voters really wanted, and we still call for a three-party government. If you, the voters, agree that this is the right way of handling the crisis, then give us a lot more MPs and that will send a message to both other parties which they cannot refuse to accept.

What would have happened? Perhaps the message would have hit home, and the Lib Dems would have improved their position. Perhaps it would have failed, and the Lib Dems might have slipped back. The one thing that is pretty certain is that they would not have sustained catastrophe on the scale they encountered in 2015.

When the general election of 2015 approached, disaster for the Lib Dems was predictable. Many people who had voted Lib Dem in 2010 were profoundly disappointed. The volte-face over tuition fees had been utterly inexcusable, for many people had been induced to vote Lib Dem by the promise on which many – but not all – of the MPs later reneged. The Lib Dems had countenanced an increase in VAT – the worst and the most regressive of all our major taxes. They had made fools of themselves over electoral reform: the referendum was bound to be rigged against the idea unless the Tories backed it. Furthermore, the proposed 'reform' would have been little better than the present voting system and was completely different from proportional representation which the Liberals had always supported. Against the many disappointed former supporters, the Lib Dems had nothing to say which might attract new support in compensation.

Some people – I was one of them – thought that the 'incumbency factor' might have saved twenty-odd Lib Dems who were good constituency MPs. But this was not to be and the party was reduced from fifty-seven MPs to eight. In the country as a whole, there are no 'strongholds'. No two Lib Dem seats are contiguous. There are only two constituencies, Westmorland and Norfolk North, in which the Lib Dem majority is as great as 3,000 and in Norfolk this may be explained in part by the unusually high UKIP vote which probably damaged the Tory challenger selectively. Lib Dems are certainly in dire trouble and unless something drastic is done about it they face the real threat of parliamentary extinction in the foreseeable future.

What played the biggest part in keeping the Liberals in existence as an active party in the bleakest years was the conviction among party activists that the Liberal Party had absolutely unique policies.

Reflecting on the catastrophe, would the Lib Dems have fared much better if, somehow, they had formed a coalition with Labour and – against all probabilities – that coalition had survived for five years? I very much doubt it. There is little reason for thinking that voters would have taken a kindlier view of the junior partner in a coalition with Labour than they did of the junior partner in a coalition with the Conservatives.

So, what can be done? There is a historical parallel. In 1951 the Liberals were down to six MPs and did not improve on that figure until the Orpington by-election of 1962, which brought them up to seven. In 1970, however, they were down to six again, after which they began a slow climb to sixty-three in 2005. What played the biggest part in keeping the Liberals in existence as an active party in the bleakest years was the conviction among party activists that the Liberal Party had absolutely unique policies. There was nowhere else that Liberals could go.

Does that conviction still apply? For a considerable time it has looked as if the aim of the Lib Dems was to find themselves in the very position which arose so disastrously in 2010: holding the balance of power between Conservatives and Labour. This implied the hope that they could slip a few of their own people into the government and restrain the larger party from doing some of the nastier things which it might contemplate. There was no prospect of securing any important objectives which were distinctively Liberal, with the very improbable exception of real electoral reform. Whatever else the 2015 general election established, it proved that the electors have no time for that sort of party.

The best hope for the Lib Dems today is to cast their minds back to the 'unfinished agenda' – things for which Liberals fought in the past, which are still unfulfilled. Some of those things have been superseded by events; but many have not.

Free trade was always on the Liberal masthead. However the voters decide in the 2017 referendum on 'Europe', much will be required to establish something like

free trade as Cobden or Gladstone, Asquith or Samuel, understood the term. It remains as true as ever that 'if goods cannot cross international frontiers, armies will'.

For well over a century, Liberals fought for a taxation system more just and more efficient than the present one, pivoting on Land Value Taxation. With huge rises in land values – both in an absolute sense and relative to the value of other things – the case for 'LVT' today is even stronger than it was a century or so ago, when it was winning elections for the Liberal Party. It is the cheapest and simplest way of raising public revenue. It will play a major part in the battle against poverty. It is a major instrument against unemployment. It will help deal with many urban problems ranging from housing shortage to inner-city decay. It will help the rural environment and the farmer, while boosting food production. It will be of great value in countering the cycle of booms and slumps.

As far back as 1929, Liberals fought a general election on the slogan, 'We can conquer unemployment'. Alas, they did not win; but they substantially increased their representation. On the same theme, later William Beveridge produced his plans for 'full employment in a free society', which for a long time was largely accepted by all parties. It is urgently needed today. In a sane society, the problem would not be 'What should we do for these people who haven't got jobs?' but 'How on earth do we find people to do all the work that needs to be done?'

Long before the First World War, Winston Churchill was castigating the Conservatives as 'the party of the rich against the poor', with the intended implication that Liberals were appalled at the maldistribution of wealth which prevailed and intended to rectify it. Wealth is still maldistributed; the poor are still much too poor and a great deal needs to be done, and can be done, to improve the situation.

It was Liberals who in 1870 first made legislative provision for universal primary education. Does our educational system yet provide any opportunity for people from disadvantaged backgrounds to make the most of their talents? If the nation needs many people with high educational qualifications for the benefit of all, is it acting wisely in imposing high tuition fees, which will inevitably discourage many aspirants? Lib Dems today need to undo the follies of the 2010–15 coalition. Everyone complains about weaknesses in the National Health Service. At the root of the trouble is a shortage of medical and nursing staff. There is no short-term answer, but the long-term solution must be greatly to increase the numbers of people undergoing the appropriate training.

In matters of 'defence' and foreign policy, we may look back to Cobden and, indeed, to some of the Radicals of much later times. Why involve ourselves in conflicts, particularly in the Middle East, where we cannot hope to determine the long-term consequences? As for 'defence', how much is necessary to protect us from attack, and by whom? Would anybody sleep less comfortably in their beds if we abandoned not only Trident but a great deal more besides? Much money and many lives could be saved by drastic reduction in both weapons and commitments.

As every experienced politician knows, good policies are not enough. They must be backed by good organisation. That was recognised by Liberals in the aftermath of 1945, when Liberals decided that their declared objective of a 'Liberal majority government' presupposed the creation of strong constituency organisations. Branches were set up in many places where they had not existed for years and existing branches were given much clearer ideas of how to organise. Of course they failed disastrously in their primary objective, but it is a fair guess that they would have disappeared altogether long ago if they had not given serious attention to their grass roots. My own experience in the constituency where I live, which was won by the Lib Dems in 2010 but lost again in 2015, is that Lib Dem organisation, even in hopeful places, is still very far from adequate.

All this seems to portend a long and stony road back; but politics is full of surprises – good as well as bad. There is some reason for thinking that the situation today may have parallels with that which prevailed in the late 1840s and the 1850s, when old parties were breaking down and new ones appropriate to the needs of the times were beginning to emerge. I think we should watch the Labour Party in particular. I have said that a Labour–Lib Dem coalition in 2010 would probably have been no better for Lib Dems (or, I may add, for the country) than the Conservative–Lib Dem coalition which actually took place. But a lot of things have changed since before the massive events of May 2015.

There is some reason for thinking that the situation today may have parallels with that which prevailed in the late 1840s and the 1850s, when old parties were breaking down and new ones appropriate to the needs of the times were beginning to emerge.

If the general election wrought disaster on the Lib Dems, it also wrought disaster on the Labour Party. Ever since 1918, the Labour Party has aimed at forming an independent government. For most of that period, the dominant reason for this was that the Labour Party believed in socialism. That faith gradually evaporated and it was formally renounced in the late 1990s in favour of what was called 'New Labour', which looked uncommonly like a mild form of Conservatism in domestic affairs and subservience to the United States in foreign policy. If the choice of a new leader signifies anything, it strongly suggests that 'New Labour' has also been repudiated. The Labour Party is casting round for new policies and – who knows? – it may eventually land up with policies not wildly different from those which I have suggested as appropriate for the Lib Dems. That, however, is completely hypothetical at this stage.

Labour also faces a major problem of a different kind. Will it ever be possible to create another Labour government? Labour's great stronghold was Scotland right down to 2015. Now they (like the Lib Dems and the Conservatives) hold just one Scottish constituency. On top of that, there is a serious prospect that within a few years Scotland will be an independent country and out of the UK political equation altogether.

Is it possible to secure, not a coalition, but some kind of electoral understanding, with Labour? An old question, but a valid one. I have before me the 'official' party publication, *Liberal Magazine*, of June 1914, p. 323. This records six by-elections to the parliament of the day in which seats that had been Liberal at the previous general election, and one where the seat had been Labour, had been captured by the Tories through the intervention

of a third candidate. It concluded, 'What is clearly wanted is a policy of accommodation between Liberal and Labour which will reproduce in the constituencies the cooperation which obtains at Westminster.' It would be useful today for both parties to consider how many constituencies were won by the Conservatives in 2015 where the victory could be attributed to the presence of a 'no-hope' candidate – Lib Dem in some cases, Labour in others.

A few conclusions seem to emerge. There is no future for a party which aspires to no more than junior partnership in a coalition dominated by others, though tactical arrangements in some constituencies may well be useful. The job of Lib Dems today is to decide on policies aimed not just at dealing with short-term problems but at producing a long-term Liberal future. It will be necessary to give much more attention than in the recent past to strengthening local organisations. Lib Dems should, however, keep in mind the prospect of eventually participating in a major political realignment. There are people in the Labour Party and there are people in the Conservative Party too, who are already thinking on truly Liberal lines.

These and many other objectives are suggested by the actions and policies of Liberals in the historic past. Whether Lib Dems have any future will depend on how well they learn from the past.

Dr Roy Douglas is Emeritus Reader at the University of Surrey, a former Liberal parliamentary candidate, and the author of fifteen books, including The History of the Liberal Party 1895–1970 *(1971) and* Liberals: The History of the Liberal and Liberal Democrat Parties *(2005).*

There is no future for a party which aspires to no more than junior partnership in a coalition dominated by others.

LETTERS

Labour and the Liberals; questions for readers

Anent James Owen's article 'The struggle for representation: Labour candidates and the Liberals, 1886–1895' (*Journal of Liberal History* 86, spring 2015), Keir Hardie was refused the Liberal nomination for the Mid-Lanarkshire by-election in 1888. He then left the Liberals and unsuccessfully contested the by-election as Independent Labour. John Sinclair, a protégé of (Sir) Henry Campbell-Bannerman and a future Secretary for Scotland, was offered the Liberal nomination but refused, as he did not want to oppose Hardie.

In 1901, Sinclair, then Scottish Liberal Whip, supported, with Sir Henry's approval, the unsuccessful Scottish Workers Representation Committee (SWRC) candidate at a by-election in North-Eastern Lanarkshire, rather than the Liberal Imperialist candidate who was also unsuccessful. The intervention of SWRC candidates resulted in the defeat of Liberal candidates in North-Western Lanarkshire and Ayrshire Northern at the 1906 general election.

Anent the report of the meeting on 'The Liberal-Tory coalition of 1915', why did Bonar Law, the Tory leader, who joined the Cabinet in May 1915, not have to submit himself to a ministerial by-election? Such were not suspended during the war, as Harold Tennant, Asquith's brother-in-law, had to submit himself to an unopposed ministerial by-election in Berwickshire when appointed Secretary for Scotland in July 1916.

And one more question for your readers. Some biographers of William E. Gladstone state that his brother, Robertson (born 1805) was educated at Eton and Glasgow Academy. However, Glasgow Academy was not founded until 1845. Can any of your readers advise where in Glasgow he was educated? Incidentally, one of the original directors of the Academy was Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's uncle, William Campbell.

Dr Alexander S. Waugh

The Great War and the Liberal Party (1)

Michael Steed in his very interesting article, 'Did the Great War really kill the Liberal Party?' (*Journal of Liberal History* 87, summer 2015) writes of the belief of the historic Liberal Party 'that reason, trade and moral principles could together bring peace' as 'close to a raison d'être' and as 'an important constituent in the glue that held together the disparate elements making up the party'. Two letters in the *Manchester Guardian* in August 1916 seem to provide sharp confirmation of this analysis.

Mary Toulmin, wife of Sir George Toulmin, Liberal MP for Bury, wrote to the *Manchester Guardian* on 5 August 1916:

> It is difficult for a life-long Liberal like myself – and one growing more Radical with years – to write with moderation of the present position of Liberal politics. The members of the Liberal Party in the House of Commons, with a few noble exceptions, have slavishly obeyed the dictum of the Prime Minister – 'Wait and See'. They have waited and they have seen! They see a unity of parties indeed but how achieved? By the continuous surrender by the Liberal Party of all those things it held most dear – a voluntary army, right of asylum, respect for conscience, education, Home Rule, and international law as touching the rights of neutrals.

The President of the Yorkshire Council of Women's Liberal Associations, Mary Isabel Salt, wrote on 10 August 1916:

> The letters appearing in your columns from Lady Toulmin, Sir William Byles, and others, undoubtedly express the opinion of thousands of sincere rank-and-file Liberals who have hitherto remained dumb under the impotence of the present situation, but who are none the less eagerly awaiting the first opportunity to battle effectively for the old principles which formed the bedrock of their political faith. Some of us are asking ourselves whether we can honestly remain associated any longer with a party whose official

sanction is given to active work against Liberal principles and to the repudiation of Liberal principles one by one … Could not a Radical party be formed even now which would pledge itself to adhere to Liberal principles? If the leaders would come forward the members would roll up in their thousands. One feels the tragedy of the present situation, insomuch as it is so infinitely easier to lose our hard-won liberties than to regain them, and if the consolidation of a really liberal party is left until after the war it may be too late to achieve much in our own generation.

As indicated, there were other letters along these lines.

Duncan Marlor

The Great War and the Liberal Party (2)

Professor Otte's excellent article on Sir Edward Grey ('The long shadow of war;, *Journal of Liberal History* 87, summer 2015) throws light on a puzzle which has vexed many historians. How did it happen that a man of high intelligence, complete probity and a deep love of peace nevertheless played an important part in involving Britain in a war which most people would now consider unnecessary and almost wholly destructive?

When I was looking at a different problem, I encountered memoranda sent to Grey by the two most senior Foreign Office officials, Sir Arthur Nicolson and Sir Eyre Crowe, shortly before Britain became committed to action which made involvement in the 1914 war inevitable. Both were obviously trying to stiffen Grey, urging that – as Crowe put it – 'in a just quarrel England (sic) would stand by her friends'. [FO800/94, fo.522] At a time when Belgium had not yet been invaded, or even directly threatened, both were much more concerned that Britain should support France and Russia than that she should take whatever action was possible to avert the catastrophe.

This set me wondering. To what extent had Foreign Office officials, unknown to the public and probably to most MPs, gradually manoeuvred Britain into policies which led to war? Were there perhaps similar people in the background in Vienna, Berlin, Paris and St Petersburg who played a major part in impelling sovereigns and statesmen who did not want war into that avoidable conflict? And may it be that similar people still lurk in the various Foreign Offices of the world?

Roy Douglas

LIBERAL HISTORY QUIZ 2015

The 2015 Liberal history quiz was a feature of the History Group's exhibition stand at the Liberal Democrat conference in Bournemouth last September; the questions were drawn from our new book, *British Liberal Leaders*. The winners, each with 19 marks out of 20, were David Hughes and Richard Sanderson. We also included anyone answering at least five questions correctly in a draw for a second prize: the winner was James Sanderson. Below we reprint the questions – the answers are on page 39.

1. On hearing that Nick Clegg was going to join the Liberal Democrats who said: 'Oh, for heaven's sake, joining the Liberal Democrats is like joining an NGO!'
2. From which city's Town Hall in 1901 did David Lloyd George have to flee a pro-Boer War mob disguised as a policeman?
3. Which Liberal leader fell foul of the man who devised the rules of boxing and was consequently mentioned in the trial of a famous playwright?
4. CB acquired his surname well after his birth; why and when did he do it?
5. Which Liberal leader became the first ever British High Commissioner for Palestine?
6. What was the name of the baronetcy inherited from his grandfather by Sir Archibald Sinclair in 1912?
7. Which seat did Roy Jenkins fight unsuccessfully at the 1945 general election?
8. In what year was David Owen first elected as an MP for a Plymouth constituency?
9. Which leader defeated a sitting Liberal MP when he entered Parliament and later sat together with that opponent in the House of Lords?
10. What was the name of the quarterly journal, founded in 1993 and edited by Charles Kennedy, which advocated preparation for a Lib-Lab coalition?
11. Which Liberal leader introduced the targeting strategy known as the Winnable Seats scheme?
12. Criticised as ready at ten minutes' notice to assume the roles of a surgeon, an architect or an admiral, which leader was compared to a Venetian magistrate by a later leader in a mock obituary?
13. Which prolific leader, better known for a cuppa than his policies, fathered an illegitimate child by an aristocratic canvasser for Fox?
14. Who was Home Secretary at the time of the Tolpuddle Martyrs?
15. He held the offices of Secretary for War, Foreign Secretary (three times) and Home Secretary and was the MP who waited longest to become Prime Minister; who was he?
16. Whose maiden speech in the first reformed parliament professed a qualified opposition to the abolition of slavery?
17. Which leader had four children, three of whom died at the age of 23, all in unrelated incidents?
18. Which Liberal Prime Minister earned the nickname 'the last of the Romans'?
19. As a young man he was bowled over by Skittles; later he created a double duchess, led the Liberals and turned down the top job three times. Who was he?
20. Who were Menzies Campbell's two opponents in the leadership contest of 2006?

Coalition and the Liberal Democrats (1)

The last edition of the *Journal of Liberal History* (issue 88, autumn 2015) was excellent, the first serious look at the coalition from a Lib Dem point of view.

Comprehensive though it was, however, it did miss something essential in my opinion: the ideological convergence between the Liberal Democrats and the Conservative parties driven by the leadership of both parties. David Laws, for example, is on record as saying that the coalition would not have been possible without the contribution made to the ideology of the party by the *Orange Book*.

There were policies that the Liberal Democrats agreed to in coalition with the Tories that it is hard to imagine that any other previous leader of the party would have agreed. Out of a long list of policies where that applies, one that sticks in my mind was the bedroom tax (albeit the other benefit cuts were perhaps even more devastating to those who had to endure them). References were made to how George Osborne pushed through the worst benefit cuts, but surely these were agreed by the Quad? If so, not only did Nick Clegg and Danny Alexander fail to say no, they actively supported the policies afterwards.

I will assume that they genuinely believed the policies would not increase poverty and increase misery. But for them to believe that they would have to disbelieve organisations like CPAG who campaigned against the policy, and who were later to have been proved right to do so. So the question is: when did we as Lib Dems stop believing in CPAG, and agree with the Tories instead? As I write, with apparently no debate the party seems to have returned to where it was before, supporting radical anti-poverty policies.

Maybe this is something the *Journal of Liberal History* should look at?

Geoff Payne

Editor's note: we plan a second special edition of the *Journal* on the coalition, in autumn 2016, analysing the difference the Liberal Democrats really made to government policy across a range of key policy areas – a topic we couldn't cover for lack of space in issue 88.

Coalition and the Liberal Democrats (2)

The Coalition and the Liberal Democrats issue (*Journal of Liberal History* 88, autumn 2015) contained much fascinating detail that will be pored over by historians, and others, for a long time to come. While reading through it, I was struck by one particular comment, in the highly critical assessment by John Pugh ('Coalition history – our follies and our fortune').

He noted that 'The blunders we made were utterly de trop and born of political inexperience and hubris', going on to note that 'people with previous experience of coalitions and pacts and experience in a British context … were either ignored or kept on the margins and advice sought instead from selected continental sources and special advisers.'

A lack of knowledge of other aspects of the party's history was apparent at times, too. I recall the important Parliamentary occasion, on 9 December 2013, when tributes were paid to Nelson Mandela. While regretting the fact that he 'never had the privilege of meeting Nelson Mandela,' Nick Clegg praised 'the British campaigners in the Anti-Apartheid Movement in London who showed unfailing loyalty to and support for Nelson Mandela during his bleakest days,' adding ' I, too, pay tribute to Mr (Peter) Hain and all his fellow campaigners for what they did at that time.'

There was no mention in Clegg's speech – as perhaps there should have been – of the determined opposition to apartheid of two of his predecessors, Jeremy Thorpe and David Steel, both associated with the Anti-Apartheid Movement, the latter as its President for a while, during a period when their stance required real political courage to be associated with their undoubted liberalism. Nor was there a mention, as there might have been, that Peter Hain – rightly praised in that debate – was then an active Liberal, although Menzies Campbell, Simon Hughes and Martin Horwood, all with a far better grasp of party history, did so in their speeches.

Instead, we learned merely that 'As a student, I was one of the thousands of people who flooded into Wembley stadium for the "Free Nelson Mandela" concert to mark his 70th birthday.' If ever there was an appropriate time for a leader of the Liberal Democrats to recall the Liberal role in the opposition to apartheid, this Parliamentary occasion was it.

Was this failure to make this point, too, born of 'political inexperience and hubris'? And of a lack of knowledge of, and interest in, the history of Liberals and liberalism? Perhaps. In any case, a politely-worded note of regret and complaint I sent at the time to the relevant address failed to receive even the most perfunctory reply.

Peter Hellyer (former YL Vice Chairman and former member of the AAM Executive)

Coalition and the Liberal Democrats (3)

There is an, in my view serious, historical inaccuracy on p. 10 of *Journal of Liberal History* 88.

Before 2010, there were many other referendums under the Blair government beside the two mentioned by Adrian Slade. There was the referendum on establishing the London mayor, the referendum on the Good Friday agreement and the referendum on North-East devolution. There were also many referendums on the establishment or removal of local mayors, far more than on any other issue in the whole of British history

I think the implication that referendums became common during the coalition is just inaccurate; it was Blair who established them as a regular part of the British political system.

Richard Gadsden

Coalition and the Liberal Democrats (4)

Undoubtedly the electoral catastrophe of May 2015 was compounded by fabricated panic that a Labour-SNP alliance would ravage England's green and pleasant land; but the fatal damage was done in 2010, not by the fact of the coalition but by the hasty vote to raise tuition fees. Time did not heal this wound. In summer 2014 I marked an A-level paper that included a question about how political parties engage with the public; the one thing that every candidate knew was that the Lib Dems – often personified as Nick Clegg – break their promises.

Once Lib Dem candidates pledged themselves to vote against in the 2010 campaign, that had to be a red line in coalition negotiations; anyone who thought this little promise was trumped by the bigger commitment to work constructively with the largest party deceived themselves. Nor could the raising of fees be justified by impending financial crisis. In the short run it made no difference whether student fees were granted or loaned.

Returned unopposed as a Lib Dem district councillor in May 2015, I was fortunate to avoid the pain inflicted on so many fine, talented people. But the moral of the disaster is clear: (1) don't make promises unless you are sure you can keep them; (2) don't make a long-term alliance in a tearing hurry.

Andy Connell

Asquith and the Lords

It's interesting how often historians chance on a 'nugget' whilst looking for something else.

I was recently researching the National Liberal Club archives to answer a query and in the minutes for the General Committee of 4 March 1925 it was recorded that the Committee's Chairman, Lord Beauchamp, had asked for the Committee's starting time to be varied to accommodate his duties in the House of Lords, as 'Lord Oxford would

not assume the daily duties of a Leader.'

There is a great deal of valuable historical material in the Club's archives and efforts are at last being to make them available, including an initial programme of digitisation.

Michael Meadowcroft (Hon. Archivist, National Liberal Club)

REPORTS

Community Politics and the Liberal Revival

Conference fringe meeting held jointly with the Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors, 13 March 2015, with Gordon Lishman and Paul Clark; chair: Sarah Boad

Report by **Graham Lippiatt**

The famous community politics resolution, adopted by the Liberal Party at its 1970 Assembly, helped to lay the foundations for revival after the party's loss of half its seats in the 1970 general election. This fringe meeting explored the community politics approach, what it meant and how might be of help to Liberal Democrats in the future. Leading the discussion were Gordon Lishman (co-author of *The Theory and Practice of Community Politics*) and, substituting for Mike Storey, former leader of Liverpool Council, who was at the last moment unable to attend, Paul Clarke who was a Liverpool councillor for thirty-four years.

Gordon introduced his talk by referring to the context in which the idea of community politics came to be born and looking forward to a debate on how that idea should be developed and used politically in the future. Community politics was adopted by the Liberal Party because there was a big gap to fill. After the 1970 general election the party did not have much of an answer to the question, 'What do we do next?' Neither did the party have an answer to the question from individual members, 'What can I do next?' This question, Gordon suggested, was likely to be on the lips of party delegates in Bournemouth, the first federal conference after the 2015 general election, more than ever since 1970. And it was also important now to revisit other aspects of the amendment passed at Eastbourne in 1970, such as how to put into practice the dual approach of working inside and outside parliament and about how to build a base in big industrial cities.

One of the issues which Gordon and the co-author of *The Theory and Practice of Community Politics,* Bernard Greaves, debated at the time of writing was whether or not include in the book a chapter linking the idea of community politics to the wider history of Liberalism; the notion that approaches to political action and political ideas are indivisibly part of the same thing. Gordon then quoted from Bernard Greaves – 'community politics is not a technique for winning local elections' – and went on to place community politics in the context of the idea of 'positive liberty' or the use of freedom. This is an idea originating in J. S. Mill's thought, and Gordon next quoted from *Considerations on Representative Government*, where Mill says that people are not just allowed to participate in politics but that it is good that they should do so, for themselves and for wider society.

Now turning to the *Little Yellow Book*, a recent publication by Nigel Lindsay and Robert Brown for the Scottish Liberal Democrats, Gordon commended the section that declares that political thought is not just something that happens in universities, think tanks or party policy committees but that everyone thinks about fairness, responsibility, power or how they want their lives to go. Politics has become disengaged from this vibrant, everyday way of thinking and it is the job of liberal community politicians to re-establish the link between political theory and the everyday thinking about politics that people do without really realising it.

The famous community politics resolution, adopted by the Liberal Party at its 1970 Assembly, helped to lay the foundations for revival after the party's loss of half its seats in the 1970 general election.

Another big area of context for the birth of community politics was the massive spread of all sorts of grassroots community action – sometimes associated with political organisations, but often not – that built on the work of people like George Clark of the Notting Hill Community Workshop who were interested in helping a community to find its own voice and to campaign to bring about the things it wanted. It was the job of the politician to add their own views to a debate with the wider public (usually on a local level) about how to bring about change and take charge of their own lives and communities.

But this era of grassroots action did not last; the election of Margaret Thatcher signalled that change was coming. Partly it was because those who had been employed to facilitate the work were no longer paid to do so, but there was also a gradual disengagement perhaps aided by the spread of television and other socio-cultural factors. We realised that there was a disconnect between the issues that we were campaigning about at university, such as anti-apartheid or UDI in Rhodesia, and the topics that people were raising on the doorstep as we canvassed for Michael Winstanley or Richard Wainwright. The challenge therefore became one of how you started from where the electorate was and turned that into a wider political debate. The thing that Liberals got wrong was not in starting where people were but in stopping at that point. So we never got beyond those everyday issues to the point where we could engage people in a wider political

debate and movement. Part of the naivety lay in underestimating the power of first-past-the-post and its deadening influence on politics. The tendency has been to concentrate on what people like and ignore the rest of the debate, to fail to mention areas which may be unpopular or at best to keep your head down. Unlike our counterparts in Europe, for example D66 in Holland, our would-be representatives have become constrained by having to say and do things which will lead to gaining votes in FPTP elections at local government and constituency levels – but, once elected, have rarely evolved the debate beyond that point This has manifested itself in many occasions in which Liberal Democrats have had power in local and national government but have remained content to manage the system, the infrastructure and how they organise. Some, however, have kept on campaigning, the London Borough of Sutton being a good example.

This is one area in which the community politics approach differs from the localism offered by the coalition government and sponsored by Andrew Stunnell. The localism legislation enables good local things to be done but does not go beyond that and do things itself. But it is only if you engage with people and get them involved in change and political ideas (as Andrew Stunell does himself in Hazel Grove) that the opportunity allowed for in the Localism Act will mean anything.

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We talked, at the time of the community politics amendment, of creating a movement. We have had the opportunity to do that with family, friends, and *Focus* deliverers, but in general we have used those people as political fodder. In 1970 we talked about how to spread our Liberal movement into a wider range of campaigns, such as David Steel's anti-apartheid stance or Mark Bonham Carter's Race Relations Board work, because they were working in pursuit of and were about liberal values and the things we stood for. And too many people sitting in Town Halls on licensing committees, for instance, is not about creating the liberal revolution. So the challenge is to work out how we get involved at a national level in a series of campaigns which gets the message across to the electorate that this is who we are and what we stand for. It is not enough to campaign on micro-issues – pavement politics – but ignore wider questions about, say, the fight for democracy in Ukraine which are part and parcel of the idea of what constitutes liberalism.

In the 1970s during ALC training on community politics and winning elections, it often emerged that how people spent their working and leisure time was not as interesting and engaging as what they wished to do in politics. This revelation changed many lives and plenty of them went on to be a substantial part of the widening and ongoing liberal movement. Today a lot of campaigners are committing themselves to fighting, say, this election and the next, but qualify their commitment and make it clear that, if they do not get into parliament by then, they'll give up and do something else. Something intangible has changed, and it will cause great difficulty to our being able to identify and engage the next generation of leaders. To conclude, Gordon quoted from Professor Sir Lawrence Freedman, now sitting on the Chilcot Committee but in 1969 a colleague in the Young Liberals who helped coin the phrase community politics: 'Votes and government are the result of our activity, not the purpose.'

Paul Clark began by saying that he was proud that this meeting was taking place in Liverpool – in effect, at the birthplace of liberal community politics. Paul said he represented County Ward in Walton which contains Everton football ground and the surrounding terraced housing and council estates. He arrived there in 1976 and stayed there for the next thirty-four years basically because of community politics. By 1976, this had already taken off in Liverpool through the efforts of two men, Trevor Jones and Cyril Carr. In those days the way elections were run followed the pattern of an introductory leaflet (if you were lucky) and then an election address. This and the two-party system worked very for Labour and Tories across the country in the 1960s and '70s, with one party in office for a while and then the other taking their turn and so on. In Liverpool as a result nothing much changed except that each party kept ripping the heart out of the city. So Jones and Carr introduced a revolutionary political tactic: being in the community, regular *Focus* leaflets and engagement, and acting as the representative of the people. The present Liberal Democrat leader in Liverpool, Richard Kemp, has mugs on sale saying 'Welcome to Liverpool: birthplace of the "good morning" leaflet' – and whether any other local party can properly claim they thought of it first, this was the kind of innovation that Jones and Carr pioneered. In these early days, there was tension about what the heart of the campaigning should be. Carr was a suave lawyer who wanted leaflets to be pages of policy with footnotes. Trevor Jones wanted them to be like a red top tabloid and, of course, overall he won that argument. In Church Ward – Cyril Carr's ward – you would find a very worthy *Focus* leaflet, but in other areas you would have a Trevor Jones design with bold headlines and storylines to grab your interest. He worked on the basis that if people had not had their attention grabbed in the first twenty seconds, they would not read it at all. Within the *Focus* there would be opportunity for feedback from the public, which is now taken for granted but it was revolutionary then to ask people what they thought and what they wanted from their councillors. What they told you, and other feedback through the raising of petitions, would be material for the next leaflet and in this way a chord would be struck with the public.

And that approach clearly worked. Trevor then became president of the Liberal Party and exported that view to the wider party. In this he was supported by Graham Tope, then a young campaigner in Sutton and Cheam, and when the community politics approach was tried there in the famous by-election of 1972 in which Graham was elected to parliament, it laid the foundation for further success in Sutton and elsewhere. In addition Jones led the fight against Jeremy Thorpe and his close allies who did not wish the party to fight every seat, with the object of ensuring that each

constituency would field a Liberal candidate in a general election and run on the principle of fighting for every vote that could be won. This was an approach which sowed the seeds of our becoming a genuine national party again and, even though we are in troubled times today, we must not slip back from this position.

Paul then said he differed from Gordon on one point. The councillor when elected becomes the representative of the people and you do not win again unless you do this. You have to win to achieve things for the people who elect you. The councillor must work all year round or they will not get re-elected, and they must represent the views of the people. In Liverpool too often councillors and candidates just represent the Labour Party. We get elected principally because people trust us to represent them and to fight for them, especially in an area like Liverpool where there are so many social problems. That, in Paul's view, is the hard core of community politics. That fight through community politics is about putting your Liberalism into practice.

So, how do we relate community politics as traditionally practised in Liverpool, to today's politics in the modern Liberal Democrats? There seemed to Paul to be a feeling abroad that community politics is thought of as being a bit old-fashioned and that the delivery of *Focus* leaflets and knocking on doors does not really work anymore. There has been an understanding, perhaps stemming from the victory of Barack Obama in 2008 that the use of new technology, social networking and social media can connect individuals with political campaigns and can be used, as it was in America, to raise money from individuals. Liberal Democrats need these donations as we do not have the money of the trade unions or of big business. New technology has not somehow overtaken the traditional communication techniques used in community politics but is the future of engaging young people in our political campaigning. These methods are an important element of the new community politics. You must not forget traditional methods, and even in the social media age, as in the past, face-to-face engagement remains the number one means of successful community politics.

Gordon Lishman, Sarah Boad and Paul Clark

Another vital part of success through community politics is the ability to inspire. In Liverpool in the past, Liberal political activity has inspired people to vote for us, to work with us. They were inspired to support us because they knew we spoke for them and we used that power to transform this city. A tangible result of that transformation is the convention centre in which the meeting was being held, together with the waterfront and the heart of the city. Look at what happened in city finances. When we arrived in office Liverpool had the highest council tax in the country but the fourth worst performance of all councils. We changed that. We froze council tax and made the city more efficient. We had to transform not just the fabric of the city but also its image and we did that. The image of the city today is nothing like the image of poor, crumbling infrastructure, knee-deep in litter, that was commonplace in the 1970s and '80s – and that change is down to community politics and way it gave us a majority on the council to set about that transformative task.

In conclusion, and in answer to Gordon Lishman's query as to where the party's next generation of leaders coming from, Paul pointed out that there were many young people at conference, not just people of his generation. In Liverpool, where the party has been hammered in recent years, a number of younger activists are coming forward. There is no reason to be pessimistic about the next generation but we have to get back to our basic Liberal principles and to shout from the rooftops that we believe in Liberal values and that Liberal values are worth having.

During question and answer session, Bernard Greaves added that part of the starting point for community politics was not only the catastrophe of the 1970 general election but also the disintegration of the Young Liberal movement, when many who had been supporters began to go in other political directions. We had to say that we wanted to create not only a Liberal government but more importantly a Liberal society. This led to a realisation that liberalism could not be a party of the individual like the Tories, nor a party of collectivist tendencies like the socialist tradition within Labour taught, but had to be distinctively based in communities. We all live in communities and survive because of them. The vision was of all those communities, not just local communities, taking control of their own affairs within a broader framework. So Liberal activists are not there just to get elected and fix people's problems for them but to assist people in fixing things for themselves. That remains vitally important today. To create a liberal society you have to work both inside the government structure and outside it: the dual approach is still highly relevant.

Graham Lippiatt is a member of the Liberal Democrat History Group's executive.

Catastrophe: the 2015 election campaign and its outcome

Evening meeting, 19 July 2015, with Phil Cowley and Olly Grender; chair: William Wallace

Report by **Neil Stockley**

The general election of 7 May 2015 was a catastrophe for the Liberal Democrats. The party won just eight seats and a mere 7.9 per cent of the votes cast in the worst result for the Liberal Democrats or their predecessors since 1970. The party's hopes that strong constituency profiles and effective local campaigns would enable at least twenty-five MPs to hang on or that enough voters might show their gratitude for what the party had achieved under the coalition were dashed. As Phil Cowley, Professor of Parliamentary Government at the University of Nottingham, told the summer meeting, the dismal outcome meant that a generation's work of growing the party was undone.

He went on to place the result in its historical context, which was even more brutal. The Liberal Democrats' share of the vote crashed by 15.2 per cent compared to the 2010 result. Professor Cowley had to go all the way back to the Liberal debacles of 1918 and 1931 to find an occasion when a major party had suffered such a huge loss of support in a single general election. The Liberal Democrats held on to barely a third of their total vote in 2010, another feat that no major party had achieved since the Liberals' collapse in 1931. And, in holding on to just 14 per cent of their Commons seats, the Liberal Democrats performed worse than any major party in any election since 1832. A total of 341 Liberal Democrat candidates lost their deposits, more than in all the general elections between 1979 and 2010 put together. And, as he reminded us, the rules for losing deposits were made more generous in 1985.

Ever since the rise of the Labour Party, the Liberals and then the Alliance and the Liberal Democrats had been undisputed as the third party of British politics. Whether measured in terms of votes or seats, that was no longer the case, he said. Half of all Liberal Democrats candidates came fourth in their contests and one in four ended up in fifth place. More finished sixth than won their seats. In four seats that the party won in 2010, they fell back to third place and one sitting Liberal Democrat MP suffered the ignominy of coming fourth. The party was only in second place in constituencies they had held until recently. And, over the previous five years, the party had suffered the loss of half its local government base and all but one of its seats in the European Parliament.

One possible explanation for the catastrophe was that the Liberal Democrat campaign, and particularly its messaging, had badly missed the mark. Perhaps, though, there were deeper, more fundamental drivers. Had the voters punished the party for what they had done when in government? Or for the very act of going into coalition with the Conservatives?

Phillip Cowley was in no doubt that the reasons should be traced right back to the party's decision in May 2010 to go into coalition with the Conservatives. The 2010 general election result left the Liberal Democrats facing the toughest of dilemmas. They could enter into coalition, or some other kind of power sharing deal with the Conservatives. Or they could attempt either with Labour. Or they could remain in opposition. All of these options had clear downsides. Professor Cowley described the Liberal Democrats' predicament as a zugswang – a German chess term used to describe a situation when the player has to move, but there is no positive outcome available: any move will leave them worse off. The skill when facing a zugswang, he said, was to find the least damaging move. The party made a hard-headed calculation to go into coalition with the Conservatives. But he was far from convinced that the Liberal Democrats took the option that was, or could ever be, 'the least bad' for them.

Professor Cowley cited the debacle over tuition fees, which was widely seen a totemic issue that had done so much to destroy the voters' trust in the party. He put up a familiar argument: 'if only you'd have stopped them, everything would have been hunky dory and the party wouldn't be where it is now'. Then he tested a counterfactual. The Liberal Democrats could have dug in during the coalition negotiations and successfully blocked the rise in tuition fees. Still, he suggested, the Conservatives would surely have insisted on another big policy concession. There would have been 'another great betrayal' that placed a wedge between the party and a large number of its supporters. The Liberal Democrats could have united and voted down the Browne package in the Commons, thereby breaking the agreement. But in so doing, they would have wrecked the coalition and, possibly, triggered an early general election in which the party's fate would have been uncertain.

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Professor Cowley's key point, though, was such an outcome 'surely would not have been as damaging as what eventually transpired in May 2015, however you add in the problems with the "what-ifs"'. This was also true, he argued, of any of the scenarios under which the Liberal Democrats left the coalition, at least until late 2014. The party could have left the coalition in May 2011, after its humiliation in the AV referendum, or following its disastrous showing in the European Parliament elections of May 2014. Or, had it not entered into coalition in 2010, there may well have been a second general election that year. Or, Nick Clegg could have resigned as leader in 2014. Under any of these scenarios, the voters may well have punished the Liberal Democrats, whenever the election came. Still, he was sure that the party would have ended up with more than the eight seats it eventually won. Moreover, he said, a general election before late 2014 would have taken place without the SNP surge that followed the Scottish Independence referendum, with all the damage that ended up doing to the party. Then Professor Cowley asked whether the Liberal Democrats' policy legacy from the coalition was really worth the electoral price that the party paid on 7 May 2015. The

audience did not really take up this challenge. Perhaps feelings were still too raw a matter of weeks after the election.

In light of all that the party had been through during the coalition, Professor Cowley saw the campaign as of little importance to the Liberal Democrats' final showing. Nick Clegg's personal ratings had improved steadily over the four weeks before polling day, suggesting that the campaign may not have been quite as bad as many people think. Yet the Liberal Democrats now relied on a 'jet age campaign machine in a digital era'. He concluded that such factors made only a small difference in the end ('Your fate was sealed much earlier'). Professor Cowley pointed to a simple, brutal fact: after the party went into coalition, their poll ratings went on 'a long-term downward cycle', which carried on for the life of the 2010–15 parliament. The modest recovery that he and many others had expected did not eventuate.

The second speaker was Baroness Olly Grender, Paddy Ashdown's second-in-command on the 'Wheelhouse Group' that ran the Liberal Democrat general election campaign, who reached a very similar conclusion to Professor Cowley. She made a convincing case, if a little defensively at first, that both the party's campaign and the disastrous result had to be seen in the context of the crises of 2010–11. The tuition fees debacle and the arguments over coalition's health reforms left Olly and her colleagues with a very poor hand to play. Echoing Phillip Cowley's point about the zugswang, she recalled writing in 2010 that the Liberal Democrats had to choose between 'death by guillotine and death by a thousand cuts'.

As Baroness Gender spoke, the sheer impossibility of the task facing the party's campaign became ever more apparent. The problems were huge and intractable. The first was the power of national issues. The party's internal polling showed that if the party was seen to be faring poorly in the national contest, then its MPs would lose at local level, even if they were popular, a grim prophecy that was fulfilled. And, in key constituencies, voters were much more likely to base their choices on the 'national vote' than the local candidate. Relying on local MPs and campaigns was always going to be a longshot.

Second, the party had been badly mistaken about how many, and which, seats could be saved. Professor Cowley suggested that, from the start, Liberal Democrat election strategists might have been tougher with sitting MPs who could not win, more ruthless about cutting people loose. After all, the party seemed to have a realistic chance in between twenty-six and thirty-one constituencies, a number that, we now know, shrank drastically as the campaign went on. Baroness Grender explained that the party could not afford tracking polls in its key constituencies once the 'short campaign' had started. As a result, she and her colleagues could not tell which (if any) candidates still had a prospect of winning as the campaign progressed. And she wondered whether a tougher approach to targeting, or having the accurate data would have made much difference, given how hard it was to persuade candidates and activists to give up on their own contests and campaign in those seats.

This led into the third challenge, which Baroness Grender termed 'activation'. More than ever, the Liberal Democrats relied on 'boots on the ground' in their key seats. It was hard enough already to persuade people to come out to canvass for the party. She pondered whether the Liberal Democrats' much-vaunted superiority in on-the-ground campaigning in key seats might well be 'a myth in our minds from a distant, remembered past'.

Fourth, the Liberal Democrats were outgunned and outspent. The Liberal Democrats spent around £3 million during the short campaign, compared to £30 million for the Conservatives. They could afford the latest voter identification and data management technologies. The Conservatives contacted 'floating' voters in marginal seats three times during postal vote week, with a simple message: they lived in one of the twenty-three seats that would decide whether Britain had stable government with David Cameron, or the alternative, chaos under a weak Labour government, led by Ed Miliband in thrall to the SNP.

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The Liberal Democrats tried to counter by warning that unless the Liberal Democrats were part of any new government, Britain faced the prospect of being ruled by 'Blukip' – an alliance of the Conservatives, UKIP and the DUP. It didn't work. Baroness Grender opined that the 'Blukip' argument 'didn't have the ring of authenticity', and suggested that had they been able to afford tracking polls, the campaign strategists might have been able to understand why it had failed. The party was not wrong to discuss hung-parliament scenarios, given what the opinion polls and electoral projections were consistently saying. The possible explanations for the failure of the 'Blukip' message can be taken further, however. Perhaps the public saw the Conservatives and UKIP as mortal enemies and simply didn't believe that they could work together? Or, perhaps they did not believe that the Liberal Democrats could make a real difference? Or, perhaps most voters simply did not want to think about any new coalition scenarios?

Crucially, the failure of the party's campaign messages was more fundamental than its attempts to frame the choices on offer. As Baroness Grender explained, the Liberal Democrats could not sing their old tunes that they were the 'insurgents' on the side of the people against the 'establishment'. After five years in office, they were no longer credible as agents of change. Thus, she explained, the party promised to provide stability, and asked for a mandate and sufficient MPs to anchor the next government to the centre ground. Most voters saw themselves as being in the 'centre ground' of politics, but 'they didn't make the connection [with the Liberal Democrats] when they went into the polling booth.'

Baroness Grender argued that the party's campaign was overwhelmed by voters' fears of a Labour government led by Ed Miliband but reliant on the SNP to stay in power. The basis of such fears, Olly stressed, was about competence much more than policy. 'Middle England' voters were deeply worried that the SNP would wag the 'weak' Labour dog. She went on to speculate that voters in Tory-facing seats may have felt more positive about voting Liberal Democrat had the national opinion

polls pointed to an outright Conservative victory. Perhaps, she suggested, the fate of the Liberal Democrats ultimately hinges on who 'middle England' trusts or fears the most? The party's successes in 1997, 2001 and even 2005, when Tony Blair made voting Labour look like a risk-free option, seem to bear this out. Her comments, some of the most insightful of the evening, highlighted an inherent weakness in the Liberal Democrats strategic position, which as the third – and now, the fourth, party – they will need to address.

Baroness Grender also suggested that the party's failure to rule out any kind of post-election deal with Labour may have added to its burdens. Professor Cowley agreed, such a statement from Nick Clegg may well have rescued some MPs, especially in the south west of England. But he added that it would surely have caused a catastrophic split within the party, given that many members had no wish to enter a new coalition with the Conservatives. Here, the party faced yet another zugswang.

Liberal Democrat peers, candidates and activists then added some more depth and colour to the grim picture. Following the speakers' lead, the discussion focused on the party's approach to coalition, rather than the campaign, as the cause of catastrophe. A long-serving party member argued that, in failing to keep their election pledges on tuition fees, the Liberal Democrats had lost the trust and respect of voters. In other words, the broken promise, rather than the merits of policy itself, may have angered the public more than Professor Cowley had suggested. A London candidate recalled how the party's role in decisions like the 'bedroom tax' had eaten away at the morale of its campaigners. 'I stopped listening to my own party,' complained another member. Sentiments such as these may partly explain the lack of 'boots on the ground' that Baroness Grender had seen in many key seats.

'We kept talking about the coalition, not about ourselves,' recalled one member. 'We looked just the same [as the Conservatives],' lamented another. 'The party wasn't seen as standing for anything,' complained Lord Greaves.

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There were strong criticisms of how the party had approached the presentation of coalition, most notably Nick Clegg's appearance in the Downing Street Rose Garden with David Cameron in the hours after the new government was formed in May 2010. There was some truth in all of the criticisms. What I was really hearing, though, was different accounts of how the Liberal Democrat brand, as honest and reasonable players, committed to 'fairness', had been destroyed after 2010. Yet the party had not built a new, popular identity that was distinctive from that of the coalition.

The Liberal Democrats' solution, in the second half of the parliament, was to try to gain more credit with the public for their achievements in government. This was a reasonable gambit. Professor Cowley was clear that most voters did not hate the Liberal Democrats; they acknowledged that party had achieved some important policy victories. (He also reminded us that, by the end of the 'short' campaign, Nick Clegg's personal popularity was similar to that of David Cameron and Ed Miliband.) Baroness Grender added that voters in target seats reacted well when the party talked about its achievements and its plans for the future. She recounted how the party's failure over five years to receive the credit that it deserved for its many initiatives and achievements 'drove me crazy'. There were some important victories, she stressed, such as the shift in fiscal policy in the 2012 budget. Olly put this down to Nick Clegg's and Danny Alexander's preparedness to take risks and start a row with the Conservatives. 'It's a shame we didn't have more of those moments,' she mused. But George Osborne and his colleagues learned when to concede on key issues and deprive the Liberal Democrats of victories.

Baroness Grender went on to discuss another massive obstacle that the Liberal Democrats had to face when in government. Whitehall and its various communications channels were based on having a single-party government; the Conservatives as the senior partner in the coalition always had more power, and as a result, held much more sway with the media and the public. The Liberal Democrats were not hated; they were seen as being irrelevant. And, much to her chagrin, some of the party's ministers had 'disappeared into their departments'.

So, if the Liberal Democrats go into coalition again, how can they be both perceived as relevant and popular? Baroness Grender contended that, in order to 'prove its worth', the minority party in a coalition government needed to have 'a disproportionate and vast level of propaganda'. Also, she said, parliament had to change, in order to recognise that there were two parties in office. There were also suggestions that, in a future power-sharing arrangement, the party should not have to 'own' all of the government's decisions, and that the rules of collective responsibility might be altered, to give it a more independent voice.

I was not convinced by any of this. The Liberal Democrats should be proud of what they achieved. But they shouldn't expect the electorate to be excited by all of their record, in some cases years after the policies were carried out. Second, both parties in a coalition would need to agree to any radical change in the constitutional conventions, which seems a tall order. Third, there is no guarantee it would work to the junior partner's advantage. In New Zealand, another Westminster democracy, two decades of multi-party governments under a proportional voting system has led to some weakening of the doctrine of collective responsibility. Yet the electorate has cast the supporting parties in successive administrations aside. It seems that voters can perceive 'the government' only as the party of the prime minister and chancellor.

After hearing Professor Cowley's figures and the ensuing discussion, the party's future did not seem bright. The historian Lord Morgan once suggested that, just as Lloyd George coalition of 1918 ended the Liberals' role as a party of government and the National Government of 1931 ended their role as a party of opposition, the 2010–15 coalition may have finished them as a third party. That may sound drastic, but Professor Cowley pointed to 'the existential threats' of a more competitive political market, where UKIP, the Greens and SNP have all pitched their tents in

different places. The new electoral boundaries for the Commons could put most of the remaining Liberal Democrat seats at risk in 2020.

I believe that, despite all these challenges, the Liberal Democrats can survive and prosper once more. Recovery and resurgence will take some time and the experiences of what now seems like the party's electoral heyday under Paddy Ashdown and Charles Kennedy are unlikely to be repeated. If they are carve out a distinctive niche and grow again, the Liberal Democrats will need to be clearer than before about 'where they stand;' their ideas and policies, particularly in the economic area, which is of most concern to the electorate. And their strategic positioning and approach to coalition will need to be rethought, starting with the basic question, 'what are we trying to achieve?'.

Neil Stockley is a former Policy Director for the Liberal Democrats, and a long-time member of the Liberal Democrat History Group.

REVIEWS

Leading the Liberals

Duncan Brack, Robert Ingham and Tony Little (eds), *British Liberal Leaders: Leaders of the Liberal Party, SDP and Liberal Democrats since 1828* (Biteback Publishing, 2015)
Reviewed by **Chris Huhne**

Roy Jenkins once discussed whether Gladstone or Churchill was the greatest prime minister, and this book is in the same comparative tradition. Leadership matters, and it usually matters a lot. The book will be important reading for those interested in leadership and Liberal history.

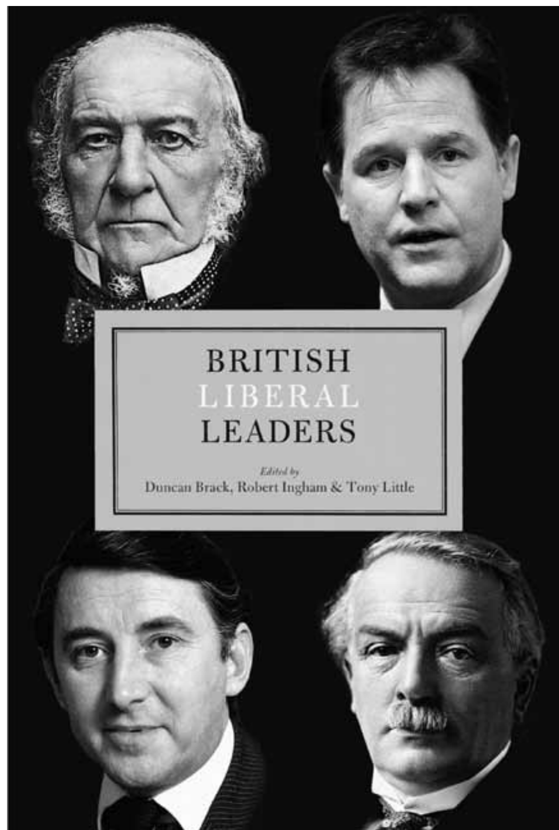
The first part is a discussion of leadership qualities, and an attempt to rank Liberal leaders. The second part is a series of potted biographies, particularly useful for those leaders who do not merit full-scale book treatment. Some are very good, notably David Howarth's treatment of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. The third part is a series of interviews with living leaders – David Steel, Paddy Ashdown, Nick Clegg.

Charles Clarke's interesting chapter assembles electoral data to rank Liberal leaders by their electoral success (in share of the vote, and number of seats). The winner? Campbell-Bannerman, who won the 1906 general election and had the good fortune – at least from the point of view of league tables – to die in Downing Street before his party was tested again at the polls. Sir Henry piled on 222 seats and 3.7 per cent of the vote between becoming leader and giving up leadership.

In the post-war period too, the numbers game is flawed. Paddy Ashdown emerges (probably rightly) as the most successful leader. However, it is not because of the crude increase in the number of seats during his tenure (plus 24) but more because of his rescue of the party from nowhere. The game is slightly given away by the cumulative fall in the share of the vote of 5.8 per cent under Paddy. Indeed, there was even a fall in the vote share between 1992 and 1997. Paddy won seats because the party's then main rival in key marginals – the Conservative Party – was falling faster than the Liberal Democrats and because of Chris Rennard's careful targeting.

Clarke points out that these assessments of numbers are wholly at odds with the more subjective measures of prime ministers, mainly by academics. Five of the six studies cited put Lloyd George (whose chapter is written by Labour peer Lord Morgan) as the leading Liberal prime minister, and the sixth has him in third place, pipped by Campbell-Bannerman and Asquith. I suspect that those assessments give due weight not just to Lloyd George's central role in the social reform of the 1905–15 government, but also as war leader. John Grigg has argued, persuasively in my view, that Lloyd George saved Britain from the real prospect of defeat in 1916. Those who criticise Lloyd George for splitting the party fail to take account of Asquith's refusal of the Lord Chancellorship or of the then still-fresh Victorian tradition of rival leaders serving in each other's cabinets.

Successful war leadership in an existential conflict like the First World War, closely followed by real legislative achievement, are surely trump cards in any historical assessment of a leader. For this reason alone, this book is unbalanced because of the decline of the Liberal Party after the First World War. Until the 2010 coalition, Liberal leaders had scant opportunity



to leave a legislative legacy. Comparisons are flawed by the shift of context.

In the modern period, the most influential Liberals were not party leaders but probably Keynes (for post-war macro-economic management in the wake of the depression, and the creation of the International Monetary Fund) and Beveridge (for the welfare state proposals enacted by the 1945–51 Labour government). Beveridge subsequently became the party leader in the Lords, but attained that position because of his intellectual achievements rather than achieving things because of his position.

The same can be said of the only modern leader who can boast extraordinary and long-lasting legislative achievements: Roy Jenkins (whose chapter is written by his recent biographer John Campbell). As a liberal Home Secretary in a Labour government (1965–67 and 1974–76), Jenkins found government time to push through liberalising private members' bills – David Steel's abortion bill and Leo Abse's decriminalisation of homosexuality. On or near his watch, Britain ended hanging, abolished theatre censorship, eased divorce and extended licensing hours. He also introduced race relations and gender equality legislation that have done much to contain bigotry, if not yet put it on the run.

The most controversial assessments will inevitably be the ones with the least length of perspective, notably of the 2010 administration. I fear that the achievements of the Liberal Democrats in 2010–15 are too easily unpicked to rank with the great historical reforms. Five-year fixed-term parliaments and Steve Webb's pension reforms may stick, but it is hard to think of much else that is sufficiently embedded to endure. The Green Investment Bank is slated for privatisation. Renewable energy has been hit hard. The Tories have already made it clear that the 'snooper's charter' will go ahead. The emphasis on raising tax allowances rather than cutting income tax rates is Liberal Democrat-inspired, but cannot offset the impact of meaner in-work benefits. We held our finger in the dyke, but the dyke burst in 2015.

Nick Clegg admits the error over tuition fees, but the real argument is not over whether the Liberal Democrats broke a promise, but over that particular promise. The Tories broke their promise to raise green taxes as a proportion of total taxes, but who of their supporters much cared? By contrast, Cameron vetoed many easy and fair cuts from the fiscal consolidation because they were against his commitment to protect pensioner benefits, and the Tories would not win an election without their disproportionate support from pensioners. The error was to forget that the nearest thing to a party interest for the Liberal Democrats is people with higher education, since they are disproportionately likely to vote for the party.

The book will be important reading for those interested in leadership and Liberal history.

Nor is it true to distance, as Chris Bowers' chapter does, Nick Clegg from the coalition negotiations. Although the policy platform – the coalition agreement – was negotiated by two teams neither of which contained the leader, the key trap into which the Liberal Democrats fell was a result of the allocation of ministers and departments, negotiated entirely by the party leaders. When Nick first offered me Energy and Climate Change, I pointed out that this contained one of two areas – nuclear – where the coalition agreement allowed the Lib Dems to abstain on an issue which went against party policy. I was aghast to find that the only other department was Business, where the secretary of state was to be Vince Cable, and who would be responsible for tuition fees. Two embarrassments out of two was not a coincidence.

We all knew the history of smaller parties being hammered in coalition, despite the contra-example of Scotland. The coalition amounted to a gamble that we could turn a referendum on AV into reform, and our chance of that happening was thrown away by delay and the political mistake of tuition fees. With a real effort to pass the legislation, the referendum should and could have been held in the autumn of 2010. The Browne review of tuition fees reported on 12 October 2010, and from then on we were stuck. That said, AV is not a proportional system. It would have saved some Liberal Democrat seats at the 2015 election, but it would have given the Tories an even bigger majority.

The debate on whether the coalition was worth it will go on, but in my view the Liberal Democrats had little choice in 2010. We were always slated for a hammering in 2015, but our political mistakes made that denouement far more destructive than it could have been.

Chris Huhne was MP for Eastleigh 2005–13, and Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change 2010–12.

Authoritative new biography of 'the goat'

Travis L. Crosby, *The Unknown Lloyd George: a Statesman in Conflict* (I. B. Tauris, 2014)
Reviewed by **Dr J. Graham Jones**

One must begin by asking the basic question of whether there is really a need for another new, full-length biography of David Lloyd George, already the subject of more than sixty different biographies (highly variable in quality and size) and other, more specialist studies. A striking revival in Lloyd George studies has been seen during the last decade – following a generally lacklustre, unproductive period during the 1990s. Authoritative volumes have been published by, among others, authors such as John Campbell, Richard Toye and Ffion Hague, together with a large number of important academic articles in journals and other publications. As recently as 2010, Lord (Roy) Hattersley (the former deputy leader of the Labour Party and a prolific writer) published a substantial biography of Lloyd George (from the Little Brown publishing house). However one must recognise at once that this volume, written by Professor Travis Crosby, far excels Roy Hattersley's rather

pedestrian, often substandard, derivative attempt.

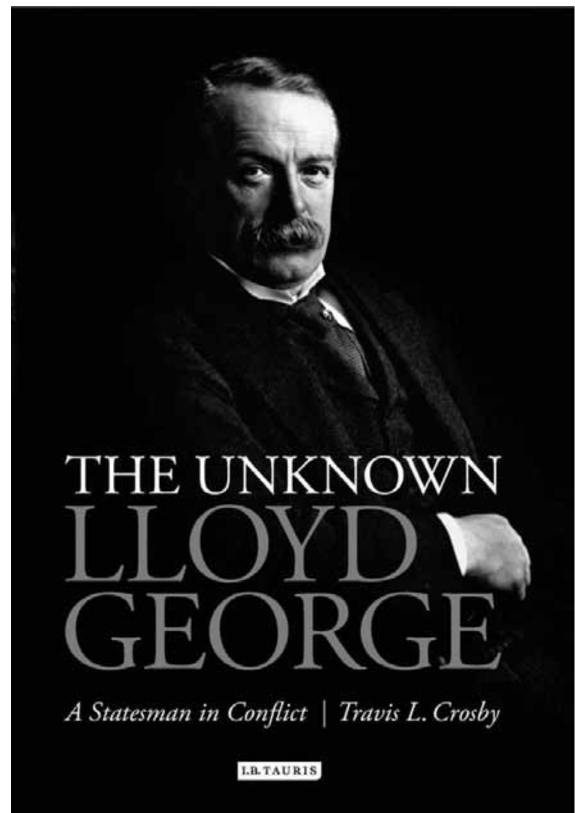
Travis Crosby is Emeritus Professor of History at Wheaton College, Massachusetts in the United States. He is an accomplished political biographer, and amongst his many volumes are important studies on Joseph Chamberlain, W. E. Gladstone and Sir Robert Peel. Each of these was highly praised by its reviewers. To a large extent the author has made use of published, secondary sources for the present biography. He has read voraciously everything available in print relating to Lloyd George's career and life – as is obvious from the helpful, detailed footnotes which he has framed while composing the text. They are of enormous interest to everyone who is seriously interested in the story of Lloyd George, packed with additional information, full of fascinating detail, while a very good bibliography is also provided of relevant publications (see pp. 508–42 within the book).

Some use has also been made of the Lloyd George Papers in the custody of the Parliamentary Archive at London and some of the Lloyd George archives deposited at the National Library of Wales, particularly those digitised by the institution during recent years, namely the papers of William George (1865–1967) (Lloyd George's younger brother), and Lloyd George's own detailed diary for 1886, a very important year in his history. (This would appear to strengthen the argument for digitising important holdings for the use of a scholar who lives and works in the United States.) Crosby has not, however, made any use of the seminal typescript diaries of A. J. Sylvester, Lloyd George's private secretary from 1923 until 1945 – a very full, all-important source for Lloyd George's years in the so-called political wilderness.

Indeed the coverage given to the years following Lloyd George's fall in the autumn of 1922 is relatively brief (pp. 334–83). Although Lloyd George was not in governmental office at that time, he remained a political and public figure of great consequence both within the United Kingdom and abroad, and his personal and family history (unconventional to say the least) is also very interesting. On the whole Crosby is exceptionally fair to the different historical periods in Lloyd George's life, and he has achieved a good balance between Lloyd George's life as a politician and his unique, most involved personal life. The author's approach is well paced, balanced, and exceptionally fair throughout from cover to cover. The study's great virtue is the author's notable ability to place his subject in his wider historical and political background, fields which, it is clear, Travis Crosby has truly mastered. There are no important errors of fact or interpretation.

The author always underlines Lloyd George's innate virtues, his strengths and his political and international achievements, not least his lowly background and his upbringing within the little cottage of Richard Lloyd, the local cobbler at Llanystumdwy, a small rural village nor far from the town of Criccieth – a whole world away from London at that time (given late nineteenth-century travelling difficulties). Attention is given to his striking eloquence as a public speaker from his earliest, formative days in north Wales, and his role as the tireless, highly respected representative of Welsh Nonconformity. A full outline is given of his legislative achievements as president of the Board of Trade, 1905–08, and even more so as Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1905–15, together with his all-important service as a war leader when he exhibited distinct virtues and strengths in a number of different directions.

Even so, Crosby is fully aware, too, of Lloyd George's obvious personal weaknesses and defects, especially the way he treated his enduring, long-suffering wife Dame Margaret and his long, intimate relationship with his secretary Frances Stevenson extending over a full thirty years. He married her – eventually – in October 1943. Here, too, is noted his proverbial liking for praise and flattery from others, a tendency which had begun when he was a small boy on his uncle and mentor Richard Lloyd's knee. The author also pays attention to Lloyd George's well-attested lack of loyalty to his fellow politicians and indeed to the Liberal Party from 1916 onwards. He divided his party at that time and he created a split which lasted for many long, exceptionally painful years for Liberals.



It is suggested here that Lloyd George employed any means or tactic possible to cling to power until his fall in 1922. Full attention is given in the text to Lloyd George's imperialism, the subject of harsh criticism of him in our age today, and to his unfortunate ideas and activities during the 1930s, above all his exceptionally positive attitude to Hitler whom he praised highly, and his negative statements in public and in private almost throughout the Second World War when an obvious decline was most evident both in his physical strength and in his mental state.

During recent years an attempt has been made by historians to rehabilitate Lloyd George's good name, and Travis Crosby is fully sensitive to this trend and he tends, on the whole, to support it. The final impression is a favourable image of Lloyd George. Travis Crosby portrays LG not as an opportunist or an ideologue, but as an individual who thought matters through carefully, was pragmatic in his response to events and situations, and one who attempted to the utmost of his ability to solve problems without fail.

At the end of the day, after wading through 555 pages of lively text, endnotes packed with information, and a detailed, helpful index, the

reader discovers the true persona of the surprisingly human and fragile Lloyd George, a wholly enigmatic figure who so often sailed very close to the wind both professionally and personally, 'to be a surprisingly vulnerable man constantly in need of reassurance [which both Dame Margaret and Frances Stevenson, in their different, mutually complimentary ways, provided for him] who struggled to reconcile the competing demands of ambition and family' (publisher's press release). Travis Crosby's explanations for his subject's attitudes and actions are carefully thought out, and wholly reasonable and acceptable. Although there is little here that is wholly new to the Lloyd George specialist, the overall survey is always perceptively sharp, lucid and illuminating.

On the whole the author has succeeded in mastering well those Welsh aspects which are so crucial to Lloyd George's early life. He understands the central importance of disestablishing and disendowing the church in late-nineteenth-century Wales and the centrality of issues like the Llanfrothen legal case which gave an enormous fillip to Lloyd George's early career. He gives full attention to prominent Welsh individuals like Thomas Edward Ellis and Thomas Gee who are significant in an understanding of the young Lloyd George. Exceptionally gripping is the account of the courtship between Lloyd George and Maggie Owen and his fraught relationship with his parents-in-law Richard and Mary Owen, Mynydd Ednyfed Fawr, Criccieth. One possible weakness is that he does not, it would appear, fully appreciate the importance of denominationalism within the politics of north Wales. But, in sharp contrast to some historians, Travis Crosby pays attention to the Welsh aspects of Lloyd George's life even after the sudden collapse of the Cymru Fydd movement in 1896 and into the twentieth century.

A number of gripping, significant photographs, carefully selected by the author, are included in the volume and add much to the interest. I. B. Tauris has produced a very attractive volume which reflects great credit on its printers. It is a real pleasure to handle it. Before long the same press will publish an authoritative new biography of Aneurin Bevan by Nicklaus Thomas-Symonds, a high-quality, balanced study which is sorely needed for this other elusive Welsh politician. And in the autumn yet another volume on David Lloyd George is anticipated from I. B. Tauris, namely *Lloyd George: a Life in Politics* by Richard Wilkinson. These new studies will be eagerly anticipated by a large number of appreciative readers.

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

Home rule and the Liberals

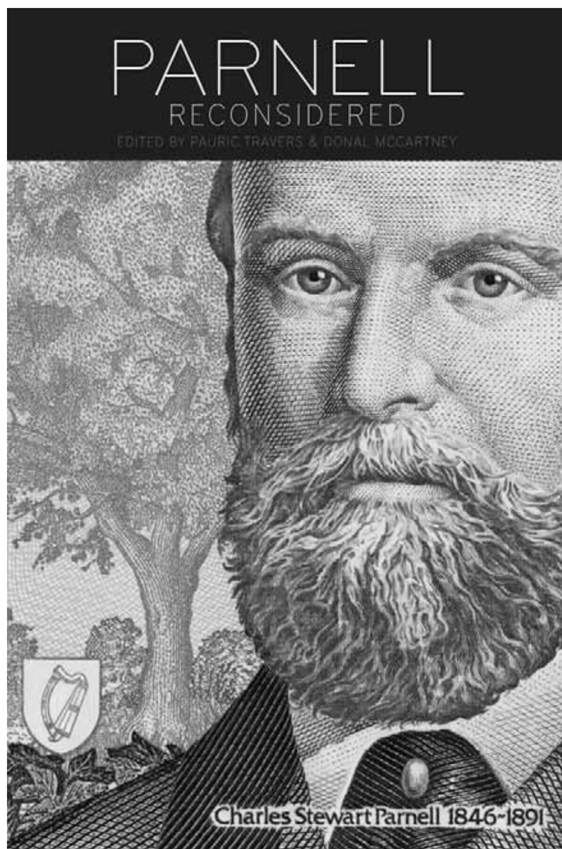
Pauric Travers and Donal McCartney (eds.), *Parnell Reconsidered* (University College Dublin Press, 2013)

Reviewed by **Eugenio F. Biagini**

This is a major reassessment of one of the most influential leaders in the making of modern British and Irish politics, and particularly of the Liberal Party, which underwent one of its deepest and most dramatic transformations in response to the 1886 Irish home rule crisis. Charles S. Parnell received considerable historical attention in the run up to the first centenary of his death (1991), and since then he has been revisited by Paul Bew and Patrick Maume in 2011, but on balance remains – as his most recent biographers put it in their title – an *Enigma*. The editors and contributors to *Parnell Reconsidered* have done an excellent job in addressing some of the unresolved questions. These include the 'Meaning of Home Rule' (McCartney, chapter 1), his relationship with Gladstone (D. G. Boyce, chapter 2), Anna Parnell as a feminist (Margaret Ward, chapter 3), Charles S. Parnell's attitudes to religion (Travers, chapter 4), to the newspaper press (Felix Larkin and Myles Dungan, respectively chapters 5 and 6), and his attitude to the drink interest (Fionnula Waldron, chapter 7). Chapters 8 and 9 are devoted to more personal dimensions (with Pat Power writing about the Parnells' Paris link and McCartney writing about sexual scandals). Finally, in chapter 10 Travers explores the 'ne plus ultra' speech (in which Parnell declared that no one could impose limits to 'the march of a nation') and his final manifesto of 29 November 1890.

Taken together, these essays represent an important contribution to the field, and are particularly welcome to scholars interested in Liberalism – whether of the British or the Irish variety. In the nineteenth century such a political creed was usually associated with demands for parliamentary reform and national self-determination, which the British Liberals had previously supported when demanded by patriotic movements in Greece, Italy and elsewhere. Would they not accept Ireland's plea for devolution? And, once a majority supported Gladstone in his attempt to 'pacify Ireland' through home rule, how solid were the bases of cooperation between the two parties, apart from the sentimental and emotional factors associated with the 'Union of Hearts'? In legislative terms, McCartney shows that there was a stable agreement on which Liberals and Nationalists could cooperate. In particular, although Parnell was disappointed by the 1886 bill because it did not offer sufficient autonomy to Dublin, he soon became a strong advocate of the retention of Irish MPs at Westminster. In other words, though the Irish leader had declared that 'no man [had] a right to fix the boundary of the march of a nation', McCartney concludes that, in practice, for Parnell 'that march … could go into several different directions', including a more flexible Union, 'depending on unfolding circumstances' (p. 21). Boyce strengthens this point, showing how Parnell echoed Gladstone in identifying the Canadian confederation and Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy as examples of a stable

In legislative terms, McCartney shows that there was a stable agreement on which Liberals and Nationalists could cooperate.



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 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.

Eugenio F. Biagini is Reader in Modern History at Cambridge and a Fellow of Sidney Sussex College. He has published extensively on the history of Liberalism in Britain, Ireland and Italy.

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 unfailingly 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, sparce 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

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

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.