

LIBERAL HISTORY NEWS

SPRING 2016

The Gladstone Umbrella

Gladstone's Library, at Hawarden in North Wales, is holding a colloquium, titled 'The Gladstone Umbrella', from Friday 15th to Sunday 17th July 2016 to discuss William Ewart Gladstone (1809–1898), the greatest Liberal Prime Minister.

Liberal Democrat History Group members are welcome to apply. Residential prices (bed and breakfast, morning and afternoon coffee, lunch and dinner) start from

£192, and non-residential from £150. Discount rates for clergy and students apply. To book, please call 01244 532350 or email enquiries@gladlib.org. Offers of papers should be sent to d.r.brooks@qmul.ac.uk.

The residential library, which was founded by Gladstone and contains his own books, is to be found at Church Lane, Hawarden, CH5 3DF, about ten miles west of Chester. Their web site is www.gladstoneslibrary.org.

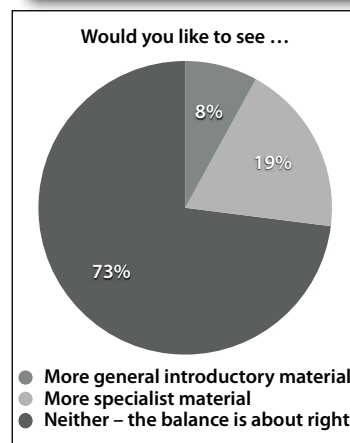
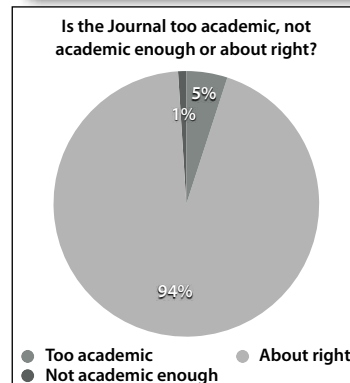
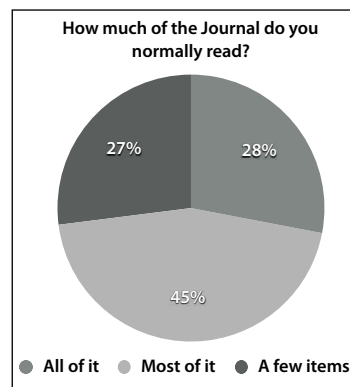


Survey of subscribers

Thank you to the seventy-one subscribers of the *Journal of Liberal History* who completed our online questionnaire in January. The feedback we received was immensely helpful; here we summarise the key points and give our responses.

We asked a series of questions about how much of the *Journal* subscribers normally read, how they rated different aspects of the *Journal*, what they thought of the length

of the articles and other items, and whether the *Journal* was striking the right balance between accessibility and authority, and between general introductory pieces and more detailed treatment of specific topics. As you can see from the charts, the clear message is that our subscribers are very happy with almost all aspects of the *Journal* (though of course we recognise that people who don't like what we publish



Future History Group meetings

- Monday 27 June, House of Lords: **The legacy of Roy Jenkins**, with John Campbell and David Steel (see back page for full details)
- September (either Sunday 18 or Monday 19), Liberal Democrat conference, Brighton: **The 2010–15 coalition: what could the Liberal Democrats have done differently?** Speakers to be announced.
- January/February 2017: History Group AGM and speaker meeting; details to be announced

may not respond, or may simply stop subscribing – though our retention rate is quite high). These findings, which are in line with our previous feedback exercises, are obviously reassuring! Many of the individual comments subscribers added were along the same lines ('excellent content and great value' was a typical observation); but we will of course repeat the survey

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**.

March

26 March 1896: Death in Brighton of Thomas Hughes, author, social reformer and Liberal MP for Lambeth 1865-68 and Frome 1868-74. Educated at Rugby and Oxford, Hughes used his experiences in his famous novel of 1857, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, and its sequel, *Tom Brown at Oxford*. Hughes was involved in the both the Co-operative and the Christian Socialist movements and was one of the founders of the Working Men's College in Great Ormond Street. In parliament Hughes campaigned to improve the legal position of co-operatives and trade unions. In later life he founded a settlement in the US - Rugby, Tennessee - designed as an experiment in utopian living for the sons of the English gentry; it still exists today.

April

8 April 1908: H. H. Asquith is appointed Prime Minister by King Edward VII in a hotel room in the South of France. The king was holidaying in Biarritz and, unwilling to interrupt his holiday, Asquith was summoned there. Following the adjournment of the House of Commons on 6th April Asquith secretly caught the boat train for Paris. Writing to his wife Margot afterwards, Asquith described the scene: 'This morning I put on a frock coat and ... went to the King who was similarly attired. I presented him with a written resignation of the office of Chr. of the Exr; & he then said "I appoint you P.M. & First Lord of the Treasury" whereupon I knelt down and kissed his hand. Voila tout! He then asked me to ... breakfast with him. We were quite alone for an hour & I went over all the appointments with him. He made no objection to any of them and discussed the various men very freely & with a good deal of shrewdness.'

May

31 May 1877: The National Liberal Federation is launched by Gladstone at the Bingley Hall Birmingham, 'to form new Liberal Associations based on popular representation'. While its decisions were non-binding on the party leadership, they came to be seen to represent the party's grassroots and were sympathetic to radical causes within the party, such as universal male suffrage, extension of the factory acts and reform of the House of Lords. Joseph Chamberlain was a dominant force in the Federation in its early days, though his influence declined after the mid 1880s when the NLF decided to ally with Gladstone over the 1886 Irish Home Rule Bill.

periodically to make sure subscribers have a chance to tell us what they think.

Thanks also for all the suggestions for new articles and authors; we will do our best to follow them up. The single most commonly suggested topic was more articles on

Liberal parties outside the UK. We have occasionally published these in the past, but will make efforts to publish more in the future.

The lowest score for any of the rating questions was on what subscribers thought of the presentation (layout and design) of the *Journal*, and quite a few of the individual comments were critical of our current layout. Accordingly, this issue will be the last in the current three-and-a-half column layout; we will introduce a new, and hopefully more attractive, layout in the summer issue. The cover design will, however, remain the same.

Subscribers also gave us valuable suggestions for future History Group meetings, and we will aim to follow up as many of these as we can. There were a number of requests for greater advance notice of the meetings, so from this issue we are adding a forward diary to this 'Liberal History News' section listing our planned meetings - even where we don't have a confirmed date, we will let you know what subjects we're thinking of.

Feedback on future ideas for books, and on our website, Facebook page and Twitter feed was also useful; about two-thirds of our subscribers at least occasionally looked at our website. We aim to increase both its accessibility and

the resources contained in it, and will keep subscribers updated on developments.

Finally, we held a prize draw for any of the History Group's books as a reward for completing the survey; the winner is one of our regular contributors, Michael Meadowcroft. Congratulations!

Volunteer needed

For the first fifteen or so years of the History Group, we recorded our meetings on cassette tapes; about ten years ago, we switched to digital recordings, which we hope to make accessible via our website. We would like to do the same for our tape recordings, so if anyone has access to technology which can convert them to digital files, and would be willing to spend time doing so, we would very much like to hear from them. Please email the Editor at journal@liberalhistory.org.uk.

Apology

We would like to apologise for the late despatch of this issue of the *Journal of Liberal History* - it went to press about six weeks later than originally planned.

We will aim to catch up with the summer issue, due out in mid-July.

