

the introduction of direct elections and the failure to get PR for them through the Lib–Lab pact, the party remained strongly pro-European and anti-imperialist. Thatcher meanwhile, moved from being a pro-European to a sceptic, and one who believed the myth of Britain being apart from Europe. Her view, as Thatcher said to Helen Wallace after her Bruges speech was that ‘they owe us so much’. Wallace later added in response to a question that one should not underestimate the impact of the Falklands War. It reinforced the image of Britain as an independent military power and harked back to the trope of Britain as a country standing alone against the odds. Thatcher picked it up and linked it, with Reagan, to images of the Second World War. This had sunk the party’s view of Britain’s place in the world.

Wallace added that there had been few opportunities for the party to put forward its view of Britain in the world and in Europe, though he did admit that it had not taken up the opportunities that had existed at the insistence, he later noted, of the party’s campaigners. He also deprecated the failure of Blair to follow through the indications given in the talks between Labour and the Liberal Democrats in 1996. Nonetheless, the party essentially remained committed to its view that the European

ideal was a common enterprise aimed at building a Keynesian social market at a European level.

Questioners asked whether there was a tension between the localism and Europeanism of the Liberal Party and Liberal Democrats, about the strength of the European commitment in the modern party and whether it had had an impact on the party’s willingness to argue for the reform of European institutions.

Wallace agreed that it was hard to reconcile the concept of giving more powers to Brussels with devolution, noting that Brussels appeared to be and was very remote, and he believed that it was a tension that had yet to be fully reconciled. Julie Smith noted that a number of new members to the party did not appear to share the instinctive pro-European position of longstanding members. She noted as an aside that she had come from the SDP which had been the only party not to split on the subject. Wallace also thought that part of the problem might be the general loss of faith in managers, leaders and elites. Graham Watson agreed that the party had perhaps been inhibited about calling for reform but, he argued that this was because the whole discourse was about attack on the European idea and the natural instinct was to defend it.

Questions were also asked about the lessons to be learned from the 1975

referendum, and what the role of the party should be in the current campaign. Watson argued that the main lesson was that the campaigns would be very different. In 1975 the whole political establishment and media supported the Yes campaign and the rest of Europe no longer appeared prosperous and unthreatening. The so far unimpressive Remain campaign needed to find an emotional appeal, Wallace believed. It also needed to tackle the myth of excessive European regulation. Did those that wanted to leave want no health and safety regulation, nothing on food safety? He also noted that such regulations could be tougher in the United States where the New York State Attorney General had actually gone after bankers. Many other issues could also only be tackled at a European or global level such as climate change and tax avoidance.

Meanwhile, Watson argued that the specific role of the Liberal Democrats was quite limited. It alone, would probably change few people’s minds. It would, however, play significant part in the wider Remain campaign and through the connections it made could bring in new members to the party.

David Cloke is a member of the Liberal Democrat History Group’s executive.

Reviews

Lloyd George in cartoons

Alan Mumford, *David Lloyd George: A Biography in Cartoons* (Matador, 2014)

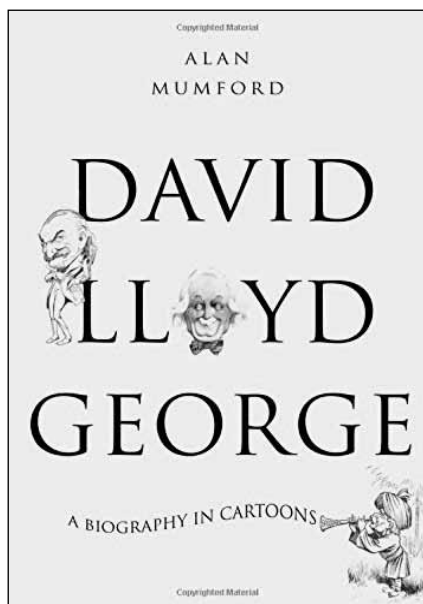
Review by **Kenneth O. Morgan**

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE was God’s gift for cartoonists. Whereas contemporaries like Asquith seemed prosaic and conventional, L.G. captivated his observers for almost half a century with a career full of vitality and versatility. In February 1934, (in a cartoon not in this book) Strube in the Daily Express portrayed him with Sir Henry Lytton of d’Oyly Carte, reflecting, as

two ‘Old Savoyards’ on how one man in his life played many parts. Beyond them stands a tableau of miscellaneous Lloyd Georges, the Welsh bard, the court jester, the Birmingham policeman, the rat-catcher of Limehouse, and, brooding in the background, ‘the man who won the war’. From the Boer War onwards, he bewitched the great cartoonists of the day – Staniforth, Gould, Reed, Partridge,

Raven Hill, Strube, David Low, Vicky. In return, they contributed immensely to his rise to the top – and, to some lesser degree, to his descent thereafter. Of all politicians, he became the great cultural artefact of his time.

It is a fascinating theme and is covered entertainingly by Alan Mumford, himself both a notable political cartoonist and a historian of the genre who has previously produced volumes on cartoonists’ treatment of the Labour and Conservative parties. While his sketch of Lloyd George’s life is prosaic, the accompanying cartoons, enterprisingly culled from a miscellany of archives, are enormously revealing, both of the man, and of the culture of his time. No one, it seems, could reach a settled view of his image. He appeared in magazines like *Punch*, the *Westminster Gazette* or the *Bystander* in guises varying from a highwayman



looking for hen roosts to rob to John Knox in the pulpit, denouncing 'motorists, golfers and all those miserable sinners who happen to own anything'. He is shown at various times as a knight errant and a conjurer, as a boxer and a punch ball. To E. T. Reed in 1915 he was 'the Charlie Chaplin of politics'. The Prime Minister of Great Britain drew on the mystique of George Robey 'the prime minister of mirth'. After all, the Edwardian music hall was his inspiration as much as the Edwardian pulpit. Sketches, mainly from his early career, alluding to his Welshness, are less interesting and nearly all clichés, a harp-playing 'Dame Wales' and the like, as in celebration of his earldom in 1945. Cartoonists also draw variously on the animal world. He is shown as a weasel and a secretary bird in 1909, a Welsh terrier in 1912, an octopus in 1917, a butting goat in 1913 (a reference to his belligerence not to his sexuality), and, most magnificently as an elephant by Leonard Raven Hill in *Punch* in 1919 – 'a cheerful pachyderm', scornfully ignoring the darts fired into his hide by a posse of trivial critics. No overriding image emerges. Mr Mumford, following us earlier historians, defines Lloyd George as 'an outsider', Welsh, Baptist, from a relatively poor social background in a tiny rural village. But what emerges here is an assured individualist, not unduly underprivileged, who soars up 'the greasy pole' through his own dynamism and genius.

What use did the cartoonists make of his career with all its dizzying twists and turns in peace and in war? In general, the treatment he received was relatively benign. While sketches attack his

radical onslaughts on landlords and the wealthier classes in general, many others are sympathetic towards his reforms like Old Age Pensions and National Health Insurance. On some of the darker passages in his career, he was lucky to get away with it. The ferocious 'retaliation' in Ireland in 1920, the era of the Black and Tans, does not seem to have inspired undue ferocity amongst the cartoonists – the Australian socialist Will Dyson in the *Daily Herald* always excepted. The fawning visit to meet Hitler in Berchtesgaden in 1936 seems to have provoked astonishment rather than condemnation. Likewise, defeatist, Petain-like speeches during the Second World War. His private life too, escaped unscathed as of course it did with the investigative journalists of the time. Mumford publishes one rare cartoon from the small-circulation *Bystander*, in April 1922, showing Lloyd George and Lord Birkenhead by the seaside, reading some of the sexier poetry of Byron in their deck chairs, but that is far from revelatory. A curious sketch by an unknown artist in the monthly *Truth* in 1920 hints at another of Lloyd George's little hobbies – phrenology and the workings of the human brain. The cartoons generally conform to the stereotypes – dauntless enemy of landlords, social crusader, triumphant war leader and peacemaker, titan in the wings after 1919. That is not surprising: the cartoonists had largely created these clichés in the first place.

What, in return, did Lloyd George make of the cartoonists? In general, he was grateful to them. They emphasised positive aspects of his career. No wonder he had friendly relations with men like Staniforth in the *Western Mail*, George Strube in the *Express*, even the more angular David Low in the *Star* and the *Evening Standard*. Invariably, they made him sound fun. If a Strube cartoon of him appeared in the morning paper, it made Lloyd George's day. Strube depicted Lloyd George as permanently accompanied by a pheasant and a walking mangel wurzel, thus recalling L.G.'s famous factual error in a speech back in 1913. Their abiding presence as Lloyd George's stage army in the thirties served to underline his splendid isolation in politics, spurned by the establishment but standing magnificently alone in crusades to revive agriculture and industry, conquer unemployment, promote a British New Deal, defend Spanish Republicanism and finally stand up to totalitarian bullies. Lloyd George, after all, relied

heavily on his PR (other than the new radio). He was a master of spin. In 1916, it made him prime minister. Just as he kept leads open to the press, from their mighty owners to their parliamentary and military correspondents, and used them to promote his causes, so he owed much to the aid of the photographers – and therefore the cartoonists. With his Inverness cloak, his pince-nez and especially his flowing Welsh locks, he created an image and style, years before Alastair Campbell began operations. He embodied a sense of uniqueness: the cartoonists, even a younger socialist critic like Vicky, pandered to it. They also fed his vanity about his appearance. Low's famous *New Statesman* cartoon of Lloyd George perched primly on a bench in the Commons emphasises the prettiness of his small feet of which he was inordinately proud. His personality in many ways was a feminine one. No wonder women loved him.

This fascinating book, then, breaks new ground, even in the well-occupied field of Lloyd George studies. Both the politician and the cartoonist flourished in an atmosphere of happy symbiosis. At least, they did then. Lloyd George, controversial though he always was, lived in a far more deferential, respectful world in which reporters kept their distance. Our culture now is rougher, and so is that of the cartoons. How a leading politician, with an unconventional sex life, with a slap-happy way with money and overtones of corruption engulfing his premiership, would fare now at the hands of Steve Bell and Martin Rowson in the *Guardian*, those latter-day Gilrays and Rowlandsons, to name but two, is an intriguing thought. The media now are far more merciless and unforgiving towards human peccadillos: their hacking and intrusions into privacy have been exposed by the Leveson inquiries and in the courts. Lloyd George today would have to find new defences to preserve his reputation. But who is to say that the man who took on and routed Lord Northcliffe in his own day would not again prevail? The English world of 'back to basics' would have been just one more where the Welsh wizard came, saw and conquered.

Kenneth Morgan is a Welsh historian and Labour peer. His thirty-five books include Wales in British Politics, Lloyd George, Consensus and Disunity, Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880–1980, James Callaghan and Michael Foot.