

was evident that once this legislation was passed, religious organisations would be free to discuss this as a matter of theology at their own pace. That is starting to happen and it is a vindication of Lynne’s approach, but one thing which the book does not capture is the extent to which LGBT members of faith groups feel abandoned.

Lynne devotes a chapter to excerpts from her postbag. She omits the most disgusting stuff so as not to dignify it, but, as an out parliamentarian who is on the receiving end of this I can confirm that it is all true. Today, witnessing the outpouring of xenophobia after the Brexit vote, one wonders whether hatred of LGBT people in the UK has diminished or whether it was simply in abeyance for the duration of the coalition until now.

This book is on one level a campaign manual. A classic text which sets out how issues emerge, campaigns arise and government responds. In one chapter Lynne sets out the main lines of attack and the rebuttals she deployed. That is immensely valuable to the party which urgently needs to recapture the messaging skills which helped us build support prior to the coalition. If the failure of the Liberal Democrat 2015 general election campaign and the success of the Brexit campaign has taught us anything it is that clear, accurately targeted messaging is critical.

The book is short and inevitably there are some omissions. There is little about the bill’s passage through the Lords. The bill could have been hijacked in the Lords, as the civil partnership legislation was in 2003. The fact that it made it safely through, despite opposition from the bishops and many leading Tories, was due to hard work by a small group of peers across the House who patiently talked to colleagues who had concerns and doubts. Some could not see the need for marriage because of the existence of civil partnerships, others worried that this form of marriage was not equivalent to heterosexual marriage. Success was due to the painstaking process of explaining that, whatever its flaws, this legislation would above all else enable LGBT people and their families to live with dignity and be celebrated as equals within their communities.

The style of the book is crisp, witty and direct. It was produced quickly for an important reason, to ensure that Liberal Democrats get due credit for our work. Since the day the Act was passed,

Stonewall and Cameron have tried to airbrush us out of the picture. However this legislation is as closely linked to Lynne as the 1967 Abortion Act is to David Steel. Liberal Democrats have a rightful place at the forefront of social change. It is a place which we keep by standing up for the legal rights of minority groups and never letting up on human rights. To do so, at a time when liberalism is under constant attack, will

be hard. Others may waiver, but Liberal Democrats must not. When we need inspiration we can turn to this book, and I hope that other former Liberal Democrat former ministers will add to the canon.

Liz Barker became a Liberal Democrat life peer in 1999. In 2015 she was appointed as the Liberal Democrat spokesperson for the voluntary sector and social enterprise.

Reform and reformers

Michael Thomas and Peter Urbach, *Commemorating Reform and Reformers, Volume 1: The Reform Club’s Collection of Ceramic and Other Objects Commemorating Reform and Those who Campaigned for it* (Reform Club, 2014)

Review by **William C. Lubenow**

LIBERALISM WAS A marked series of processes and procedures; its character was instrumental rather than substantive. It was a matter of words, rather than deeds, and there have been many efforts to capture its essence in myth and in material flesh. Images of Mr Gladstone as a woodsman created the myth of the iconic statesman and scholar who chose menial work for his recreation. The Reform Club itself is a physical monument to the mood and movement of reform. Founded by radicals and Whigs in 1836, the club was a

testimonial to those who had brought in and passed the Reform Act of 1832. It became the headquarters of those who would wish to push electoral reform further. Wandering through its rooms one can see portraits and busts of those since the 1830s representing (save perhaps for the bust of Winston Churchill which adorns the Morning Room) the promoters of reform.

The club, by gift and purchase, has assembled a collection, which this catalogue describes, in a celebration of the reform movement. The collection



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consists largely of ceramic objects which could be produced cheaply on a large scale, but it also includes examples of commemorative works in brass, silver, wood, and glass. These objects carry the images of those who by dint and drive advanced the great reform bill: Lord Grey, Brougham, Lord John Russell, and Lord Althorp. The collection includes a tray blending the messages of reform and patriotism portraying a young man carrying a tricolor banner bearing the slogan 'Reform'. He stands on a greenward which carries the slogan 'England Forever'. There is also, among others such, a spirit flask of Daniel O'Connell – a reminder of Catholic emancipation and a nod to the future of O'Connell's campaign for repeal of the Act of Union. There is also a spirit flask of Frederick, Duke of York and Albany, a popular figure who is commemorated by a 124-foot column in Waterloo Place hard by the Reform Club. There are also plates, mugs, and jugs celebrating the Reform Act itself. A punch bowl is decorated with the slogan 'The Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill'. An 'Old Rotten Tree' jug condemns the rotten borough system. A cream jug (not the cow creamer celebrated in the works of P. G. Wodehouse) carrying an image of Lord John Russell is a tribute to 'The Champions of Reform'. A teapot, fittingly bearing the image of Lord Grey, also carries the portraits of Lord John Russell and Brougham. There are snuffboxes in the collection as well as a silver urn dedicated to Joseph Hume, a member of the

Reform Club and MP for various constituencies from 1818 until his death. The urn was presented to him at a dinner at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in the Strand. It acknowledged 'his Great Zeal/ And persevering advocacy/of Reform Retrenchment &/the Removal of all/ Public Abuses'. There are Britannica mugs and jugs, reminders that reform was no French disease but a movement fully compatible with British patriotism. The collection contains a miniature cannon inscribed 'The Voice of the People' which was said to have been fired at a reform demonstration in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire in 1831–1832.

These are examples of efforts to make instrumental words flesh. The collection, of which this catalogue is a beautiful description, contains 100 artifacts that are material accounts of the events and the people involved in the passing of the Great Reform Act. This is the first volume of the catalogue and we can look forward to another that will disclose the richness of the Reform Club's collections further.

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wider lessons. The reader is mostly left to spot what patterns he or she can in the stories, but the book does provide a useful service in capturing this bygone age of local government as it looked from the political inside.

Norman Baker's time in helping take the Liberal Democrat to control of Lewes Council – which he led for some time – and then to parliamentary victory also saw some very intensive and bitter party infighting. Most of the time Baker is relatively magnanimous about those he fell out with and his own limitations as a group leader – but only most of the time.

The second book-within-the-book follows Norman Baker's parliamentary career, and in particular his four and a half years as a minister in a coalition whose creation in May 2010 Baker strongly supported, though he doubts the wisdom of initially presenting it as a 'love in' rather than as a business relationship between people who often disagree.

Curiously absent from the account of these years are most of his Liberal Democrat parliamentary colleagues. Nick Clegg gets fulsomely praised – more so indeed than Charles Kennedy who Baker found remarkably lukewarm rather than congratulatory in his reaction to Baker's investigations securing one of the resignations of Peter Mandelson. (The lukewarm reaction of Kennedy and other Lib Dems is put down by Baker to a belief that Mandelson was far more warmly disposed to cooperating with the Liberal Democrats than many of his Labour colleagues.) Also frequently praised are Baker's staff, but

Ploughing his own furrow

Norman Baker, *Against the Grain* (Biteback Publishing, 2015)

Review by **Mark Pack**

NORMAN BAKER WAS quickest off the mark in the former-Lib-Dem-MPs-write-books stakes, and his lengthy *Against the Grain*, published in 2015, has the virtue not only of interest and humour but also of capturing views fresh out of coalition before longer-term consensus has set firmly in minds.

However, much of the book is not about coalition and, indeed, *Against the Grain* is really two books in one. The first is a tale of politics as it used to be,

documenting what already sounds a very distant world where councils closed their offices at lunchtime, the government kept a 1771 map of the River Dee an official secret, a cinema licensing committee existed for an area without any cinemas (Baker got appointed to it), and hard local campaigning could take Liberal Democrats to council control and parliamentary victories.

The rapid-fire anecdotes keep this part of the book moving swiftly, though at the cost of relatively little analysis or

