

Journal of Liberal

HISTORY



Richard Livsey, 1935–2010

J. Graham Jones

Richard Livsey and the politics of Brecon and Radnor

Tony Little

'Women who wish for political enfranchisement should say so'

John B. Davenport

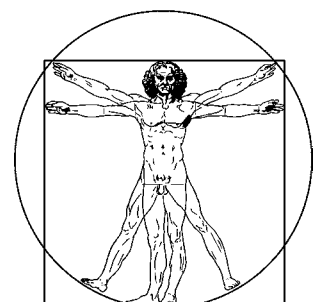
The Distributists and the Liberal Party

Douglas Oliver

The legacy of Roy Jenkins Meeting report

Ian Cawood

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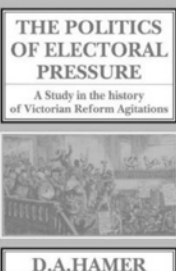

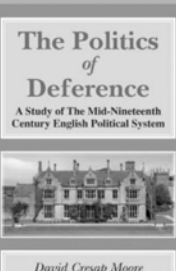
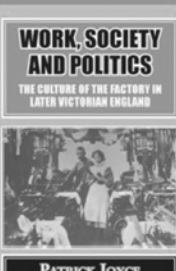


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Journal of Liberal History

The *Journal of Liberal History* is published quarterly by the Liberal Democrat History Group.

ISSN 1479-9642

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Cover design concept: **Lynne Featherstone**

Published by the Liberal Democrat History Group,
c/o 54 Midmoor Road, London SW12 0EN

Printed by **Kall-Kwik**,
Unit 1, 37 Colville Road, London W3 8BL

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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.

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Liberal History News

Winter 2016–17

Trevor Jones (1927–2016) – An Appreciation

The death of Trevor Jones on 8 September 2016 signals the demise of one of the most remarkable electoral campaigners in modern political history. It was his skill and drive that delivered Liberal control of Liverpool City Council and which produced a number of the by-election successes that rescued the party from its 1970 depths. At that election it had fewer votes and seats than today but, after five by-election victories and the early burgeoning of community politics, it reached almost 20 per cent of the vote by the February 1974 election.

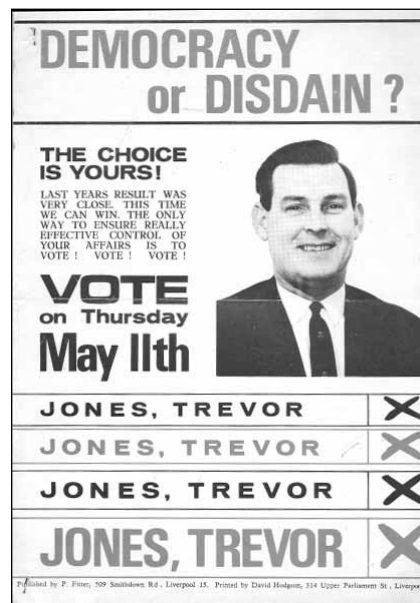
The bare statistics of the Liverpool successes were remarkable, following, as they did, Trevor's first victory in 1970, when he joined Cyril Carr as the second Liberal councillor, and led to control of the City Council a bare three years later. The context of this transformation is significant and remarkable in that they were achieved in a city that had a very sparse Liberal tradition. Even in the halcyon year of 1906, only two of the city's nine constituencies had returned Liberal MPs and Liberals had not controlled the City Council since 1895. Two Liberal MPs were elected for the one year 1923–24 but otherwise it was unremitting gloom for many years. There were single local ward victories in 1946 and 1947, without Conservative opposition, and the last lingering Liberal alderman came off the council in 1955. Liverpool politics were additionally stacked against Liberals by the dimension of religious alliances. The strong Catholic population identified itself with Labour and, until local government reorganisation in 1973, there was a Protestant party which regularly held two wards, without Conservative opposition.

There was not even more than a smattering of Liberal clubs, with only the Kildonan and Garmoyle institutes – the latter still in party hands. Even so, the mighty handful of Liberal stalwarts, such as Beryl Hands, Warwick Haggart, Albert Globe, Fred Bilson and Russell Dyson, maintained a Liberal presence during the dark years. Cyril Carr had gained Church ward at a by-election

early in 1962, at which Labour had turned down an appeal to withdraw its candidate but mysteriously failed to submit a valid nomination paper. Significantly there was no additional success in Church ward until 1967 – the year of Trevor Jones' first contest in the City.

Trevor Jones was born in Denbighshire, North Wales, but his family moved to Bootle soon after. He went to the local grammar school but left at the age of fourteen. Then, concealing his age, he joined the Merchant Navy and served on the Atlantic convoys, about which Nicholas Montserrat wrote so vividly in *The Cruel Sea*. At the end of the war he was in Singapore where the sight of emaciated Allied prisoners being released from the Changi prison camp had a great effect on him. Back in Liverpool he married Doreen Brown in 1950; she was also to become a Liberal councillor and Lord Mayor. After working on the docks for some years he borrowed £200 to buy the business which eventually became a successful ship's chandlery.

It was the threat of demolition of one of his warehouses to make way for a new road that was the eventual catalyst for his involvement in politics. He took his campaign, with typical Jones' leaflets, all the way to the House of Lords. He then realised that only political involvement could have long-term effects. His instinctive affinity for the underdog, plus his Welsh roots, led him to join the Liberals, and neither its single-figure national poll rating nor the fact of having only one City Councillor out of 160 council members inhibited him. Two second places followed in 1968 and 1969 until he joined Cyril Carr the following year, gaining Church ward. Cyril and Trevor were completely different but, with more tolerance on both sides, could have been complementary. Cyril was a thoughtful lawyer with a long Liberal heritage and always acted with care, whereas Trevor leapt in with the telling phrase and sharp repartee. Trevor was initially loyal to Cyril's leadership but they fell out after the Liberals had gained



control of the new Metropolitan City Council in 1973 and Trevor retired to the back benches. Each of them had their adherents and, despite attempts to cover up the split, it was inevitably difficult to run the City Council. Cyril refused to resign the leadership but eventually his declining health made it necessary and Trevor duly took over.

He did not inaugurate the name *Focus* for the now ubiquitous leaflets but he popularised its use and latched on to its frequent appearance on the streets as a way of localising Liberal campaigns. Trevor saw it as a tool to use everywhere and was frustrated that the national party was, he felt, too respectable to promote it. He therefore decided to stand for election as the party's president and used his *Focus* techniques around the country successfully in 1973 to defeat Penelope Jessel, the leadership's candidate.

Trevor then engineered his most remarkable election coup. He had got involved in the pending by-election in Sutton & Cheam before being elected as party president. On the face of it this was nowhere near a possible Liberal victory. The party had polled only 6 per cent at the April 1970 Greater London Council election and barely saved its deposit at the general election two months later.

But there was a new, young candidate in place – Graham Tope – who readily agreed to Trevor using his new techniques at the by-election. Trevor took over the whole campaign with astonishing energy. He would pick on local issues, producing all the leaflets and election material in Liverpool and then driving down to Sutton with his Triumph Stag stuffed full of *Focus* leaflets which the local helpers then delivered. The final result in Sutton & Cheam was a Liberal victory by over 7,000 votes, conjured out of nowhere by Trevor. Other by-elections followed, usually with Trevor much involved, and with greatly increased Liberal votes and with a number of Liberal victories. He once told me that he had voted in every by-election he had been involved with!

Perhaps the most curious aspect of Trevor's undoubted skills was the failure to deliver parliamentary victories in Liverpool – including his own candidature in Toxteth, in which he finished a poor third. He then tried for the candidature in Orpington following Eric Lubbock's 1970 defeat but Kina Lubbock, Eric's wife, was preferred. He had one further parliamentary campaign, in Gillingham, but again finished third. He then concentrated on Liverpool and was Council leader at the time of the Toxteth riots, which upset him greatly. In 1981 he was

knighted for his services to local government, but the title he much preferred was 'Jones the Vote', which combined his Welsh origins and his electoral skills.

Trevor was certainly not an easy colleague. He was intensely loyal and committed but he had little time for those who did not accept his strategy. He remained popular not least because he was so effective. An instinctive Liberal, he was a strategist and a campaigner rather than a great thinker. He was fierce with those who stood in his way and this applied to the SDP who stood against Liberal candidates, thus ensuring a number of Labour victories and opening the door to the disaster of Militant. Trevor was fearless in standing up to their councillors. On one occasion he so riled Derek Hatton, Militant's key man, that Hatton shouted, 'I'll dance on your grave'. Trevor replied, 'That's fine by me – I'm going to be buried at sea.' His refusal to give way to the SDP meant that Liverpool Broadgreen was one of only three constituencies contested by both Liberal and SDP candidates at the 1983 general election. When in March 1987, forty-seven Militant councillors were disqualified, the Liberals came back into control and Trevor was once again leader of the council, albeit very briefly.

Trevor Jones' policy achievements in office were slim, and his passion always

seemed to be more for the thrill of Liberal election victories rather than for political power. Very unusually, Trevor's municipal leadership and the amazing, if somewhat capricious, Liberal municipal successes in Liverpool were based primarily on his remarkable organisational abilities and his ability to grasp tactical opportunities. It is for these skills that he is warmly remembered by his Liberal colleagues.

Michael Meadowcroft

Future meetings schedule

- Monday 6 February, National Liberal Club: History Group AGM and speaker meeting – '**Jeremy is Innocent**' : **The Life and Times of Jeremy Thorpe and Marion Thorpe**, with Ronald Porter (see back page for full details)
- Friday 17 March, Novotel Hotel, York (Liberal Democrat spring conference): **Who Rules? Parliament, the People or the Prime Minister?** with Professor Michael Bradick and Lord Martin Thomas (see back page for full details)
- June / July 2017: details to be announced
- September 2017: Liberal Democrat autumn conference, Bournemouth: details to be announced

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

7 December 1950: Liberal Party member Harry Willcock is stopped while driving by police who demand to see his ID card. He refuses, allegedly replying, 'I am a Liberal and I am against this sort of thing'. Compulsory ID cards were introduced at the start of the Second World War and the Labour government decided to retain them afterwards. Willcock was prosecuted and although he lost the case and a subsequent appeal the Lord Chief Justice was openly critical of their retention. In the wake of the publicity surrounding the court case, Willcock founded the Freedom Defence Association to campaign against ID cards. Both the Liberal and Conservative parties committed to abolish ID cards and in 1952, a few months after the Tories were returned to power, it was announced that ID cards were to be scrapped.

January

5 January 2006: Charles Kennedy admits to receiving treatment and help for a 'drinks problem', and calls a leadership election. Kennedy initially signalled his intention to stand in the contest to allow the party's membership to decide whether he should continue as leader. Following the release of a statement signed by 25 Liberal Democrat MPs signalling that they would not continue to serve under Kennedy, however, he announced on 7 January that he would not seek re-election. Between his election as leader in 1999 and his resignation, Kennedy had overseen an increase in the number of Liberal Democrat MPs from 46 to 62.

February

27 February 1868: Despite the Conservatives being in a minority in the Commons and Gladstone presenting a strong case for his own appointment, Victoria commissions Disraeli to form his first ministry. Gladstone would be PM before the year was out, but he was overlooked on this occasion as Victoria opted for continuation from the Derby ministry.

Biography

J. Graham Jones reviews the life and political career of Richard Livsey, Lord Livsey of Talgarth (1935–2010)

Richard Livsey and the pol



Richard Livsey, Lord Livsey of Talgarth (1935–2010)

IN THE 2003 Sir John Lloyd lecture to the Brecknock Society, entitled 'Brecknock at the Crossroads', Professor Aled Gruffudd Jones commented on the surprise election of Richard Livsey, the Liberal candidate, at the 1985 Brecon and Radnor by-election and said that it showed how Brecon stands in the middle of a political crossroads and has done so for a very long time.¹ He attributed this instability to the fact that inhabitants of the area moved between different social, political and cultural worlds, travelling from south to mid-Wales, from east to west, from the agricultural to the industrial, the rural to the urban, and from Welsh areas to predominantly English-speaking ones. An appreciation of these

underlying processes can provide some understanding of the way in which such a major political upset could occur.

In assessing Richard Livsey's engagement with his constituency, I have drawn on a very large collection of his political papers, some deriving from the family home and others held at his office at the House of Lords, which was recently presented by his widow to the custody of the Welsh Political Archive at the National Library of Wales. Through them I seek to illustrate the way in which, despite the power of party machines, an individual politician can make a real difference and change the way in which a constituency is perceived.

This article was originally published in Volume 46 (2015) of *Brycheiniog*, the journal of the Brecknock Society & Museum Friends. The author would like to thank Dr John Gibbs, then acting editor of *Brycheiniog*, for his help in improving the structure of the article and for sourcing the illustrations. It is here republished with the kind permission of the Editorial Board of *Brycheiniog*.

itics of Brecon and Radnor

Richard Livsey's background and developing interest in the Brecon and Radnor constituency

Richard Arthur Lloyd Livsey was born at Talgarth, Breconshire, on 2 May 1935, the son of Arthur Norman Livsey, a master mariner of Brecon who also worked as a canal lock keeper, and Lilian Maisie (née James), a schoolteacher. His father died in Iraq in 1938 when Richard Livsey was just 3 years old, and consequently it was his widowed mother who had a great influence on his early development. He was educated at Talgarth County Primary School, Bedales School in Hampshire (a progressive independent school), Seale-Hayne Agricultural College, where he studied for a National Diploma in Agriculture, and later at Reading University, where he gained the degree of M.Sc. in agricultural management.

The young Richard Livsey began to take a keen interest in political life with the general election of July 1945, which he followed avidly in the Brecon and Radnor constituency: 'Breconshire was very political but was always split three ways between the three political parties'.² Set in the context of the twentieth century as a whole, this is a fair comment, but it should be noted that, having been taken by the Labour Party in 1939, the Brecon and Radnor division was held by that party for 40 years. Tudor Watkins, well regarded as a constituency MP, was the member from 1945 until 1970, beating the Conservatives into second place at every election despite the fluctuating fortunes of the two parties on the national scene.³

Richard Livsey was much influenced by several prominent Welsh Liberals – 'the Liberal political legends of the post-war period' – like Seaborne Davies, briefly the Liberal MP for the Carnarvon Boroughs (Lloyd George's old seat) in 1945, Roderic Bowen MP (Cardiganshire), Sir Rhys Hopkin Morris MP (Carmarthenshire), and Clement Davies MP (Montgomeryshire), who was also the Liberal Party leader from 1945 until 1956:

Davies spoke a lot around Wales about the need for a Welsh parliament and many other Liberal causes. Although he wasn't always that good a speaker, he could draw a substantial crowd. I recall one meeting in 1959 in Builth Wells in which we had over 300 people in attendance.

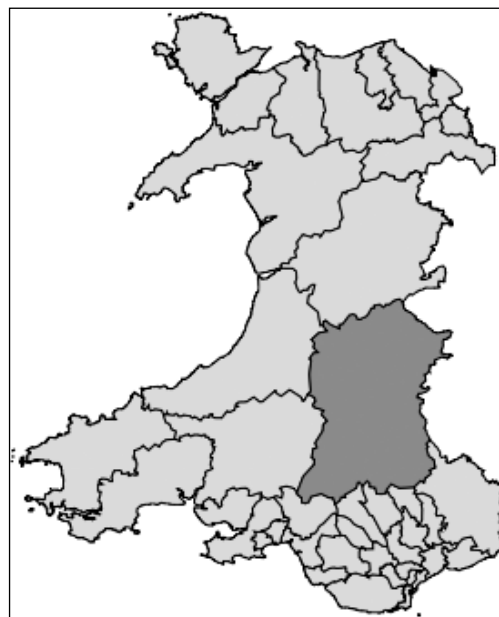
Davies was also a practical politician planning for the future. In this respect he selected Emlyn Hooson as his successor three years before his death. This helped Emlyn build up his profile in the seat and go on to win it in 1962.⁴

It was largely the influence of these men which made Livsey a committed Liberal and he joined the party in 1960. He was immediately asked to consider standing as the candidate for Brecon and Radnor, but the necessary resources were simply not available locally and, at 25 years of age, he also felt too inexperienced politically to stand for selection. Consequently no Liberal candidate stood in the constituency in 1964 as had also happened in 1959.

Richard Livsey enjoyed a varied life before eventually entering the House of Commons in July 1985 at the age of 50. In 1961 he moved to Galloway in Scotland to work for a year as an Assistant Farm Manager on one of the ICI company's farms; this was the period when he met Rene, his future wife. He was then transferred to Northumberland where he worked as ICI's agricultural development officer for the next five years. When Livsey left ICI, it was to return to Scotland to become Farm Manager of the Blair Drummond Estate in Perthshire where he was to remain for four enjoyable years. From 1971 until 1985, he was a senior lecturer in Farm Management at the Welsh Agricultural College (WAC), Llanbadarn Fawr, near Aberystwyth, initially under the leadership of Dr David Morris. Livsey played an important role in the setting up of the pioneering college and thereafter in providing a wide range of exciting and challenging academic courses. He and his wife also farmed some sixty acres of land at a smallholding at Llanon in Cardiganshire.

Despite being based in Scotland at the time, he played some part in the Liberal campaign in the Carmarthenshire by-election of July 1966 when, disappointingly for the party, the Liberal candidate D. Hywel Davies came a poor third, behind Plaid Cymru and the Labour Party: 'One, us Welsh Liberals felt we could have won. I think as Welsh Liberals this was probably our lowest point'.⁵ Livsey stood unsuccessfully as the party's candidate for Perth and East Perthshire in the general election of June 1970 (where he polled 3,000 votes, came fourth and lost his deposit in what

I seek to illustrate the way in which, despite the power of party machines, an individual politician can make a real difference and change the way in which a constituency is perceived.



had been a traditional Unionist seat), and he was then considered as a possible candidate in several Welsh divisions in the early 1970s. He was very conscious that, whereas Jo Grimond's leadership had led to something of a Liberal revival north of the border, Wales remained largely unaffected. Together with Geraint Howells, who had fought Brecon and Radnor in the 1970 general election, he argued for the reorganisation of the Liberal Party in Wales and for a clearer structure for policy formulation. Richard Livsey was one of a number of University and College staff at Aberystwyth during the early 1970s who much advanced the Liberal cause there; these included the scientists Dr Merfyn Jones and Professor H. K. King, and also George Morrison who was a member of the executive committee of the Welsh Liberal Party. In 1974 the Aberystwyth University Student Liberal Society, which had recently lapsed, was re-formed and soon attracted a substantial membership which much helped Geraint Howells to win the Ceredigion constituency from Labour in February of that year.

Pressed to stand for Denbighshire, Richard Livsey declined on the grounds of his then lack of proficiency in the Welsh language, understandably considered nigh on essential for selection in the constituency. Moreover, 'My real interest lies in Brecon and Radnor, I am a native of those parts and have strong connections there. I am sure if I got the opportunity, I could do well ... In the past my experience of Liberals in Breconshire is that they need quite a lot of badgering to be stung into action. However once that is done, quite a lot can be achieved'.⁶ Although the governing body of the Welsh Agricultural College did not in any way object to Livsey standing as a parliamentary candidate and was prepared to grant him leave of absence to conduct a general election campaign, by the end of 1973, with a general election likely to take place the following spring, he himself still felt unable to go ahead. Preparation for courses

at the college had proved unexpectedly arduous and time-consuming, his wife (who was expecting a child the following May) was increasingly unwell, and his personal financial situation at the time was 'a bit stretched'.⁷ In the event Dr Noel Thomas was chosen to contest Brecon and Radnor and polled a creditable 8,741 votes (19.4 per cent) in the February 1974 general election. The successful Labour candidate Caerwyn Roderick, who had taken over from Tudor Watkins in 1970, received 18,180 votes and the Conservative 15,903. By April it had become clear that yet another general election contest was likely before the end of the same year. Frustratingly both for him personally and for his party, Richard Livsey again felt unable to allow his name to go forward. As he wrote to Emlyn Hooson, the veteran MP for Montgomeryshire:

I continue to believe that a campaign of about three years' duration is needed to get into a winning position. In the meantime the initiative must not be lost. It could be that some members of the [Brecon and Radnor Liberal] Association may be reluctant to have a go again so soon after the last time, for reasons of cash etc. But I am sure you and Geraint [Howells] will persuade them otherwise, if they need such persuasion. Again it is a pity I cannot stand, particularly in view of the current situation in livestock farming, especially beef. This is – politically – one of the most frustrating years I have had to suffer. My ambitions will have to remain temporarily submerged.⁸

Eventually, in the 1979 general election, Richard Livsey did stand as a parliamentary candidate, and this, somewhat surprisingly, in the Labour/Conservative marginal constituency of Pembrokeshire. On his adoption there in November 1977, Emlyn Hooson wrote privately to the chairman of the Pembrokeshire Liberal Association, 'Mr.

Left: Livsey after the by-election

Above: Wales and the Brecon & Radnor constituency (Wereon – own work, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4459706_)

Livsey has been active within the Welsh Liberal Party for some considerable time, both as a candidate and in other spheres, and has proved himself to be a person of outstanding ability and dedication. ... With the solid base of support which has already been built up in Pembrokeshire, I feel sure that Liberalism in the constituency will now go from strength to strength'.¹⁰ This certainly proved a wholly forlorn hope! In the dramatic swing to the right that brought Margaret Thatcher into Downing Street in May 1979, support ebbed away from the Liberals as well as from the Labour. Emlyn Hooson lost his seat in Montgomeryshire, and Livsey saw the Liberal vote in Pembrokeshire fall by a third. In Brecon and Radnor the drop in the Liberal vote was on a similar scale. Here Tom Hooson the Conservative aspirant (and a first cousin to Emlyn Hooson) defeated Caerwyn Roderick, converting a Labour majority of 3000 into a Conservative one of the same magnitude.

Livsey as a significant member of the Liberal Party outside Westminster

By the late 1970s Richard Livsey had emerged as a highly respected figure within the Liberal Party in Wales and had lent his support to the formation and continuation of the 'Lib-Lab' pact formed with Callaghan's Labour administration in March 1977: the only official bi-party agreement in Britain since the Second World War – until the formation of the coalition government of Conservatives and Liberals in 2010. At a special conference convened by the party at Blackpool on 21 January 1978, Richard Livsey threw his weight unequivocally behind the continuation of the innovative pact between the two parties: 'The easy path to take would be to scrap the Pact now and throw away all the advantages we have gained and leave no chance of further gains in the future. But I think we are only just over half way through and this is the time to keep our nerve and support David Steel. The skipper and crew should not abandon ship halfway through the voyage'.¹¹ A belief in devolution was integral to Livsey's political philosophy, and, predictably, he wholeheartedly supported the first devolution referendum convened by the Labour government on St David's Day 1979 seeking to establish a national assembly for Wales, potentially a major step forward.¹²

In the same speech in which he spoken up for the Lib Lab pact, Livsey continued:

As regards devolution it is essential that we see the Welsh devolution Bill through Parliament. The Welsh Liberal Party have been fighting for increased autonomy for Wales since the days of Lloyd George at the end of the last century. Now that our ideals are at last coming to fruition it is not the time to pull out and prevent a Welsh Assembly being set up. The Welsh nationalists are now opposing the Wales Bill on the grounds

that it will ultimately lead to a federal system of government throughout Britain. That's just what we want. The issue must be settled now – there will be no chance under the Tories. If we support the Pact today we will be half way to letting the Welsh Liberal Party realise the aspirations of the Welsh people. What is good for the Liberal party is good for Wales and is good for Britain. *Anwyl gyfeillion* [dear friends], fellow Liberals, don't hesitate now. Our vote here today can show the way ahead for radical politics in Britain. We must have the courage of our convictions and carry on with our courageous experiment in modern government.¹³

The overwhelming 'No' vote in the Referendum of 1 March 1979 left Livsey highly dejected, 'In hindsight I felt that it was the wrong time for a referendum. It was simply used as a way of voting against an unpopular Labour government and Tories milked this fully'.¹⁴

Another highly significant event of this era was the breaking away from Labour in 1981 of 'The Gang of Four' and its followers, and the subsequent formation of the Social Democratic Party (the SDP). Interviewed in 2003, Livsey recalled his initial feelings towards the new party.

The SDP were a totally different type of people [from the Liberals]. Some were quite aggressive; others were quite friendly; many had absolutely no experience of politics at all. What they did give us was an important new impetus. This was because many were active in the world of business and they also had a large membership on the ground in the south-Wales urban constituencies which we hadn't been in for decades. They were also well up in publishing, printing and campaigning techniques, which the Liberals in Wales often lacked. The balance of members in rural seats, however, still remained predominantly Liberal. In Brecon and Radnorshire, for example, I recall there were 150 Liberal members and twenty-seven SDP.¹⁵

Richard Livsey first contested Brecon and Radnor in 1983 as the Liberal-SDP Alliance aspirant, when he came third. However, he succeeded in more than doubling the previous Liberal vote in the constituency – from 4,654 in 1979 to 9,226 in 1983. The Conservative Tom Hooson won again, and the Labour Party vote was nigh on halved. In the recent redrawing of the boundaries of parliamentary constituencies, the division had lost some 12,000 constituents in the Brynmawr and Cefn Coed area of Breconshire, that southern strip at the top of the mining valleys. In consequence, political pundits ventured the opinion that the Labour Party stood no prospect of recapturing a division which comprised Brecon, Llan-drindod Wells, a number of smaller towns and hundreds of rural villages. It contained one of the largest farming votes in the whole of the United

By the late 1970s Richard Livsey had emerged as a highly respected figure within the Liberal Party in Wales and had lent his support to the formation and continuation of the 'Lib-Lab' pact formed with Callaghan's Labour administration in March 1977.

Richard Livsey and the politics of Brecon and Radnor

Kingdom, fully 17 per cent of the local workforce.¹⁶ At this time no more than a small proportion of the farming community within the constituency was committed to voting for the Labour Party. Only one corner of the constituency remained safe for Labour – the area surrounding the still sizeable town of Ystradgynlais where there remained a massive Miners' Welfare Hall, a fissured monument by the 1980s to the age-old Socialist tradition of self-improvement and self-reliance. During the course of the 1983 general election campaign, Richard Livsey told the electors of the substantially revised constituency:

In Brecon and Radnor the situation is now far worse than at any time since I was growing up in Talgarth. I love this constituency and its people, but like so many before and since, I was forced to move away to find work. I know what it is like to long to come back to one's homeland, and the frustration of being unable to do so through lack of opportunity. The scourge of unemployment amongst our young people, and middle aged family people is totally unacceptable. Through Government policies our education, transport and social services have been cut to the bone. Powys has lost its intermediate area development status and that has cut us off from a lot of European and other aid, yet our people are some of the lowest paid in Britain.

... Do not be put off at this election by negative stories of the Alliance letting Labour or the Tories in. Due to Boundary changes in the constituency, 12,000 electors have left us in Brynmawr and Cefn Coed. The political map of Brecon and Radnor has totally changed. This is a new and great opportunity for you to cast aside the old politics. Be positive and vote for the Liberal Alliance.¹⁷

The 1985 by-election

On 4 July 1985 Richard Livsey finally entered the House of Commons as the Liberal MP, with the slim majority of 559 votes over the Labour candidate, at a high-profile by-election held on the death of Tom Hooson. The by-election was one of the most notable electoral successes of the SDP–Liberal Alliance. It was the first Liberal gain in Wales since Sir Rhys Hopkin Morris's largely unexpected capture of Carmarthen and the first Liberal by-election victory in a Welsh constituency since 1923. A Liberal had not represented Brecon and Radnor since the 1924 election when the sitting MP William Jenkins was defeated by the Unionist Walter Hall. As indicated earlier, in many of the intervening campaigns the party had been unable even to field a candidate.

Tom Hooson had suffered from ill health for a considerable period. Although viewed as something of a loner at the House of Commons, he had earned deep respect within Brecon and Radnor as

a conscientious, committed, hard-working constituency MP. Indeed, he was still working, signing letters to his constituents, only hours before he died: the victim of incurable cancer. Tom Hooson's majority of 3,027 votes in 1979 (6.3 per cent) had surged to 8784 votes (23.2 per cent) by June 1983. In any general election, such was his local standing and personal vote, the seat seemed pretty safe for the Conservatives. But a mid-term by-election, when a government is inevitably unpopular to some extent, was a wholly different proposition.

On 26 May 1985 Richard Livsey was formally selected as the prospective Alliance candidate. His old friend and political associate Geraint Howells, having known of Tom Hooson's terminal illness, had tipped off Livsey as to the likelihood of a by-election, thus enabling him to redouble his efforts on the ground. Ever since the 1983 general election, Livsey had been nursing the constituency and had spared no effort to revitalise the local party organisation. An additional advantage was that Andrew Ellis, the president of the Liberal Party nationally at this time and twice its general election candidate at Newcastle-upon-Tyne Central, now became Livsey's election agent. Other fortuitous factors had intervened too. The Revd D. R. Morris, the Labour candidate in the 1983 general election, was now sitting in the European Parliament at Brussels, while his successor as candidate at Brecon and Radnor, the academic Dr Richard Willey, had spent but little time in the constituency. Labour Party morale was conspicuously low at this time as the party nationally was dogged by severe internal disputes, during the leaderships of Michael Foot and Neil Kinnock, while the legacy of the miners' strike of 1984–85 remained fresh in the minds of the electorate. Brecon and Radnor did not even appear on the published list of the Labour Party's 130 top target seats at this time. Another factor was that the Conservative aspirant Dr Chris Butler also had no local links with the division and was given only a few weeks to campaign on the ground. Ironically, the wish of the local Conservative Association to have the by-election in September or October had been thwarted by the decision of the Conservative administration to move the writ on 10 June 1985 for the by-election to be held on 4 July.¹⁸

The famous (some might say 'notorious') Liberal by-election machine swung powerfully into action during the frenzied campaign, with party activists flooding in from all over the country, not a few of whom got totally lost trying to find the addresses of isolated voters. Prominent heavyweights from all the political parties began to arrive there in increasing numbers. Brecon and Radnor was the largest and the most rural constituency in the whole of Wales, and the one with the highest numbers of sheep anywhere in the UK! As described in the introduction to this article, the elongated constituency was also one of great contrasts, stretching from the sparsely populated

Left, from top:

Newspaper headline 6 July 1985, after Brecon & Radnor by-election.

Livsey with Paul Tyler at a local market (photo: Brecon & Radnor Liberal Democrats).

Livsey at a British Field Sports Society event (photo: Brecon & Radnor Liberal Democrats).

uplands in the north to the once heavily industrialised town of Ystradgynlais in the south, from the borders of Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire in the west over to the English borders in the east.¹⁹ At the height of the keenly observed by-election campaign, *The Times* reported:

Brecon and Radnor is as near to being uninhabited territory as any tract of land that hopeful candidates ever went foraging into. Voters are amongst the rarest forms of livestock among its mottled mountains. If a rare human figure does plod into view, to be surrounded instantly by candidates eager to show off their command of EEC sheepmeat regulations and reporters intent on testing the mood of the nation, it is ten to one that he proves to be a backpacker from Birmingham. After a few rebuffs one begins to suspect that this is a form of protective colouring adopted by the locals: they will have increasing need of it in the weeks ahead.

Campaigning here is less a matter of door-stepping than of orienteering, and if the candidates all muster for the count without losing their way in the up-country lanes, they will have done well. The constituency is the largest in area in England and Wales, with only 48,000 voters scattered across wide-open acres of delectable landscape. Almost half the constituency lies higher than the 1,000 feet said to denote a mountain. The electoral statistics place Brecon and Radnor securely among the 50 prettiest seats in the House, and by moving the writ for a July 4 vote the Government's political managers have given a host of political commentators an excuse for excursions into Mid-Wales while the hawthorn and cow-parsley are still at their best.²⁰

At the core of Livsey's campaign was a call for novel approaches to tackle the interrelated thorny problems of unemployment and rural depopulation. He called for local assistance for locally based firms, a greater flexibility on the part of the Mid-Wales Development Corporation to generate new jobs, assistance for people wishing to set up new businesses, and a revitalisation of the local economy. He maintained that the political complacency identified by commentators could be attributed to the fact that scarcity of work locally meant that the division had fewer young people than most seats and more pensioners. In the words of the *Daily Mail*, 'Out around the sheep pens, and beside the mud-spattered land-rovers, the Alliance candidate, smallholder sheep farmer Richard Livsey blends more naturally with the local landscape than the others. And the word of mouth goes that he is "all right". If constituencies need MPs who fit their profile, then the quiet spoken Mr. Livsey is probably the man for Brecon and Radnor.'²² The record of the Conservative government on unemployment was generally unimpressive, there was an announcement that some £175 million was to be cut from the funding



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available for the payment of child benefit, and the personal popularity of Margaret Thatcher had dropped significantly since the heady days of the Falklands War in the spring of 1982 and the ensuing June 1983 general election campaign.

But, during the second week of the by-election campaign, the air at Brecon and Radnor was allegedly 'filled with innuendos, slurs and smears' when the Livsey campaign team distributed their second leaflet asserting that not only was their candidate a family man, but that he was also 'the only major party candidate with a secure family background':

Most people feel Brecon and Radnor deserves a local M.P., in touch with local opinions, able to really represent local needs and interests. Richard Livsey could do that. According to the *Daily Telegraph*, 'He is the last authentic local candidate'. Richard is the only major party candidate in this election with a secure family background, and that's important. Richard knows how important the values and traditions of family life are. This area is Richard's home and he shares our own deep pride and love for mid-Wales. Our concerns are his concerns and, with his many local contacts and interests, Richard could be relied upon to continue our long-standing tradition of independent and fair-minded representation in Parliament.²³

This was an unpleasant reflection on the Conservative contender Chris Butler who, at 34 years of age, was still single, and more particularly on the Labour candidate Dr Richard Willey who had lived with his 'common law wife' Celia for sixteen years without going through a formal marriage ceremony. Chris Butler declared at his next press conference that he was indeed 'deeply offended' by the leaflet, 'A man who started out being Mr Nice has become Mr Nasty. I would like an apology for that remark'. Initially, Richard Livsey declared in response that his Conservative opponent had become 'over-sensitive' to the implications of the leaflet, but soon felt obliged to issue 'an unreserved apology', asserting that he himself had not, in fact, approved the content of the leaflet which was the work of 'the hardened backroom boys of the Liberal Party'. But by this time the offensive literature had found its way into every home in the constituency and, although later withdrawn, it would inevitably make an impact.²⁴ Personal attacks had begun to dominate the local campaign – at least according to the media. *The Guardian* reported that, on the following Saturday, Nicholas Edwards, the Secretary of State for Wales, had told delegates at the Welsh Conservative Party conference at Llandudno that the opposition candidates in the by-election had been behaving like 'a mixture of the mafia and the mentally handicapped'.²⁵ According to the *Liberal News*, the Conservatives saw Richard Livsey as 'a loser, a split choice, a ditherer, an

opportunist, a political nomad and not his own man'.²⁶ Other views were, however, more sympathetic. During the course of the campaign it had been suggested to those on the left wing of Plaid Cymru that, as it was such a close campaign, the party should not put up its own candidate, and rather lend support to the Labour aspirant Dr Richard Willey. Party leader Dafydd Wigley responded that it would be more fitting to throw their weight behind Richard Livsey.²⁷

In the aftermath of the striking by-election victory, *The Times* political correspondent wrote of the newly elected MP, 'He is not a man of outward brilliance, and as a public speaker he is flat and a little diffident. But he has a real warmth, especially in face-to-face contacts, and he has the advantage over his main rivals of looking like a man mature and at home in the workaday world, slow-spoken and reassuring and not like a product of some rarefied political environment'.²⁸ In the House of Commons Livsey became one of a group of three Welsh Liberal MPs: the others being Geraint Howells (Ceredigion) and Alex Carlile who had recaptured Montgomeryshire from the Conservatives in 1983. After the result had been declared, Carlile had told the euphoric audience, 'With the three constituencies of Ceredigion, Montgomery, and Brecon and Radnor, the Liberals now represent between 1.5 and 2 million acres of Wales'. On the same occasion the agent Andrew Ellis claimed a new principle of proportional representation 'Liberals now represent more land area in the UK than the entire Labour Party'.²⁹

Richard Livsey's success was widely claimed to be 'a rebirth of Liberalism in Wales',³⁰ and his victory was of much significance to his reviving a party which now had eighteen MPs sitting in the House of Commons and, for the first time since 1956, three MPs from Wales. The experience of campaigning together during the hard fought by-election campaign had also proved highly beneficial in cementing the bonds between the two Alliance parties in Wales.

A parliamentary career: ups and downs in a marginal seat

As Livsey took the oath of allegiance on assuming his seat in the Commons, the Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher congratulated the new MP, but ventured the opinion that 'he might well not be around for long'. Party loyalists, however, staked their hopes on the fact that six of the Liberal victors in by-elections during the previous twenty years were still at Westminster: David Steel, Cyril Smith, Clement Freud, Alan Beith, David Alton and Simon Hughes.³¹ Richard Livsey was immediately rewarded at Westminster with his party's agriculture portfolio and attacked the Thatcher government over the rapidly declining fortunes of agriculture in Wales. During an Opposition day in the House of Commons the

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following February, he chastised the government for its ineffectual record on farming, 'I have been in the industry thirty years and have never seen such a time when the industry shows such a lack of confidence'.³² His rhetoric drew attention to the severe problems faced by the Welsh farming communities, and also hardened the resolve of the Conservatives to re-capture the constituency at the first available opportunity.³³

Richard Livsey was re-elected at Brecon and Radnor in the 1987 general election, but now with an even slimmer majority, determined after several recounts, of just fifty-six votes, and on this occasion over the Conservatives. Now he campaigned on his record as an excellent constituency MP and on the slogan 'Everybody knows somebody who has been helped by Richard Livsey'.³⁴ In this general election campaign, he was given responsibility for his party's countryside portfolio, while Geraint Howells assumed responsibility for 'Wales' and Alex Carlile for legal affairs.³⁵ In spite of their nationwide portfolios, the three Welsh Liberal MPs did most of their election campaigning within Wales, publicising the Welsh manifesto of the Alliance parties entitled *Wales, the Way Forward: the Time has Come* and immensely proud that an Alliance candidate was now able to stand in every single Welsh constituency. In a moving tribute to Livsey at the Lloyd George weekend school held at Llandrindod Wells in February 2011, his energetic local agent in 1987, Celia Thomas (subsequently Baroness) recalled:

Two years later [i.e. in 1987], the General Election presented a formidable challenge. The by-election unit had gone, and I was asked to be his agent – a most daunting task. I discovered that he was a very popular and well-loved MP who knew every inch of his vast constituency and many of his constituents personally, for whom he worked his socks off. But nothing was simple. Before we mapped out his itinerary, he said, in his rather mournful voice: 'Celia, there's something you ought to know about me.' My heart sank. But he went on: 'I just can't live on sandwiches for lunch.' Phew, what a relief – and so a pub lunch was factored in each day. But his next instruction was more than a little frustrating. He believed that he must be seen in the north and south of his constituency every day, which meant that he spent a huge amount of time on the road. He was also determined to hold meetings in every village and town, enjoying the challenge of the occasional difficult question from one or two keen to catch him out.³⁶

Brecon and Radnor had now become one of the most marginal seats in the whole of the United Kingdom. On his return to parliament, Richard Livsey was at once appointed the Liberal Democrat's new Welsh leader and the party's Shadow Secretary of State for Wales, a popular choice, although there were some former SDP members

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who grumbled at the apparent dominance of the Liberals within the merged party. He served as Liberal Party spokesman on agriculture, 1985–87, and as Alliance spokesman on agriculture and the countryside and on Welsh Affairs, 1987–92. He also served as the leader of the Welsh Liberal Democrats and Party Spokesman on Wales from 1988 until 1992. In addition, he was a member of the Welsh Select Affairs Committee. Following poor Liberal Democrat by-election results in Wales and elsewhere in the UK during 1988, there was a debate on a new name for the united party some pressing for the total deletion of the word 'Liberal' from its title.³⁷ Livsey joined forces with Geraint Howells and Alex Carlile in advocating that the party should become known as the 'Liberal Democrats' and the party in Wales as the 'Welsh Liberal Democrats', changes eventually approved by a ballot of all party members in the UK in October 1989. Richard Livsey was the only prominent Welsh Liberal to come out strongly in support of the election of Paddy Ashdown (who conspicuously lacked popular support in Wales), rather than Alan Beith, as the leader of the new party as successor to David Steel in July 1988:

I was a close friend of Alan Beith, but I still believed that Ashdown had greater potential. He was a different kind of leader. [David] Steel had got involved in Wales during election times; his helicopter tours to Ceredigion during election time were very useful. Ashdown was much more active within Wales, though. There was a large Liberal faction in favour of Beith within Wales, as he was seen as a traditional Liberal. Ashdown's disciplined lifestyle, however, had made him a greater political force. Therefore I got involved in Ashdown's campaign from the very start. During the campaign we met in his flat in London every morning. Thankfully, although the first few years were not that fruitful, Ashdown's leadership provided us with some of our greatest post-war successes.³⁸

Having contributed to the up-hill Alliance by-election campaigns at Pontypridd and the Vale of Glamorgan in 1989, Richard Livsey also participated actively in the lively Monmouth by-election campaign of May 1991, helping to bring about a creditable vote of 11,164 (24.8 per cent) for the Liberal candidate Frances David – 'an excellent candidate and a seasoned campaigner'³⁹ – in a division which bordered on Brecon and Radnor and gave the party in Wales a major boost. He reflected, 'People were fed up with the Tories at this time and they came across to us in droves. This was a much more rural seat like those we held in mid-Wales and we felt at home there. Frances's vote reflected this fact'.⁴⁰ As the next general election campaign inevitably loomed, the MP for Brecon and Radnor spared no effort to bring his constituency's many problems to the attention of the House of Commons.

Richard Livsey and the politics of Brecon and Radnor

In the 1992 general election Livsey was narrowly defeated by Conservative Jonathan Evans by the agonisingly tiny margin of only 130 votes, although Livsey's personal vote had actually increased by 1,338. Celia Thomas has again recalled the course of events:

Then came the next General Election and once more I was asked to be his agent. This time the hunting issue was very much to the fore, and Richard was in a dilemma, which is when I saw the stubborn side of his character. I urged him to make his position clear, but he declined, saying that although he had nine hunts in his constituency, he had actually received more letters against hunting, mainly from the Ystradgynlais area, and didn't want to inflame passions. Besides, he thought, quite understandably, that there were far more pressing issues to speak about, such as the real poverty in much of the rural economy. But Brecon & Radnor was targeted by the British Field Sports Society, who characterised his position as being anti-fox hunting, and Richard lost the seat by just 130 votes – perhaps the only constituency in the country where hunting may have made a difference⁴¹

The issue of hunting came in an election, won by the Conservatives, where the Liberal Democrats showed a decline and the Labour party advanced. Richard Livsey later reflected on his loss of the seat: 'I had always been pro-hunting but this didn't become evident enough in the campaign and it cost me the vital votes I needed to keep the seat. Also, during the campaign I put too much time in as the Welsh party leader in other constituencies. This was at the expense of my own constituency and my support there suffered'.⁴²

While outside the House of Commons, Richard Livsey faced a period of unemployment, and then served as the deputy director and subsequently the development manager for ATB-Landbase Cymru from 1993 until 1997. Then, in the 1997 general election, following a dynamic local campaign based on support for public services, small businesses and farms. Livsey was able to recapture the seat by the impressively wide margin of more than 5,000 votes to become one of a solid cohort of forty-six Liberal Democrat MPs in the new parliament. This was the general election in which 'New Labour' came to power under the leadership of Tony Blair with a landslide majority in the House of Commons. Nationally, there was little overall change in the percentage of votes cast for the Liberal Democrats, but tactical voting was a significant factor in certain constituencies.⁴³ This was well illustrated in Brecon and Radnor where every single leaflet circulated by the Liberal Democrats was emphatic that 'only Richard Livsey can defeat the Tories'. In addition, the local campaign team's performance was second to none, their efforts buttressed still further by canvassers from neighbouring constituencies.

'Both the Welsh and the Federal (National) Liberal party targeted the seat, which gave us a lot of resources there. We were also able to do a private opinion poll in the seat which meant that we could target the messages we needed to win'.⁴⁴ In the process he had the satisfaction of ousting the sole remaining Conservative MP in Wales, Jonathan Evans. As Brecon and Radnor was the last Welsh constituency to declare in 1997, the re-elected MP rejoiced in his key role in creating within Wales 'a Tory-free zone' for the first time ever since the Liberal landslide victory of 1906.⁴⁵ No longer was the Brecon and Radnor division transparently marginal! Immediately following his re-election, Richard Livsey was appointed a member of the Welsh Affairs Select Committee and of the Constitution Reform Strategy Committee. He was also his party's spokesman for Wales.

Service in the Upper House and support for devolution

In March 2000, stubbornly unwilling to continue as an MP into his seventies, Richard Livsey announced his intention of retiring from the House of Commons at the next general election. He was undoubtedly also keenly aware of the resurgence of the Conservatives within his constituency and felt that a younger candidate was required. He thus left parliament at the general election of 2001 and, on the recommendation of Charles Kennedy, immediately entered the House of Lords as Baron Livsey of Talgarth. In the Upper House, he became his party's spokesman on agriculture and countryside affairs, was made a member of the European Environment and Rural Affairs Committee and became president of the EU Movement in Wales. From the House of Lords he campaigned vigorously for registered hunting, rather than a hunting ban, being now released from his earlier caution. The House of Lords always warms to experts, and Richard Livsey's impressive knowledge on all matters to do with farming, the countryside, the rural economy and Wales, was much appreciated in the less combative atmosphere of the Upper House.

Livsey's support for the 'Yes' campaign during the 1979 referendum on a Welsh Assembly has already been described, and his enthusiasm for devolution remained undimmed. On one occasion, when the Speaker of the House of Commons had failed to call a single Opposition MP from Wales to speak in a debate on devolution, Richard Livsey was unrestrained in his indignation, 'As a Welshman, I am used to being treated with contempt, but I would not have expected my nation to be disgraced in this way in this House'.⁴⁶ He continued thereafter to be central to the pro-devolution cause and was the leader of the Liberal Democrat campaign in the narrowly successful Welsh devolution referendum in 1997, certainly contributing to raising the 'Yes'

'Brecon & Radnor was targeted by the British Field Sports Society, who characterised his position as being anti-fox hunting, and Richard lost the seat by just 130 votes – perhaps the only constituency in the country where hunting may have made a difference.'

vote within largely intransigent Powys, which had polled a most substantial 'No' vote in 1979. Richard Livsey worked amicably for the cause of devolution with leading figures from the other political parties in Wales including Peter Hain, Ron Davies, Dafydd Wigley and Ieuan Wyn Jones. He and Mike German were by far the most frequently broadcast 'media faces' of the Welsh Liberal Democrats during the campaign. Livsey rather dramatically took to the stage at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama at Cardiff alongside Ron Davies, the then Labour Welsh Secretary of State, Dafydd Wigley, Plaid Cymru leader, and the other campaign leaders as the extremely narrow result in favour of devolution was announced. As he left the count, Livsey was mobbed by groups of zealous teenagers revelling in the outcome. Recalling the campaign in an interview with the *Western Mail* in 2009, he said: 'We had the right people in the right place at the right time. We were all working for the same objective and we knew where we were going. If other personalities had been involved, a different mix of people, it could have been diabolical'.⁴⁷

Assessments and conclusions

Richard Livsey was a man of honour and decency who was loved and respected by his constituents, colleagues and by politicians of all parties. One scribe complained that Livsey's 'melancholy drone' left him with a strong desire to emigrate. But what he lacked as an orator, he made up for in hard work and a kindly, gentlemanly air which won him firm friends across the political spectrum. He will be remembered particularly as a champion for the rural communities in which he lived and as an expert on agriculture. Despite this, for someone used to running farms, Richard Livsey could be surprisingly impractical at times! During one election campaign, while on a visit to Margam college, south Wales, his car suffered a flat tyre and he had to appeal helplessly for someone to change the wheel.⁴⁸ Such incidents were commonplace during successive campaigns.

As well as being a central figure in Welsh Liberal politics over a thirty-year period, Livsey's main success was to build Brecon and Radnor into a relative stronghold for the Liberal Democrats. But he had his failures as well. During his period as leader of the Welsh Liberal Party, the party never took off electorally, and the Liberal success in the Brecon and Radnor division was not exported to neighbouring Welsh constituencies. He did not do 'a Grimond for Wales'.

Although he had enjoyed robust health for most of his life, Richard Livsey died unexpectedly in his sleep on 15 September 2010 at his home at Llanfihangel Tal-y-Llyn near Brecon, at the relatively early age of 75 years. Among the hundreds of mourners who attended the funeral service held at St Gwendoline's church, Talgarth eleven days later, were Simon Hughes,

the Deputy Lib Dem leader, Lord (Roger) Roberts of Llandudno, who delivered the moving eulogy, and Kirsty Williams, the AM for Brecon and Radnorshire and the Welsh Liberal Democrats leader – eloquent testimony to the respect in which Livsey was held by all generations within his party. On hearing of his death, Glyn Davies, by then the Conservative MP for Montgomeryshire, paid tribute, 'Sad to learn that Lord Richard Livsey has died. Like most people who knew Richard, I liked him. He was a very good friend to Mid Wales in particular, to agriculture and to the cause of devolution ... Always thought he had a wonderful feel for his constituency of Brecon and Radnorshire'.⁴⁹ Vaughan Roderic, the BBC Wales political affairs correspondent, spelled out Livsey's accomplishments: 'His great achievement was to make us think of Powys as being the Liberal heartland, because it wasn't before Richard Livsey. Montgomeryshire was, Brecon and Radnorshire wasn't'.⁵⁰ This was quite remarkable in a division in which the Liberal cause had been moribund for decades and testimony to the contribution that a single individual can make – and this without great histrionic ability but through an engaging personality and a devotion to duty.

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- 1 A. G. Jones, 'Brecknock at the Crossroads – journalism, history and cultural identity in nineteenth-century Wales', *Brycheiniog*, vol. 35 (2003), pp. 101–16.
- 2 R. Deacon, 'Richard Livsey', *Journal of Liberal History*, 81 (Winter 2013–14), p. 37. This extensive interview took place in March 2003 as part of Professor Deacon's ambitious research programme on the history of the Liberal Party in Wales.
- 3 See J. G. Jones, 'Watkins, Tudor Elwyn, Baron Watkins of Glantawe, (1903–1983)', *Dictionary of Welsh Biography on-line*, accessed 17 Dec. 2014. It is of some interest to note that Tudor Watkins was one of the very few Labour MPs from Wales from this era who was consistently loyal to the cause of devolution – wholly contrary to Labour Party directives.
- 4 Deacon, 'Richard Livsey', p. 38.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 National Library of Wales [hereafter NLW], Emlyn Hooson Papers, box 44, Richard Livsey to Rhys Geran Lloyd, 31 Dec. 1972, marked by RGL, 'Dear Emlyn [Hooson], Urgent, Can you please stir this up urgently[?] Richard fought in Scotland last time'. See also *ibid.*, Sir Russell Johnston MP to Emlyn Hooson, 23 Feb. 1973, 'I think he [Richard Livsey] would be an excellent candidate and we were very sorry to lose him from Scotland'.
- 7 *Ibid.*, Vivian Roberts, Acting Principal of the Welsh Agricultural College, Llanbadarn Fawr, Aberystwyth,

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- to Emlyn Hooson, 10 Dec. 1973; *ibid.*, Richard Livsey to Hooson, 4 Dec. 1973.
- 8 *Ibid.*, Livsey to Hooson, 23 Apr. 1974.
- 9 It would seem that the Pembrokeshire Liberal Association had already adopted Richard Livsey as its candidate long before candidate selection was considered by the constituency party in Brecon and Radnor.
- 10 NLW, Emlyn Hooson Papers, box 44, Emlyn Hooson to W. C. Philpin, chairman of the Pembrokeshire Liberal Association, 24 Nov. 1977 (copy).
- 11 NLW, Merfyn Jones Papers, file 83, press release issued by the Pembrokeshire Liberal Association, 21 Jan. 1978.
- 12 The Welsh referendum of 1979 was a post-legislative referendum held on 1 Mar. 1979 (St David's Day) to decide whether there was sufficient support for a Welsh Assembly among the Welsh electorate. The referendum was held under the terms of the Wales Act 1978 drawn up to implement proposals made by the Kilbrandon Report published in 1973.
- 13 NLW, Merfyn Jones Papers, file 83, press release issued by the Pembrokeshire Liberal Association, 21 Jan. 1978.
- 14 Deacon, 'Richard Livsey', p. 38.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 39.
- 16 Compared with less than 3 per cent of the population of the United Kingdom.
- 17 NLW, Merfyn Jones Papers, file 83, election leaflet of Richard Livsey, June 1983 general election.
- 18 See R. Deacon, *The Welsh Liberals: the History of the Liberal and Liberal Democratic Parties in Wales* (Cardiff, 2014), pp. 218–19.
- 19 See Richard Livsey's election address, June 1985.
- 20 George Hill, 'Looking for votes over hill and under dale', *The Times*, 15 Jun. 1985, p. 10.
- 21 *Ibid.*
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- 23 NLW, Gwyn Griffiths Papers, file 50, by-election leaflet of Richard Livsey, June 1985.
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- 30 Kirsty Williams, leader of the Liberal Democrats in Wales, in the *Western Mail*, 18 Sep. 2010.
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- 32 *Liberal News*, 21 Feb. 1986.
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- 34 NLW, Welsh Political Ephemera Collection, leaflet in file BA3/4 (general election 1987).
- 35 *Welsh Liberal Party Campaign Bulletin*, no. 17, Feb. 1987.
- 36 Baroness Celia Thomas, 'Tribute to Richard Livsey', 25 Feb. 2011, Lloyd George Society website, consulted 21 Dec. 2011.
- 37 The Liberal–SDP 'Alliance' in fact came to an end in 1988 when they merged into the Liberal Democratic Party which still exists today.
- 38 Deacon, 'Richard Livsey', p. 40.
- 39 *Ibid.*
- 40 *Ibid.*
- 41 *Ibid.*
- 42 *Ibid.*
- 43 Tactical voting frequently occurs in elections with more than two candidates, when a voter supports a candidate other than his or her *sincere preference* in order to prevent what he thinks may be an undesirable outcome.
- 44 Deacon, 'Richard Livsey', p. 40.
- 45 Wigley, 'Richard Livsey', p. 30.
- 46 *Ibid.*
- 47 *Western Mail*, 18 Sep. 2010.
- 48 Noted in Livsey's obituary in *The Guardian*, 19 Sep. 2010.
- 49 Website, 'A view from rural Wales: Welsh politics and countryside', consulted 20 Dec. 2011.
- 50 Cited in Deacon, *The Welsh Liberals*, p. 303.

Letters to the Editor

Reforming the Lords

Professor Robert Hazell's account of the coalition's failure to reform the House of Lords (*Journal of Liberal History* 92, autumn 2016) seems rather rough when he blames Nick Clegg's 'lack of detailed knowledge, aggravated by his failure to appoint any expert advisers' but is unwittingly endorsed when one of his inexpert advisers, Matthew Hanney, protests at the sentiment!

My complaint is that they also lacked knowledge of the history of the party on the subject. Mr Asquith promised a 'popular' chamber to replace the hereditary one. He appointed the Bryce Commission to come up with proposals and they suggested election by the House of Commons, but the First World War intervened.

In my first election as leader in 1979, our manifesto stated: 'The House of Lords should be replaced by a new, democratically chosen, second chamber which includes representatives of the nations and regions of the UK, and UK Members of the European Parliament'. And in the 1987 election, jointly with David Owen, our Alliance manifesto pledged: 'a reform of the second chamber linked with our devolution proposals so that it will include members elected from the nations and regions of Britain'.

These were both overlooked in favour of the simplistic 15-year general election which, as Hazell rightly points out, never had a chance of being approved by any House of Commons. (The Bryce Commission itself had 'forcibly argued

that a Chamber elected on the same franchise as the Commons would inevitably become a rival'.)

Setting aside the doomed coalition efforts the party should now, post-Brexit, be advocating our long-standing commitment to a federal UK, enabling not just the Commons but the other legislatures to elect a wholly new democratic senate as the federal chamber of our parliament.

By the way, even David Cameron was moved in a press conference in Singapore – of all places – to acknowledge 'the passing of the Steel Bill' as at least enabling peers to retire and to expel crooks; pending fundamental reform, such minor steps are fully justified and will continue.

David Steel

The Liberal Democrats and *Spitzenkandidaten*

Issue 92 on the 2010–15 Coalition provided valuable analysis and primary source material in the shape of ministers' and their advisers' accounts.

Tim Oliver, in the article 'The coalition and Europe', says: 'no UK party had bought into the *Spitzenkandidaten* idea, including the Liberal Democrats'. This is not quite right.

I was present when the ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in Europe) Party Council met in Pula, Croatia in May 2013. That Council decided that ALDE would select a candidate for Commission President. It was carried by a large majority and was supported by the UK Liberal Democrat delegation. As far as I know none of the party's officers, committees or Leader were opposed to it (if they were they never communicated so to the party's delegates).

In September 2013, the Liberal Democrat conference met in Glasgow and passed an important policy paper on Europe commissioned by the Federal Policy Committee. The paper (which is on the party's website) contained many steps to reform the EU and policies to be pursued in both Brussels and Westminster for British people to get and see greater benefits from EU membership. It was a shame that in the 2014 European Election campaign, and subsequently, the valuable content of this policy paper was largely undeployed. In the debate at Glasgow (which is memorable for a powerful speech by Charles Kennedy that can be found on Youtube) the leading candidate scheme was referred to positively by several speakers, without dissent.

I had been nominated in Autumn 2012 as number 2 candidate on the South East England list. In effect, I would take over from Sharon Bowles MEP if our vote held up. As prospective MEP I had numerous discussions with the serving MEPs about what our plans, aims and strategy would be if we were to serve, as we hoped we would, in the 2014–19 Parliament. I cannot remember a specific conversation about the leading candidate scheme, but I have a general recollection that it was understood that the nomination of the next Commission President according to who was the largest group in the Parliament was a given, and we supported the decision taken at Pula. UK Liberal Democrat MEPs had spoken for the motion at Pula.

My strong expectation, based on all the discussions I had, is that if a group of Liberal Democrat MEPs had been elected in 2014 that would have supported in Parliament the democratic concept of the Commission President being the candidate of the largest party in the Parliament.

So, my view is that it was settled by Autumn 2013 and thereafter that the Liberal Democrats supported the *Spitzenkandidaten* concept.

This faced a question mark briefly when ALDE Congress took place in November 2013 at Canary Wharf with the task of nominating a candidate. In the weeks prior to the Congress two candidates had emerged: Guy Verhofstadt MEP, the former Belgian Prime Minister and Leader of ALDE in the European Parliament, and a Scandinavian candidate who made little impression. By the time the Congress met the second candidate had withdrawn and Verhofstadt was nominated, as always looked likely.

The party leader evidently decided before the second candidate's withdrawal that Verhofstadt was a bad candidate and I am told of a meeting of the party leadership where pro-federalist quotes of his were read out. Staff from the Leader's Office contacted UK delegates to ALDE Congress to encourage us to support the other candidate. There was a colourful exchange of emails (copied to all delegates) between a peer urging against Verhofstadt and Andrew Duff MEP coming to his fellow-MEP's defence. Even after the second candidate's withdrawal we were asked to vote for him if (as was thought) his name was still to appear on the ballot paper. This was roundly rejected by most of the UK delegates to the Congress, especially by those who attended regularly or were not peers.

At no point in Pula, Canary Wharf or at any other time did I hear the party leader or his office express objection to the leading candidate scheme per se.

It may be that after the 2014 European Elections that Nick Clegg supported David Cameron's objection to Jean-Claude Juncker or to the leading candidate scheme per se – although I never heard that myself. However, I think it is historically inaccurate to say the Liberal Democrats did not support the leading candidate concept.

The German word '*Spitzenkandidaten*' was not (as far as I recall) used at any of the meetings mentioned. We used terms like 'candidate from each group',

'leading candidate' or 'candidate for Commission President'. I heard, in the UK, *Spitzenkandidaten* mainly used by our tabloids and Conservative politicians who wanted, one imagines, to attach to the idea an idea that it was foreign or being imposed by Germany or Angela Merkel whom by 2014 the *Mail*, *Express*, *Sun* and *Telegraph* had already decided to mis-represent as bossy or dictatorial.

In public debates in the 2014 campaign and 2016 referendum, when euro-sceptic speakers spoke of the Commission's alleged lack of accountability, I found it useful to point out that in the old days the Commission President was appointed behind closed doors, but that in 2014 things had changed: each party nominated a candidate and the candidate from the party who won most seats was elected President. I compared this to our own method for appointing Prime Ministers.

An important debating axis of the referendum (and the longer struggle to protect the UK's place in Europe) was the tendency of euro-sceptics to think of EU institutions and people as alien, and EU supporters to see familiarity and democracy.

Antony Hook

Liberal Clubs

The letters from David Steel and Peter Hellyer emphasising the role of the three working men's Liberal clubs in the Borders (*Journal of Liberal History* 91, summer 2016) argue for their role in Liberal victories from 1965 onwards. That role had deep foundations.

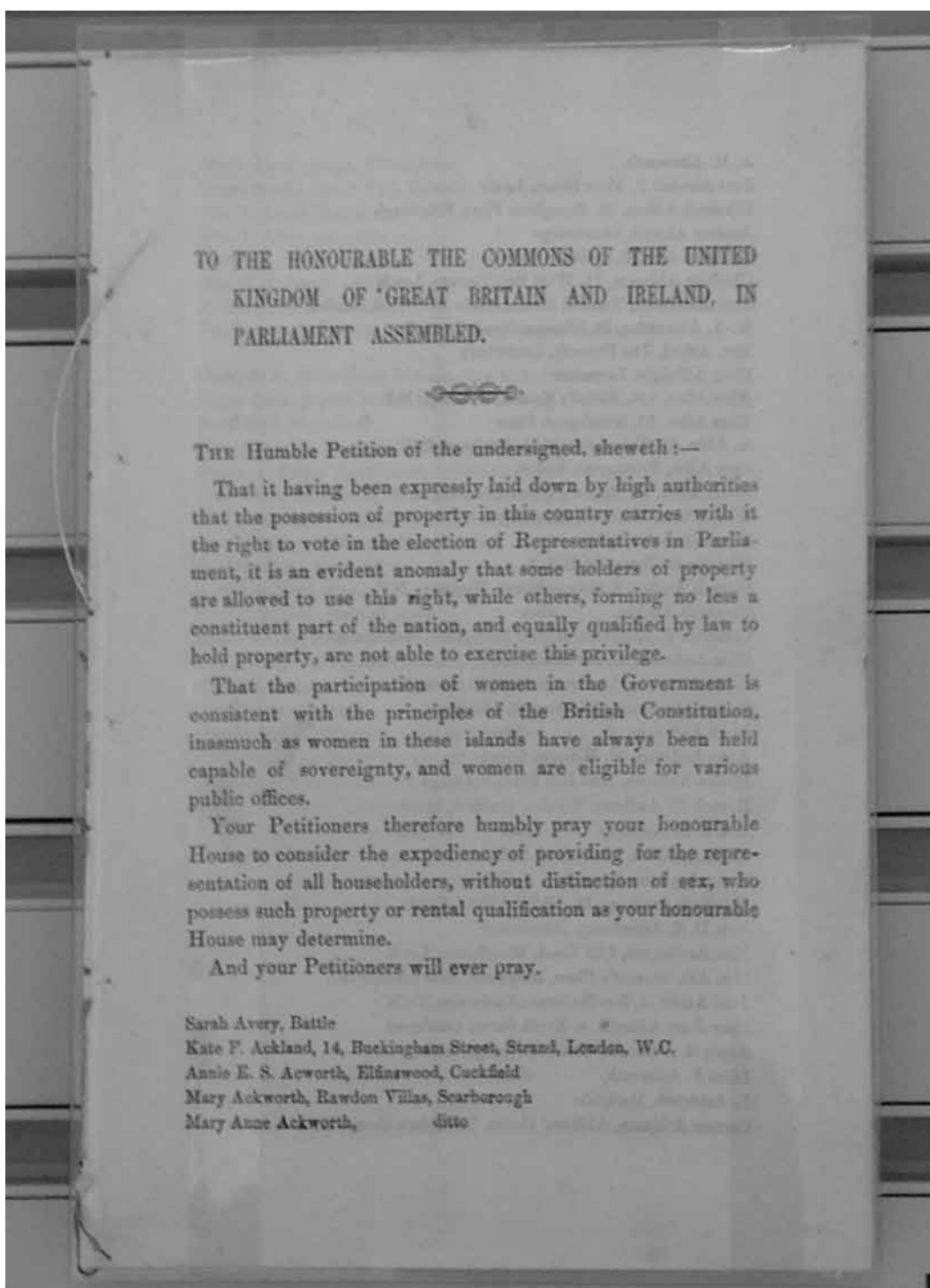
Roxburgh & Selkirk was one of only five constituencies in Great Britain where Labour never once overtook the Liberal vote. The other four (North Cornwall, North Dorset, Montgomery, Orkney & Zetland) were largely agricultural, and Labour's weakness is easily explained by the tiny size of an industrial working class vote. In the Borders, Liberal clubs held the loyalty of these three towns' working class Liberal voters, even though the Labour vote grew during that party's early years – Labour came closest to taking second place in Roxburgh & Selkirk in 1924. Nowhere else did Liberal Clubs play such a key role.

Michael Steed

Votes for women

2016 marks 150 years since a petition written by the Liberal women Helen Taylor and Barbara Bodichon kickstarted the women's suffrage campaign. By Tony Little.

'Women who wish for political e



The pamphlet used to capitalise on the 1866 petition calling for votes for women

enfranchisement should say so'¹

THESE MODEST WORDS, drafted by Barbara Bodichon and Helen Taylor (John Stuart Mill's stepdaughter), on a petition, are credited with starting the organised women's suffrage movement in Britain:

'To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom ...

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray your honourable house to consider the expediency of providing for the representation of all householders, without distinction of sex, who possess such property or rental qualifications as your Honourable House may determine. ...'

The petition signed by some 1,500 women was presented in parliament by Mill 150 years ago, on 7 June 1866. The Fawcett Society take this petition as their foundation² and the London School of Economics, now the home of the Women's Library, marked the 150th anniversary of the presentation of the petition with an exhibition and public lecture at the LSE library.³ The petition was organised by women with strong Liberal connections and impeccable Liberal values, yet these women are not much celebrated or commemorated by the Liberal Democrats. Why?

The popular view, reinforced by the recent Helena Bonham Carter/Carey Mulligan movie *Suffragette*, appears to be that women won the right to vote through the violent suffragette campaign directed by the Pankhursts, at the beginning of the twentieth century, overcoming the opposition of a Liberal government led by a bone-headed Asquith and duplicitous Lloyd George. Because, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we are so at ease with the *idea* of equality in politics for women it is too easy to assume that it was always obvious that women *should* have the vote. But the campaign for voting equality took more than sixty years from that petition in 1866 and faced significant opposition from women as well as from men. Perhaps a greater understanding of the context of the 1866 petition would encourage Liberals to better appreciate their contribution to the suffrage campaign and why it took so long to achieve its objectives.

The intellectual case for equality between the sexes was famously made by Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792, at the time of the French Revolution. However, desultory attempts between the 1830s and the 1860s to win the suffrage succeeded only in clarifying that the law precluded women from voting in parliamentary elections. But an inability to vote did not prevent the bolder female spirits from participating in election canvassing or deter them from identifying injustices and agitating for reform. In the early Victorian period women played a part in the anti-slavery campaign, Chartism and the Anti-Corn Law League.

More significantly, discrimination against women was institutionalised. Most middle-class women received little formal education and were prevented from entering university examinations. On marriage, women lost most rights over their property and had no rights even over their children. When the divorce laws were reformed in the 1850s, women had to meet tougher tests than men to secure separation. Career choices were limited, yet even for many single and widowed women of middle-class origins, earning a living was an inescapable necessity. By the 1860s campaigns had been organised to fight each of these wrongs, though with varying, limited, degrees of success.

Probably the greatest success had been in the admission of women to the university local exams and the establishment of a London college providing for education beyond secondary schools which helped professionalise the role of women in teaching. The National Association for the Promotion of Social Sciences (NAPSS) allowed women to submit essays to the annual conference and the more intrepid read their own papers, though some preferred that a man undertake this public function. The NAPSS went beyond academic debate and sought to lay the intellectual foundation for the progressive reform of society, playing its part in the suffrage campaign and the campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts. Building on its example, a group of women formed the Kensington Society, an invitation-only discussion group, whose members were invited to submit papers for discussion and to

A greater understanding of the context of the 1866 petition would encourage Liberals to better appreciate their contribution to the suffrage campaign and why it took so long to achieve its objectives.

'Women who wish for political enfranchisement should say so'

make responses, even if they could not attend in person. The Kensington Society provided the intellectual base, the organising cadre and the process by which the 1866 petition was created.⁴

Second Reform Act

If it was generally accepted in 1866 that women were not entitled to vote, it was also generally accepted that not all men should vote. The 1832 Reform Act had increased the electorate to 652,777 or less than one in five of the adult male population.⁵ Democracy was viewed with considerable apprehension. The most prominent democracy in the world, the United States had just endured a devastating civil war ending with the assassination of its president. Despite its careful qualification, W. E. Gladstone had provoked outrage with his 1864 statement that 'every man who is not presumably incapacitated by some consideration of personal unfitness or of political danger, is morally entitled to come within the pale of the constitution'.⁶ By 1866, most Liberal MPs were signed up to further reform but many harboured doubts about any practical plan suggested.⁷

The death of Palmerston, in the autumn of 1865, brought into office Earl Russell, who was determined to push a new reform bill. The bill, devised by Russell and Gladstone, was designed to extend the franchise – but only to the more skilled artisans able to pay a rent of £7 per annum in a borough seat. The rent level was calculated to leave working-class voters still in a minority in most seats.⁸ The proposal was submitted to the House in March 1866. Among those supporting the bill during the second reading debate at the end of April, was John Stuart Mill, who looked 'upon a liberal enfranchisement of the working classes as incomparably the greatest improvement in our representative institutions which we at present have in our power to make', anticipating that it would lead quickly to the introduction of schools for all, as indeed followed in Forster's 1870 Education Act.⁹ Mill had been elected for the Westminster constituency in 1865. In the course of his campaign Mill attracted the notice of a *Punch* cartoon by mentioning that he favoured votes for women and featuring women on his platform at campaign meetings. Among those who supported Mill were Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, the artist and illegitimate daughter of the Liberal MP, Ben Smith, and Emily Davies, the founder of Girton College and later an early elected school board member.

Benjamin Disraeli, in summing up for the opposition against the bill, attacked the views of Mill. In the course of his onslaught he argued:

Now, I have always been of opinion that if there is to be universal suffrage, women have as much right to vote as men. And more than that – a woman having property now ought to have a vote in a country, in which she may

hold manorial courts and sometimes acts as churchwarden.¹⁰

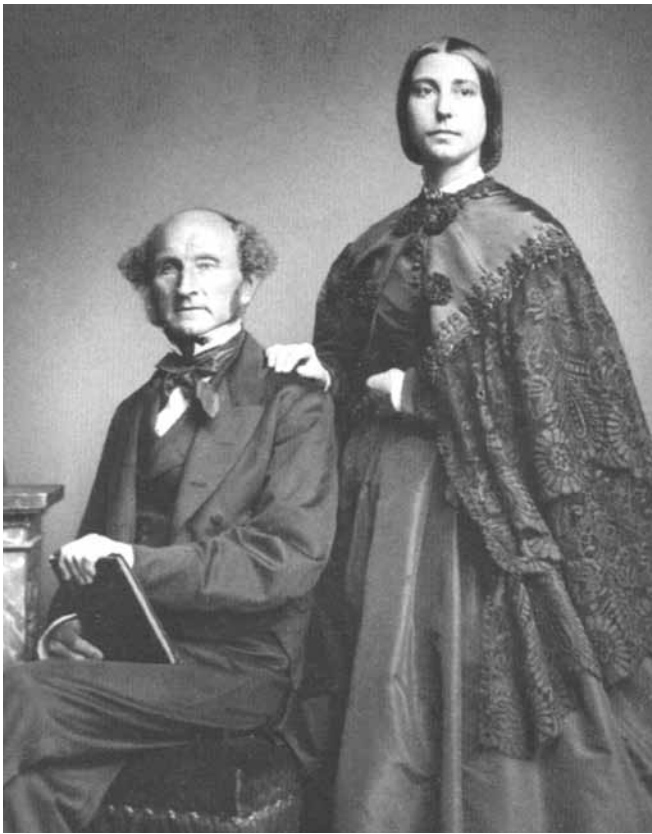
This statement is sometimes mistakenly seen as the spark for the 1866 petition.¹¹ The rest of the speech indicated that Disraeli was by no means in favour of universal suffrage and the rest of his statement, read carefully, has its ambiguities. But it does point to a central dilemma for women's suffrage campaigners. When only a minority of men had the vote, which women should be empowered to vote?

On 9 May 1866, twelve days after the second reading of the Russell/Gladstone Bill, Barbara Bodichon wrote to Helen Taylor seeking her views and those of her stepfather on the expediency of starting a petition for 'getting women voters', offering £25 for expenses and asking Helen Taylor to produce a draft. Helen Taylor responded the same day that 'it is very desirable that women who wish for political enfranchisement should say so. ... I think the most important thing is to make a demand and commence the first humble beginnings of an agitation. ... If a tolerably numerous signed petition can be got up my father will gladly undertake to present it'. She offered a further £20 towards expenses, suggested that the petition focus on propertied women householders to play on the established link between taxation and representation rather than the 'much more startling general proposition that sex is not a proper ground for distinction in political rights', and stipulated that more than 100 signatures were needed. In addition, Mill offered to ask parliament for the appropriate electoral statistics.¹²

Reassured, Bodichon shortened and strengthened the Taylor draft and set about assembling the signatures. She and her colleagues, including Elizabeth Garrett (later Anderson), Bessie Parkes, Jessie Boucherette, Jane Crow and Emily Davies, were experienced political campaigners, principally through the Married Women's Property petition and the campaign for the admission of women to university examinations. They had a network available to them through the Kensington Society and the Langham Place group, the home of the campaign for better work opportunities for women and the offices of a feminist magazine. The signature collection proceeded, partly on the basis of a chain letter and partly on the choices made by the recipients of the central letter. Some asked family and friends, some worked door to door; appropriate local tradespeople were approached or church groups exploited.

In consequence, there is no consistent social, religious or geographical uniformity to the 1,499 signatures collected, though a quick glance through the list suggests a bias towards major cities such as London, Leeds and Manchester, areas of historic liberal strength. Signatures, collected in under a month, came from as far south as Brighton and as far north as Lerwick, from as

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far east as Aldeburgh and as far west as Honiton. From Conway and Swansea, Galway and Dublin, Dunbar and St Andrews, they flowed in with outliers from Calcutta and La Spezia. The campaign was hasty, to exploit the timetable of the reform bill against a background of the somewhat precarious existence of the Russell government. Consequently the numbers and types of signatory reflect the nature of the established female networks of the organising group rather than a national campaign. For the time available the geographical spread is impressive.

Ann Dingsdale and Elizabeth Crawford have been working to identify the women who signed the petition from a surviving copy of the pamphlet issued by the campaigners.¹³ The picture has not been completed but it seems fair to suggest that while there was a smattering of working-class women, the middle class is much more heavily represented, reflecting the background of the organisers. Some canvassers appear deliberately to have targeted women who would be expected to qualify even under a heavily restricted franchise such as widows and businesswomen. Reflecting the link to Emily Davies, teachers were much more represented in this than later petitions when they may have been deterred by the negative publicity for their schools.¹⁴ The pamphlet of the petition makes no attempt to single out well-known women, but the most prominent at the time would probably have been Lady Amberley, daughter-in-law of Earl Russell and later mother of Bertrand Russell, Mrs Alford, wife of the Dean of Canterbury, Harriet Martineau, the economist and positivist, and Mary Somerville, the scientist.

Others became famous later, such as Josephine Butler, the campaigner against the Contagious Diseases Acts and Elizabeth Garret (Anderson), the first female doctor and sister of Millicent Fawcett, all with strong Liberal connections. Dingsdale identifies seven women who were later members of the British Women's Liberal Association. Others from Liberal or Radical families include Kate Cobden, Harriet Grote, Priscilla (Bright) McLaren, Ursula Bright, Caroline Stansfeld, and Jane Rathbone. John Bright's family and Quaker connections led to a strong representation of Brights, Priestmans and Lucases. Although John Bright, himself, was not a wholehearted supporter, his brother Jacob proved more reliable.¹⁵

On 7 June the petition was carried to parliament by Elizabeth Garrett and Emily Davies; Barbara Bodichon was ill on the day. The event is commemorated by a painting in which Garret and Davies show Mill the stall of an apple seller in Westminster Hall where they stashed the petition under cover while they went to the central lobby to find Mill. After the petition was presented, the organisers had a pamphlet prepared giving the terms of the petition and listing the signatories in alphabetical order for circulation to MPs and the press in the hope of stimulating further debate. Only two copies of the pamphlet are known to survive but a digitised list of the signatories is readily available.¹⁶

A wide variety of newspapers such as *The Times*, the *Daily News*, the *Leeds Mercury* and the *Birmingham Post* reported the petition, probably from an agency filing, most giving the number of signatures as 1,550 and Mill's description of

Left: Helen Taylor (1831–1907) with her stepfather, John Stuart Mill (1806–73)

Above: Barbara Bodichon (1827–91)

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the ladies as originating in the middle and upper classes. The reception of Mill's call for the appropriate statistics may be judged from the report in the *Pall Mall Gazette*:

Mr Mill has apparently not abandoned his peculiar views as to the right of women to the franchise if we judge from the notice which, amid some laughter, he gave last night for a return of 'the number of freeholders, householders and others in England and Wales who, fulfilling the qualification required by law, are excluded from the franchise by reason of their sex.'¹⁷

As far as I can ascertain, only *The Standard* and the *Pall Mall Gazette* ventured on editorials. The *Gazette* took the opportunity to expound its views on women's schooling – 'an educated, intelligent, willing woman can learn to do almost anything with incredible swiftness, and under certain circumstances her natural instincts would aid her' – but failed to suggest any conclusion on the franchise.¹⁸

The Standard was more robust. Its opening gambit was to suggest that 'The real way to deal with such a demand, when made by persons of average sense and education, is to show that it is unreasonable'. It concedes that it 'will never do to tell the women who think this way to look after their nurseries and be careful of their husbands' dinners ... The truth is that the franchise for women is unnecessary; the social task they perform is already sufficiently onerous; it would involve them in necessities and positions utterly repugnant to their sex and their place and function in the community; and, above all they do not want it.'

The Standard's great concern was involving women in politics, posing the questions 'how many brothers would care to have their sisters exposed to the appeals of candidates, and the paid civilities of professional agents' in the canvass? How many women of refinement and delicacy would like to go to the hustings amid a stormy contest, through a vociferous crowd, when the atmosphere is laden with squibs, and the rivalry waxes hot, to be cheered or hooted according to their colours, or hustled to and fro by the mob? The editorial concludes, 'only the most fanciful of miniature minorities ever dream of regarding themselves wronged because the Constitution does not label them Blue or Yellow, Orange or Purple, and summon them, amid shouts and jests and beer-inspired enthusiasm, to flutter their bonnet-strings at the polling booths.'¹⁹ At a time when voting was open, not secret, and election contests frequently decided by bribery, booze and bullying intimidation, *The Standard's* fears had at least some merit, as readers of Trollope's autobiography and novels or Dicken's *Pickwick Papers* would recognise. But, as Barbara Bodichon noted, the 1872 secret ballot act 'mended this evil'.²⁰

Despite its modest ambitions the Russell/Gladstone reform bill was destroyed by the lacerating speeches of Liberal MP Robert Lowe and the fears of the more timid government supporters, labelled Adullamites by John Bright.²¹ The government had resigned by the end of June 1866 and had been replaced by a minority Conservative administration led by Lord Derby, who was assisted by Disraeli as Leader in the Commons. Mass demonstrations ensured a further reform bill. Disraeli demonstrated his 'dexterity as a tactician'²² when he betrayed both his own supporters and the Adullamites by accepting more radical proposals than any contemplated by Gladstone and thereby 'Dishing the Whigs'. While still restrictive – less than one-quarter of adult men in the counties and less than one-half in the boroughs received the vote – the householder franchise nearly doubled the size of the electorate.²³

Disraeli's 1867 reform bill (later Act) gave a further opportunity to advance the women's cause, when Mill moved an amendment in committee to replace the word 'man' by 'person' in the qualification for the franchise, and this allows an assessment of the arguments used on both sides at an early stage in the franchise campaign. On 20 May 1867, Mill rose to move his amendment at about 7.45 pm. Mill spoke shortly after Lowe had accused Disraeli of 'bringing in the dregs of the house-occupying class to control the respectable householders' and 'handing over to new and untried persons the institutions of this country, and everything which is dear to us as Englishmen'.²⁴

Mill was apparently sufficiently distracted by Lowe's speech to forget his own, standing silent for 'near two minutes or more ... only his eyebrows worked fearfully'.²⁵ Encouraged by the cheers of his supporters, he argued the case for justice and equal treatment for women asking, rhetorically,

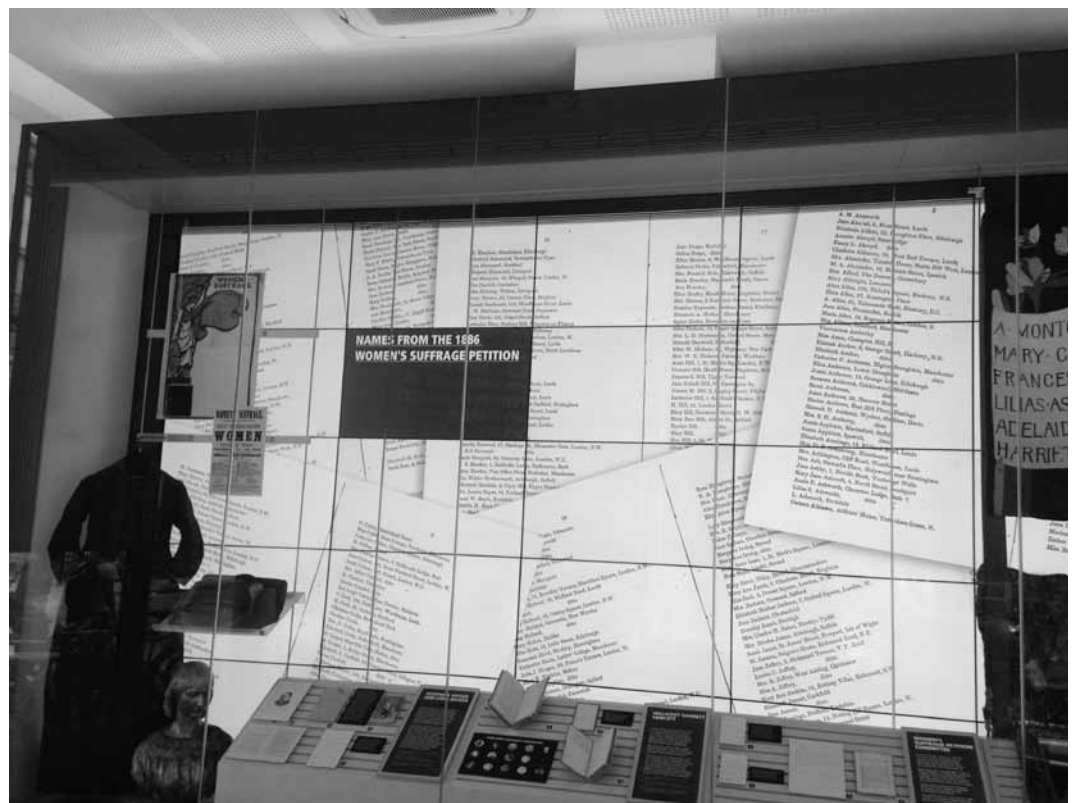
Can it be pretended that women who manage an estate or conduct a business – who pay rates and taxes, often to a large amount, and frequently from their own earnings – many of whom are responsible heads of families, and some of whom, in the capacity of schoolmistresses, teach much more than a great number of the male electors have ever learnt – are not capable of a function of which every male householder is capable? Or is it feared that if they were admitted to the suffrage they would revolutionise the State – would deprive us of any of our valued institutions, or that we should have worse laws, or be in any way whatever worse governed through the effect of their suffrages?

before answering 'No one, Sir, believes anything of the kind'. He sought to answer the claims that

Politics are not women's business, and would distract them from their proper duties; women

Disraeli's 1867 reform bill (later Act) gave a further opportunity to advance the women's cause, when Mill moved an amendment in committee to replace the word 'man' by 'person' in the qualification for the franchise.

The exhibition at the LSE library to mark the presentation of the women's vote petition, including pages from the list of signatories.



do not desire the suffrage, but would rather be without it; women are sufficiently represented by the representation of their male relatives and connections; women have power enough already.

He argued that women had a right to say on the education of girls, on domestic violence and on the discrimination against married women

controlling their own property and against women being prohibited from pursuing most professions. He concluded,

We ought not to deny to them, what we are conceding to everybody else – a right to be consulted; the ordinary chance of placing in the great Council of the nation a few organs of their sentiments – of having, what every petty trade

'Women who wish for political enfranchisement should say so'

or profession has, a few members who feel specially called on to attend to their interests, and to point out how those interests are affected by the law, or by any proposed changes in it.

None of his opponents answered Mill's points, suggesting instead that conceding the vote to single women would lead either to a decline in marriage or votes for married women and that women MPs would inevitably follow. At 10 pm, seventy-three MPs voted with Mill but the amendment was defeated by a majority of 123.²⁶ Kate Amberley described the speakers against Mill as 'silly and frivolous' but that 'Mill was much pleased and everyone was surprised at the number for him' although it was less than the 100 promised.²⁷ Russell informed Kate Amberley that he opposed Mill, Gladstone voted against the amendment and Disraeli did not vote.

While Mill might have been pleased at the level of support, the failure to achieve a victory and the flippancy of his opponents demonstrated the clear need for a more permanent campaigning organisation. In London, steps were initiated immediately after the presentation of the petition in 1866. Madame Bodichon wrote to Helen Taylor suggesting that 'an association should be formed, with an executive committee of five members' but the two women disagreed over the part that should be played by men. Bodichon was happy to include them on the committee; Taylor proposed that they should only be employed in a consultative capacity. Over the summer and early autumn Taylor made her regular visit to Avignon. While she was away Bodichon published a pamphlet answering the objections to enfranchisement and produced a paper, read in October, at the Social Science Association in Manchester. In the audience was Lydia Becker, an immediate convert who became the secretary of the Manchester Women's Suffrage Committee on its formation in January 1867.

In London a general committee was also formed, in October 1866, whose membership included men to the dismay of Helen Taylor, despite its smaller, women-only, working group intended as the executive. While the work of propaganda and petitioning progressed in advance of Mill's amendment in 1867, the organisational dispute remained unresolved. In June 1867, the original committee was dissolved and a new, women-only, substitute committee created under the control of partial absentee Helen Taylor, an arrangement that also proved unsatisfactory as Taylor quarrelled with Lydia Becker and also with Jacob Bright who replaced Mill as the parliamentary spokesman for the women's campaign.²⁸ Despite Liberal gains in the 1868 general election, Mill lost his Westminster seat to W. H. Smith, the retailer, partly in reaction to his advocacy of women's rights. He used his enforced leisure to publish *The Subjection of Women* in 1869. This, the fullest statement of his feminist views,

'We ought not to deny to them, what we are conceding to everybody else – a right to be consulted; the ordinary chance of placing in the great Council of the nation a few organs of their sentiments – of having, what every petty trade or profession has, a few members who feel specially called on to attend to their interests, and to point out how those interests are affected by the law, or by any proposed changes in it.'

had been written earlier and, he asserted, much influenced by his late wife. It became immediately and remains an influential text.²⁹

The dispute between Taylor and Bodichon weakened the London group but allowed provincial groups to flourish, for example, in Bristol, Dublin and Edinburgh as well as Manchester. By 1872 a votes-for-women petition attracted more than 350,000 signatures, half of them women.³⁰ However the disunity had a price, discouraging some activists and diminishing the prospects for a cohesive set of aims and methods. Which women should have the vote? How closely should the franchise groups be identified with other feminist crusades such as the highly controversial campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts? In 1872 a central committee was formed in London to provide coordination but the London suffrage society refrained from participation until 1878 because several central-committee members were associated with Josephine Butler's work.³¹ How closely should franchise campaigners identify with and work within the more sympathetic Liberal and later Labour parties and how far remain independent? And if these were not sufficient grounds for dissension, how should female activists align themselves on the wider issues of politics? The split in the Liberal Party over home rule separated hitherto united women. Millicent Fawcett, for example, having earlier helped unite suffragists, was one who sided with the Liberal Unionists in 1886, though she turned against Chamberlain in 1903 on tariff reform. 'She led the faction that split the National Society for Women's Suffrage in 1888 by refusing to allow branches of the Women's Liberal Federation to affiliate.'³²

The continued divisions and lack of cohesive central leadership were key factors delaying victory, but the campaigning was not without achievements. In 1869, Jacob Bright succeeded in gaining the vote for women at municipal elections, almost without debate, and the following year Forster's Education Act granted not only the vote but also service on school boards. In the 1880s women had quietly begun to stand and be elected to poor law boards as well as school boards, and some of the leading suffragists such as Lydia Becker, Emily Davies and Elizabeth Garrett served to act as example and encouragement to others. By 1900 around 200 women had been elected to school boards and nearly 1,000 were poor law guardians.³³ These were responsibilities which could be accommodated within conventional thinking on the appropriate role for women in society but carried less weight with opponents of female parliamentary voting than hoped.

In 1894, under Gladstone's last government, women gained the right to participate in parish/vestry and district elections. Two women were even elected to the first London County Council in 1889, including Jane Cobden, Richard

Cobden's daughter, and a third was appointed an alderman. But various Tory challenges to their right to stand or to participate in council decisions went against them, injustices which excluded women from the LCC after 1894 and which were not rectified until 1907. Both the Women's Liberal Federation and the parliamentary Liberal Party became progressively more in favour of women's suffrage as the old century ended and the new began but Gladstone and Asquith both harboured old-fashioned views on the female role and feared women voters would be predominantly Conservative. The frustration engendered led to the militancy of the suffragettes after 1905.³⁴

The pioneering feminists who contacted Mill in 1866 knew the depth of prejudice they had to combat within their own gender. Even Queen Victoria was against them, writing to a biographer of her husband, in 1870:

The Queen is most anxious to enlist everyone who can speak or write to join in checking this mad wicked folly of 'Woman's Rights' with all its attendant horrors, on which her poor feeble sex is bent, forgetting every sense of womanly feeling and propriety. Lady Amberley ought to get a *good whipping*.³⁵

They knew they were in for a long haul. Barbara Bodichon is reputed to have said to Emily Davies, 'You will go up and vote upon crutches and I shall come out of my grave and vote in my winding sheet.' Davies survived to vote in the 1918 election but Bodichon died in 1891.³⁶ Despite knowing the scale of the challenge, they started and persisted in a great constitutional crusade for change. The Suffragists deserve better recognition and as much credit as the Suffragettes.

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- 3 <http://www.lse.ac.uk/library/exhibitions/home.aspx>; <http://www.lse.ac.uk/newsAndMedia/videoAndAudio/channels/publicLecturesAndEvents/player.aspx?id=3539>
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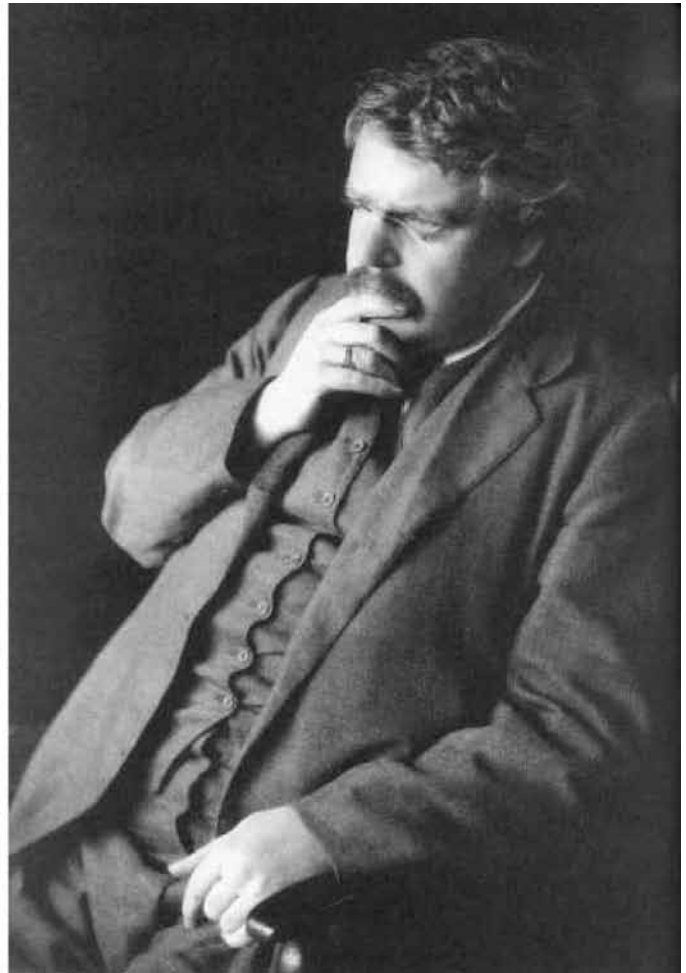
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- 10 Hansard, 27 Apr. 1866.
- 11 The error is explained in Evelyn L. Pugh, 'John Stuart Mill and the Women's Question in Parliament, 1865–1868', *The Historian*, May 1980, pp. 399–418.
- 12 Pam Hirsch, *Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon* (Pimlico, 1999 edn.), pp. 217–8; Pugh, 'John Stuart Mill', p. 406.
- 13 <http://1866suffragepetitionwomen.blogspot.co.uk/2009/06/petition-itself-and-petition-hanging.html>; <https://womanandhersphere.com/>
- 14 Dingsdale, 'Generous and Lofty Sympathies', passim.
- 15 John Bright voted for in 1867 and against in 1875.
- 16 The list of signatories is available at <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/parliamentary-archives/1866SuffragePetitionNamesWebJune16.pdf>
- 17 *Pall Mall Gazette*, 9 Jun. 1866.
- 18 *Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 Jun. 1866.
- 19 *The Standard* 9 Jun. 1866.
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- 21 A biblical reference (I Samuel 22:1–2), to David's gathering in the Cave of Adullam 'every one that was in distress' and 'every one that was discontented' in opposition to King Saul.
- 22 Robert Lowe, Hansard 20 May 1867.
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- 24 Hansard, 20 May 1867.
- 25 Bertrand and Patricia Russell, *The Amberley Papers*, vol. ii (Hogarth Press, 1937), pp. 36–7.
- 26 Hansard, 20 May 1867.
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Liberal thought

John B. Davenport analyses the Distributists and their impact.

The Distributists and



Hilaire Belloc
(1870–1953)
G. K. Chesterton
(1874–1936)

ONE OF THE many factions subsumed in the Liberal Party before the First World War were the Distributists, a small, self-conscious, and intellectually influential group of radical High Churchmen, who attempted to marry their understanding of Christian social teaching to a miscellany of traditional Liberal preoccupations of the Edwardian period. These particularly included British land reform on the Irish model, home rule for the entirety of Ireland, limiting plutocratic influence on government, and defining a social programme between ‘collectivism’ and ‘individualism’ – a coherent ‘Liberalism’ between the socialist Scylla and Conservative Charybdis. The Distributists were very much

the product of a period of ideological redefinition – one which allowed individual Liberals considerable intellectual freedom. The failure of the party to define the essence of modern Liberalism, both before the First World War, and thereafter, eventually led, of course, to the disintegration of the party between the wars. The Distributists, as eclectic Radical Liberals, entered the political wilderness after Versailles, eschewing the standard ideologies of the day, whether ‘scientific’ socialism, ‘New’ or ‘classical’ liberalism, or Conservatism – of either the Red Tory or reactionary varieties. The ‘centrist’ quality of pre-war Liberal reform (with which they often sympathised but which, after the war seemed missing from

and the Liberal Party

British politics) they rediscovered, after a fashion, in Catholic social teaching. After the war, a moderate, sometimes Catholic, political stance was present on the Continent (e.g. in the German Centre Party, branches of certain liberal parties, and in various 'peasant' parties) but it seemed to the Distributists to have absented itself from British politics, as the parties became increasingly indistinguishable.¹

Who were the Distributists?

The Distributists, at least initially, were more of an intellectual club than a movement. Their members originally included a closely knit group of friends and relations, namely Hilaire Belloc (1870–1953), a journalist, popular historian, novelist, humorous poet, social theorist, and Liberal MP, 1906–10, for Salford South; Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874–1936), a journalist, novelist, playwright, poet, social theorist, and popular theologian; and G. K.'s brother Cecil Chesterton (1879–1918), a journalist, social theorist, and the original ideological sparkplug of the group – all established men of letters and public figures before the First World War.² Belloc was a Catholic by birth, the Chestertons by conviction, with Cecil converting from Anglicanism in 1912 and G. K. in 1922. Catholic social theory, particularly the papal encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), combined with certain idiosyncratic elements of the British Radical Liberal tradition, became the touchstones of the Distributist system. While the most significant elements of Distributism were defined, to the degree that they would be, before the First World War, both Belloc and G. K. Chesterton continued to refine Distributist social philosophy throughout the interwar period.³

Politically, when they made their party affiliations known before the First World War, Belloc was perhaps the most publicly Liberal, both as an author and Member of Parliament, although his experience as an MP, 1906–10, and the Marconi Scandal, 1912–13, left him alienated from the party; G. K. is best described as an increasingly disaffected Liberal supporter, who finally severed his links with the party on Asquith's

death in 1928; and Cecil was a less-focused iconoclastic 'Radical', who embraced Fabian Socialism until about 1911 (while adamantly declaring that a new Labour or Socialist Party needed a programme absolutely distinct from Liberalism) and who generally believed that the Tories historically had promulgated marginally better 'social legislation' than the Liberals – by which he meant legislation ameliorating the poverty of the working class – which for him was the most essential goal of British politics.⁴ His experience as a journalist in attempting to expose 'insider trading' by several Liberal cabinet ministers during the Marconi Scandal, 1912–13, negated any prospective sympathies he might have had for 'Liberal' reform.

Among the Distributists, the influence of Christianity generally, and the Catholic Church's social theology particularly, articulated in relation to contemporary social problems by Pope Leo XIII in the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), was significant. Belloc, a devout reflective Anglo-French Catholic layman, was thoroughly imbued with the sensibility of social Catholicism, which influenced all of his economic and social/political writing.⁵ The Chestertons initially were not influenced, to the degree Belloc had been, by this ideological strain, but as their disillusionment with Anglicanism, and interest in Catholicism grew, under Belloc's tutelage, this became an important element in their worldviews as well. The Chestertons had been raised in a nominally Anglican home, but the family most often had attended the Rev. Stopford Brooke's Unitarian Bedford Chapel in Bloomsbury.⁶ Both Chestertons longed, in their young adulthoods, for greater beauty and historicity in worship and doctrinal certainty than this upbringing provided, something which they eventually found in Catholicism, after an intermediate period spent within the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Church of England.⁷

What did the Distributists believe?⁸

We can glean the essential doctrines of Distributism by examining the seven foundational texts of the movement – listed here by date of publication – and noting in each both proposed

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The Distributists and the Liberal Party

policies and recurring criticisms of the contemporary political system:⁹

- Hilaire Belloc, 'The Liberal Tradition,' in *Essays in Liberalism*, by Six Oxford Men – edited by John Swinnerton Phillimore and Francis Wrigley Hirst (1897);
- G. K. Chesterton, *What's Wrong with the World* (1910);
- Hilaire Belloc and Cecil Chesterton, *The Party System* (1911);¹⁰
- Hilaire Belloc, *The Servile State* (1912);
- G. K. Chesterton, *The Utopia of the Usurers* (1917);
- G. K. Chesterton, *The Outline of Sanity* (1927);
- Hilaire Belloc, *An Essay on the Restoration of Property* (1936).

One most also append to this list two papal encyclicals, which eventually are considered foundational to Distributism:

- Pope Leo XIII (Vincenzo Giocchino Pecci, pope 1878–1903), *Rerum Novarum* (1891);
- Pope Pius XI (Achille Ambrogio Damiano Ratti, pope 1922–1939), *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931).

We first will examine the texts by Belloc and the Chestertons, and thereafter briefly relate them to the two papal encyclicals.

Belloc was one of six Oxford alumni who contributed to Phillimore and Hirst's *Essays in Liberalism*, providing the introductory overview, 'The Liberal Tradition'. While there was inevitable ideological diversity amongst these representatives of the Liberal camp, Belloc identified the following elements as constituting a commonality: individual responsibility rather than the acceptance of deterministic 'environment' as a necessary predication for social change; anti-imperialism; suspicion of an increasingly capricious and overbearing central government; an objective moral basis for government and politics (for Belloc the social theology of the Catholic Church); an economy based on autonomous small producers, whether in business or agriculture; local control of government (particularly for ethnic minorities, like the Irish); land reform, predicated on the breakup of large estates through the removal of legal entail and primogeniture, application of market forces, and (if necessary) government intervention, as in the case of Ireland; universal male suffrage; a qualified acceptance of free trade; local non-sectarian control of education; the breakup of corporate monopolies (by unspecified means); and rejection of 'socialism,' meaning for Belloc the administration of all property on behalf of society by representatives of the state.¹¹ One can see here, in a nascent form, many of the tenants of what would become 'Distributism' over the next decade or so.

G. K. Chesterton's *What's Wrong with the World* (1910), dedicated to the Liberal MP Charles F. G. Masterman (1873–1927), generally is identified as the earliest 'comprehensive' Distributist work. In it, Chesterton identifies the following necessary elements as then missing from British politics: (1) a

moral sensibility, based – like G. K.'s remembrance of Gladstonian Liberalism, and unlike Lord Rosebery's secular 'Efficiency' – in a composite orthodox Christianity;¹² (2) local autonomy in government, including the autonomy of smaller national or ethnic groups (like the Irish), and an abiding suspicion of 'big' or 'central' government;¹³ (3) protection of government at all levels from the intrusions of plutocratic manipulation;¹⁴ (4) the sanctity of the nuclear family as the basic 'building block' of civilised society and provision for the family of the requisite private property necessary to preserve its autonomy;¹⁵ (5) The necessity of home and plot ownership as the minimum of required family property;¹⁶ (6) individual responsibility and support for cooperative movements over and against socialist collectivism as the basis of the amelioration of social problems;¹⁷ (7) opposition to contemporary imperialism, of 'the attempt of a European country to create a kind of sham Europe which it can dominate, instead of the real Europe, which it can only share ... I do not believe in Imperialism as commonly understood';¹⁸ (8) a middle ground in the licensing question, pro-public-house but evidently with regulation, to insure some standard of 'wholesomeness';¹⁹ (9) opposition to 'big' capitalism and amoral business practices;²⁰ (10) ambivalence toward modern feminism, based in uncertainty concerning women's 'real' attitude toward the franchise, a belief in Christian 'complementarianism' regarding some family and vocational roles, a strong belief in the need for a dedicated female domestic 'administrator' of the complex (middle-class) Edwardian home, and the inevitably exhausting nature of the 'double-standard' inevitably 'required' of working women (the perceived 'perfection' required of working women both at home and in the workplace – a prescient observation still being addressed today);²¹ and (11) the wrong-headedness of primary and secondary education that neglected Christianity. Chesterton tried, once again, to establish middle ground in this regard. His point ultimately was that it mattered little who 'controlled' education, as long as it *was* universally available, that there was some element of 'local' control – whether by secular education boards or local boards administered by the Anglican, Nonconformist, or Catholic Churches – and that provision was made for orthodox Christian instruction within the curriculum.²²

The Party System – unsurprisingly, given the well-known bellicosity of both its authors – was a relentless, scathing attack on 'corruption' in British politics and the increasingly meaningless nature of Conservative/Liberal party distinctions during the period of Balfour's, Campbell-Bannerman's, and Asquith's early governments.²³ The authors pointed out, firstly, that the members of both the Lords and Commons, and particularly of the front benches of the latter house, were familiarly linked in an almost incestuous manner and

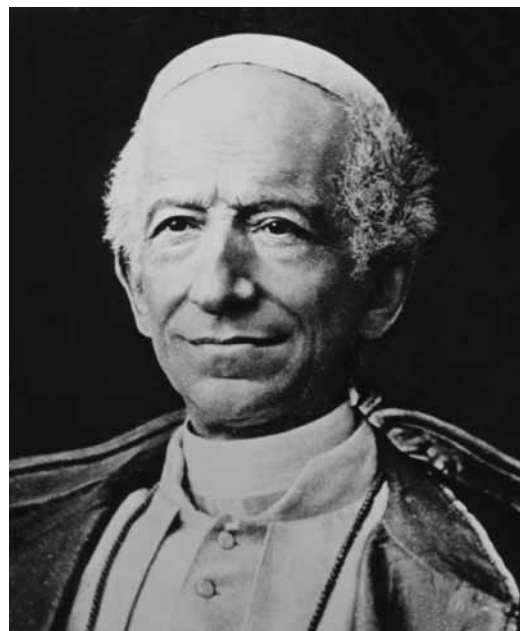
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ideologically were often virtually indistinguishable. They constituted a 'class', drawn from the same families, schools, and professions (particularly the legal profession), and generally had more in common with one another than they did with the constituents or organisations that they theoretically represented. As a result of this state of affairs, members of the Commons needed 'independence' from this interconnected class – they needed to be accountable to constituents only and not to a party organisation. They also required a state-supplied 'non-party' salary.²⁴ Within parliament, and particularly the Commons, individual members needed to articulate an independent, non-party voice, so that discussions of both procedure and policy could be determined by someone other than the party leaders, whips, the Speaker, the chairmen of committees and the members of 'conference' committees (generally chosen by the other aforementioned individuals). This monopolistic concentration of undemocratic power was illustrated to the authors, for instance, in the informal agreement among front-benchers that resulted in the Lords thereafter (1911) being unable to oppose legislation agreed upon in advance by the leaders of the government and opposition.²⁵ The general collusion of the party establishments over subjects discussed in parliament, and the amount of time allotted for discussion of these subjects, particularly in the Commons, needed to be countered and left to the discretion of the Commons and Lords members generally, so as to insure both transparency and the timely discussion of truly important issues.²⁶ And, lastly, 'clean' government required elimination of secret party funds, and of the sale of titles in the annual Honours List, both of which were employed to 'buy' votes and influence, inside and outside parliament.²⁷

The authors are hardly sanguine about the likely amelioration of any of the difficulties noted above. They propose as possible reforms: shorter, fixed terms for the Commons (thereby limiting the power of party leaders to perpetuate themselves in power by calling potentially advantageous snap-elections); devolution of most parliamentary responsibility over crafting legislation, and forwarding it to the entire house, to specialised committees independent of party leaders; the adoption, at the national level, of the then-fashionable American Initiative and Referendum, successfully employed about this time in several American states; primary elections to choose constituency candidates, independent of the party establishments; establishment of a non-party press (a recurring effort of all three men); and extension of the suffrage to all women voters, thereby establishing a truly representative electorate.²⁸

Belloc's *The Servile State* (1912) was a modestly successful bestseller for a work of contemporary social policy. His earlier adherence to the 'Individualist' branch of British Liberalism becomes very evident in the content of this text.²⁹ Belloc's

Cecil Chesterton
(1879–1918)
Pope Leo XIII
(1810–1903)
Pope Pius XI
(1857–1939)



The Distributists and the Liberal Party

Belloc and Chesterton published their most mature summary statements of Distributist philosophy between the wars, after they had abandoned political Liberalism, i.e. Chesterton's *Outline of Sanity* (1926) and Belloc's *Essay on the Restoration of Property* (1936).

book includes a breathless social history of the European working class, from antiquity to the era of advanced capitalism. Belloc saw the status of this class progressing incrementally from the early medieval period through to the sixteenth century, largely as a result of limits imposed by the Church on the rapaciousness both of the medieval landed aristocracy and later the emerging class of international capitalists. During this period, the mass of humanity emerged from a condition of 'servility,' in which they had little independence, few rights, and almost no property, to a condition of modest autonomy and prosperity. If agricultural workers, they increasingly enjoyed prescribed rights and responsibilities, usually defined vis-à-vis the landed class through the influence of the Church, a certain level of self-government at the village or commune level, periods of rest on the increasingly numerous Church holidays, an income which allowed the modest accumulation of domestic property, and, if not actual land ownership, then at least security on the land as tenants, with compensation for improvements, and some control over what they produced. If city dwellers, they often had the protection of, and had gained a certain autonomy through, membership in the medieval craft guilds, which laid down guild standards, ran occupational training programmes, established 'quality control' over production in the various crafts, set realistic prices, and served as units from which local governments could choose their members. This elysian condition was shattered during the period of the Protestant Reformation, which Belloc links inextricably with the onset of advanced capitalism, when the economic and social 'regulatory' powers of the Church increasingly were appropriated to the state. Church lands were expropriated and used to establish a new landed (and capitalist) class dependent on, but eventually supplanting, the monarch; common lands were enclosed – eventually forcing many small proprietors off the land and into a proletariat without property; many church holidays were eliminated; the guild system was abandoned in favour of capitalist corporations; and land shifted from crops to grazing (throwing even more smallholders off the land).

The period since the Reformation had seen the virtual elimination of the autonomous propertied working class and the emergence of an increasingly impoverished, underemployed, urban proletariat, which, in the early twentieth century, had begun to demand, with increasing militancy, some improvement in their situation. In Belloc's view, the inadequate 'solutions' society offered in the early twentieth century to the problems of this class were either socialism or the 'Servile State'. Taking orthodox Marxists at their word, Belloc believed that socialism would entail the administration of virtually all property, including particularly the means of production and

distribution, by a government elite, on behalf of society. The Servile State, on the other hand, which Belloc saw as the 'collectivist' or 'New Liberal' solution, would essentially see the poor returned to their status in late antiquity, wherein they would labour (either for the state or corporations) in a slave-like condition, virtually without rights, independence, property, or autonomy, in exchange for the most minimal basics of life, provided through a welfare establishment.³⁰

Belloc's book primarily is a work of analysis, rather than the proposal of 'solutions,' but his identification of his ideal past as a 'Distributist' society makes it clear that a just, functional, future civilisation for him would include: personal autonomy and the political independence of adults; the ability for a husband and wife to form a family, including a proper home and enough property to support their family; control over one's work; organisation of work at the local level, perhaps in cooperatives; and a Christian sensibility governing social relations, as in the Middle Ages.³¹

G. K. Chesterton's short work, *The Utopia of the Usurers* (1917), like many of his books, is a collection of his (sometimes edited) recent columns from his journalistic work.³² Its focuses are the prostitution of artists and authors in a mega-capitalist economy, as creators are forced to debase their artistic work both in advertising and in publishing laudatory dishonest lives of prominent capitalists – a sometimes rather precious and overdone presentation for Chesterton;³³ the shoddiness of mass-produced 'department-store' products, over against those of craftspeople;³⁴ the degradation of working people through the reduction of their paid holidays, leisure periods that once were the province of the Church;³⁵ the evils of eugenics, a false solution to the problem of diseases that could be eliminated through a healthy upbringing in a proper modern home – a subject dealt with at length elsewhere;³⁶ and the reality that self-regulated work resulted either in better work or (implicitly) starvation – either of which is preferable to the degrading nearly military oversight of workers in factories.³⁷

Belloc and Chesterton published their most mature summary statements of Distributist philosophy between the wars, after they had abandoned political Liberalism, i.e. *Chesterton's Outline of Sanity* (1926) and Belloc's *Essay on the Restoration of Property* (1936). The former amplifies points made in Chesterton's earlier monographs, and journalism. He notes that the Manchester School of laissez-faire or 'classical' liberalism, the guiding political philosophy of so many Liberals in the half-century before the First World War, ultimately had led to monopoly and plutocracy rather than healthy competition and economic diversity. It treated members of the largely powerless and property-less working class as expendable tools, to be used and discarded as profit dictated. Its political alternative, socialism, simply wished

to transform the monopolies created by high capitalism into state enterprises, supposedly to be administered in a non-exploitative fashion on behalf of society by enlightened elites. These elites, given human nature, seemed to Chesterton, in the cases both of social democracy and communism, simply to recreate the self-perpetuating oligarchies of high capitalism and to treat the mass of the population in nearly the same 'capitalist' manner, as economic slaves, to be minimally sustained, at a level just above penury (lest they revolt), by the all-wise all-powerful 'Servile State', in the expectation of a theoretical golden future that could and would never arrive.³⁸ As an alternative to both, Chesterton's Distributism advocated the recreation and nurturance of a true 'middle class' of autonomous, self-sustaining, propertied small holders, whether these be 'peasants' on the land, independent high-street proprietors, autonomous professionals, or workers in cooperative-owned factories. Without emphasising it in a significantly 'evangelical' sense (since both Chesterton and Belloc always addressed their works to the general public), Chesterton quietly insisted that a moral recovery, based in Christianity, and particularly Catholic Christianity, was an essential precondition to economic sanity.³⁹

Belloc's work offered many (he hoped) practical propositions to move Britain toward a Distributist future and away from plutocratic capitalism and socialism. He differed from Chesterton mainly in his emphasis on the role that government would need to play in the process of creating a healthy economic order. This government intervention would involve a temporary 'artificiality' to economic life that many laissez-faire capitalists (and some consumers) probably would find unpalatable.⁴⁰ It would include rigorous application of anti-monopoly laws, and expansion of these laws to include taxes on, or even prohibitions of, amalgamations in a given industry; taxes on new chain stores; taxes on the proliferation of what we now days might call 'warehouse' stores; taxes on non-agricultural capital (rather than a graduated income tax); limiting income taxes to a flat tax of 10 per cent with other indirect taxation on certain unspecified 'luxuries'; separate, much lower tax rates for smaller than larger units of agricultural land and related capital investments; encouragement of agricultural land sales from large-owners to small-owners, with tax breaks for the former as part of these sales; corporate tax breaks for small-business owners and those attempting to start small businesses; possible nationalisation of those industries, like railroads and banks, the control of which gives undue advantage to certain businesses or industries; and legal encouragement of agricultural cooperatives and craft guilds, so as to protect smaller from larger producers.

One can perhaps discern from the brief exposition of Distributive texts above both how Distributists might have made good Liberals before the First World War and how they might have found it difficult to remain Liberals thereafter.

Like pre-war Liberals generally, of whatever faction, the Distributists supported local control of education (although they generally did not share the Nonconformist trepidation about potential Anglican domination thereof), franchise reform, a nuanced imperialism that emphasised development and self-determination, land reform in Britain like that already achieved in Ireland after Wyndham's Land Purchase Act of 1903, and a general abhorrence of 'socialism'. Like the 'Individualist' (what we might now call 'classical' or 'libertarian') Liberals, they emphasised self-help rather than social legislation (opposing the growth of the 'Servile State') and devolution of government control to local authorities when practicable. Like the New Liberals, they were, however, willing to accept the selective intervention of the central government in domestic affairs, although they limited this generally to innovative taxation and matters related to the reestablishment of a peasant class on the land.

Of the issues that purportedly led to British Liberalism's 'strange death', Belloc and the Chestertons stood with the party concerning the People's Budget and curbing the Lords, and opposed it over Ireland, when it refused to call the Army's bluff and equivocated over home rule. They in turn equivocated over women's suffrage, generally (but not always) opposing it before the war. Regarding the 'Worker's Rebellion', they opposed socialism but generally supported the unions, which would place them with many other contemporary Liberals. All three of the chief Distributists supported the government when war was declared, with Cecil eventually dying of illness while on duty in 1918. G. K. supported the war because of his general abhorrence of authoritarian 'Prussianism', his contempt for what he saw as naked German imperialism, and in support of Belgium and other 'small nations' (like his earlier championing of Irish home rule). Belloc, half-French, and a French army veteran, was a natural supporter of the Entente. Together, their response to these issues, while perhaps comparatively 'rigid' in regard to Ireland, was similar to that of many British Liberals.

It became increasingly clear to Distributists, however, after the war, that while they often occupied a political 'middle ground' between Conservatism and socialism, they did not occupy the same 'centre' as did most 'New Liberals', increasingly the dominant element in the party, who Distributists saw as having shifted Liberalism to the left, toward a 'welfare-state' Liberalism that often was indistinguishable from social democracy.⁴¹ Distributists rejected some key Liberal policies before and after the war: unqualified free-trade, the abandonment of an impartial

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The Distributists and the Liberal Party

'Gladstonian' Christianity as the moral basis of the party programme, and home rule that did not include the entirety of Ireland.⁴²

Distributists also came to advocate new programmes that neither Tories, Labour, nor most Liberals embraced, including: the promotion of cooperatives and guilds; electoral reform, including primaries for choosing constituency candidates and the national initiative and referendum; (mostly unspecified) expanded legal protection for, and promotion of, the nuclear family as the basis of British society; expanded paid holidays for the working class; a middle ground regarding pub licensing, between deregulation and prohibition; unrelenting opposition to monopolies and any combinations that hindered small proprietors; radical parliamentary reform, so as to make individual members truly constituency representatives rather than mere party functionaries; tax reform in favour of small proprietors; and 'transparency' regarding party secret funds and manipulation of the Honours List.

The general 'tone' of Distributist journalism both before and after the war was closer to Labour than to that of either of the traditional parties, emphasising the corruption of, and collusion between, the major parties; a general anti-establishment stance, suspicious both of big business and big government; and a bemoaning of the lack of a 'free' press, meaning the dearth of non-party periodicals and newspapers – like G. K.'s *Weekly* – that were independent of the established parties.

If one glances at the first two modern papal social encyclicals – Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and Pope Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) – one can see what attracted the Distributists to Catholicism. These documents articulate a 'third-way' social philosophy similar to that developed by the Distributists.⁴³ In them, the popes note the following essential elements in a Christian response both to laissez-faire capitalism and socialism in its various guises: (1) a return to a Christian worldview, expressed socially as in every other part of life;⁴⁴ (2) personal autonomy in making one's way economically in the world, in a prudent and thrifty manner, whenever possible, without the interposition of the state – but with provision that the state *could and should* intervene in social life during periods of extreme economic distress;⁴⁵ (3) the duty of the state to provide social services for the poor if they are not available from any other source;⁴⁶ (4) the importance of the nuclear family as the basic 'building-block' of civil society;⁴⁷ (5) the need, in Christian charity, to reconcile social classes rather than drive them apart;⁴⁸ (6) the necessity for employers to pay workers a just wage, one that would allow the accumulation of capital, which would allow workers the development of social autonomy and independence;⁴⁹ (7) that employers provide safe and healthy work environments for their employees, including work hours limited by the requirements of health and safety;⁵⁰ (8) that the wealthy

recognise that their property, beyond that necessary to support their families, is held in trust for society as a whole and should, when necessary, be used for the benefit of others;⁵¹ (9) that it is the Church's duty, as it was before the onset of global capitalism, to protect and promote the interests of the poor and to reconcile social classes;⁵² (10) that the state should honour Sundays and the holidays identified by the Church as necessary for rest and recreation;⁵³ (11) that the accumulation by families of adequate private property to insure their independence and autonomy should be promoted by the state;⁵⁴ (12) that taxes should be limited so that families can support themselves from their non-taxed income;⁵⁵ and (13) that non-socialist labour unions, worker's cooperatives, mutual-aid societies, and other constructive combinations by members of the working class should be encouraged by the state and society and should be immune from state and employer interference.⁵⁶

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One sees in all this that while the Distributists shared much in common with the reforms advocated by many within the early-twentieth-century Liberal Party, they were looking for something else besides. This was an ideological coherence, an overarching philosophy, which Liberalism lacked. The Distributists eventually found, or created, this philosophy in a confluence of certain elements of Liberal reform and of Christianity, a combination once significantly present in Liberalism's Gladstonian heyday. The Distributists eventually found their social vision articulated best in the Catholic social teaching of the day. Belloc's linking of Catholicism and social progress, which the Chestertons absorbed from him, the Chestertons' evolving High-Churchmanship, which eventually became Rome-focused, and the peculiarity of their own particular proposals for social reform, found a natural, if perhaps partially coincidental, affinity in the social Catholicism of the two contemporary popes who also were interested in political economy. Whether (for the Chestertons, at least) the 'chicken' of social reform or the 'egg' of Catholicism came first is not entirely clear. What is obvious is that the confluence of a coherent timeless Christian theology and non-socialist reform that the Distributists found in social Catholicism was for them an irresistible combination.

The Liberal Party's significant, diverse Christian membership, and the motivations of this element for eclectic reform, combined with Belloc's increasingly influential advocacy of Catholic-inspired non-socialist social reform, together probably provided the impetus for the Distributist impulse. The Chestertons, before they became Catholics, were linked to the Anglo-Catholic movement, which had a long-standing connection to social reform, articulated by individuals

What neither Liberalism nor Anglicanism could offer the Distributists, and particularly the Chestertons, was ideological and doctrinal coherence and permanence. Social Catholicism offered both.

like Fr. Frederick Denison Maurice (1805–1872 – the contemporary of the Liberal High-Church PM William Ewart Gladstone, 1809–1898), and other influential Anglican social-theology luminaries such as Bishop Charles Gore (1853–1932) and Archbishop William Temple (1881–1944).

What neither Liberalism nor Anglicanism could offer the Distributists, and particularly the Chestertons, was ideological and doctrinal coherence and permanence. Social Catholicism offered both.⁵⁷

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1 The increasingly-less-ideologically-distinct Conservative, Liberal (various factions), and Labour parties supported ‘national’ governments, 1916–22 and 1931–45.

The ideological difficulties which the Liberal Party of the United Kingdom faced in the post-Gladstonian world – the attempt to re-establish a ‘centre’ in British politics – were mirrored in other European liberal parties of the period. See: Dieter Langewiesche, *Liberalism in Germany* (Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 128–198, 257–270. Like the British Liberals, those in Germany divided into ‘classical’ and ‘social’ liberal factions, which (unlike Britain) actually resulted in the creation of separate parties, both before and after the First World War.

The same process in Britain is described variously and well by many. I have relied mostly on two older texts: Alan Sykes’ *The Rise and Fall of British Liberalism, 1776–1988* (Longman, 1997) and H. V. Emy’s *Liberals, Radicals, and Social Politics, 1892–1914* (Cambridge University Press, 1973).

2 Other individuals associated with the initial, influential, British, and increasingly Roman Catholic, Distributist movement included the craftsmen Eric Gill (1882–1940) and Hilary Pepler (1878–1951), and the theologian and social theorist Fr. Vincent McNabb (1863–1943). The Guild Socialist Arthur Penty (1875–1937) sometimes is added to this list.

3 The Distributists have never been a significant political force, although they continue to influence individual social thinkers and politicians (see, for instance, John C. Medaille’s *Toward a Truly Free Market* (ISI Books, 2010)). A London-based ‘Distributist League’ was founded in 1926.

4 Please see, in this regard: Hilaire Belloc, ‘The Liberal Tradition’ in J. S. P[hillimore] and

F. W. H[irst] (eds.), *Essays in Liberalism* (Cassell, 1897), pp. 1–30; G. K. Chesterton, ‘Liberty, Liberalism, and Libertarians’, *Illustrated London News*, 3 Mar. 1928, to be found in *The Collected Works of G. K. Chesterton*, vol. xxxiv (Ignatius Press, 1991), pp. 481–485; and Cecil Chesterton, *Gladstonian Ghosts* (Lantern Press, 1905), pp. 18, 27, 45, 47, and 49.

5 Belloc also acknowledged a debt to Henry Cardinal Manning, whose championing of the workers in the London dockers’ strike of 1889 remained embedded in his memory. See: Joseph Pearce, *Old Thunder: A Life of Hilaire Belloc* (Ignatius Press, 2002), pp. 28 and 82.

6 Ian Ker, *G. K. Chesterton: A Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 22–23. Joseph Pearce, *Wisdom and Innocence: A Life of G. K. Chesterton* (Ignatius Press, 2004), p. 10.

7 G. K. Chesterton describes the process of his conversion in various works, most notably *The Catholic Church and Conversion*, *Why I am a Catholic*, and *The Thing: Why I am a Catholic*. See: G. K. Chesterton: *Collected Works*, vol. iii (Ignatius Press, 1990), pp. 59–335.

8 One of my students once remarked that ‘The Distributists usually knew what they were against and sometimes understood what they were for.’ This epigram was provided by Mr Josiah W. Baker, my research assistant during spring term, 2016. I am much indebted to him both for his readings of various Distributist texts and his work in helping compile the bibliography from which this article was written.

9 This list includes internally described Distributist texts and the writings most often identified as essential to the movement. I have tried to identify either the first British or American edition as follows: (1) Hilaire Belloc, ‘The Liberal Tradition’, in *Essays in Liberalism*, by Six Oxford Men, edited by John Swinnerton Phillimore and Francis Wrigley Hirst (London: Cassell, 1897); (2) G. K. Chesterton, *What’s Wrong with the World* (New York: Dodd, 1910); (3) Hilaire Belloc and Cecil Chesterton, *The Party System* (London: S. Swift, 1911); (4) Hilaire Belloc, *The Servile State* (London & Edinburgh: T.N. Foulis, 1912); (5) G. K. Chesterton, *The Utopia of the Usurers* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1917); (6) G. K. Chesterton, *The Outline of Sanity* (New York: Dodd, 1927); and (7) Hilaire Belloc, *An Essay on the Restoration of Property* (London: The Distributist League, 1936). Citations from modern editions often will be noted herein below. The Papal encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) obviously were not written as ‘Distributist’ texts per se, but eventually were treated as such by Belloc, G. K. Chesterton, and their followers, since the ideas of the Distributist ‘founders’ and the two popes in question were essentially congruent.

10 Cecil Chesterton’s *Gladstonian Ghosts* (1906)

generally is not included in the list of primordial Distributist texts, since Cecil’s ideology, while containing elements of what became the Distributist consensus, was much less focused even than the diverse Distributist movement. This text did anticipate some of what followed in his and Belloc’s *The Party System* (1911), which usually is identified as a ‘Distributist’ text.

11 Belloc, ‘The Liberal Tradition’, pp. 6–7, 29–30

12 A sensibility that could be shared by the Christian elements uneasily held together by the strap of the historic Liberal Party, i.e. Anglicans of various stripes, particularly High Churchmen; Roman Catholics (particularly Irish Roman Catholics); and Non-conformists. Archibald Philip Primrose, 5th Earl of Rosebery (1847–1929), the Liberal PM 1894–1895 and leader of the opposition, 1895–1896, propounded a vague theory of government labeled ‘Efficiency’, an entirely secular version of the earlier Liberal ‘Retrenchment and Reform’. See: G. K. Chesterton, *What’s Wrong with the World* (Ignatius Press, 1994), pp. 19–20. Chesterton wanted this Christian sensibility, which he felt was missing after Gladstone’s departure, reemphasised; see p. 27.

13 Ibid, pp. 33–34, 56.

14 Ibid, p. 37.

15 Ibid, p. 41.

16 Ibid, pp. 52–53.

17 Ibid, pp. 58–61.

18 Ibid, p. 67.

19 Ibid, p. 73–74. Chesterton’s brother Cecil expands on this point in *Gladstonian Ghosts*, ‘Our British Moslems’, pp. 142–158. ‘Beer drinking ... is a national habit which no wise ruler would try to suppress’ (p. 153).

20 Ibid, pp. 79–80.

21 Ibid, pp. 83–125, passim.

22 Ibid, pp. 129–175, passim.

23 Hilaire Belloc and Cecil Chesterton. *The Party System* (IHS Press, 2007), pp. 30–31, 36–42. G. K. Chesterton makes the same point repeatedly in the *Illustrated London News*, 1910–1913. Please see his columns: ‘Objections to the Party System’ (17 Dec. 1910), ‘The Conserving and Reforming Parties’ (4 Feb. 2011), ‘The Party System’ (4 Mar. 1911), ‘Is Parliament Corrupt?’ (27 May 1911), ‘The Political Parties and Bureaucracy’ (2 Mar. 1912), ‘The Collapse of Party Labels’ (6 Jul. 1912), ‘Abuses of the Party System’ (1 Feb. 1913), and ‘New Titles for Our Parties’ (24 May 1913). G. K. Chesterton: *Collected Works*, vol. xxxviii, *The Illustrated London News, 1908–1910* (Ignatius Press, 1987), pp. 647–651; and G. K. Chesterton: *Collected Works*, vol. xxix, *The Illustrated London News, 1911–1913* (Ignatius Press, 1988), pp. 32–35, 47–51, 91–95, 250–253, 320–324, 433–436, and 497–500.

Paranthetically, the link between late-nineteenth-century British Liberalism and

- modern Classical Liberalism can be seen in the modern edition of *The Party System*, wherein the Foreword was composed by Ronald Ernest ('Ron') Paul, Congressman from Texas, 1979–1985, 1997–2013, Presidential candidate for the Libertarian Party in 1988, and a past-leader of the Liberty Caucus of classical liberals in the American House of Representatives.
- 24 Belloc and Cecil Chesterton, *The Party System*, p. 26. The Parliament Act of 1911 provided the first 'independent' salaries for members of the Commons – £400 per annum. The discussion of individual-member 'independence' is amplified in ch. 5, 'Control of Elections', pp. 86–98.
- 25 Ibid, pp. 48–52.
- 26 Ibid, pp. 54–75, passim.
- 27 Ibid pp. 76–85.
- 28 Ibid, p. 127.
- 29 The lingering influence of the Distributists on Liberalism can be found among those who draw upon Christian ethics in the articulation of their political vision, e.g. George Elliot Dodds (1889–1977) or Joseph ('Jo') Grimond, Baron Grimond (1913–1993). Dodds became the chairman of the Liberal 'Unservile State Group' in 1953 and wrote a chapter in George Watson's book *The Unservile State: Essays in Liberty and Welfare* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1957).
- 30 Belloc's analysis of society is summarised by Victor Feske in ch. 1, 'Hilaire Belloc: The Path Not Taken', in *From Belloc to Churchill: Private Scholars, Public Culture, and the Crisis of British Liberalism, 1900–1939* (University of North Carolina Press, 1996) pp. 15–60. See particularly pp. 33–37.
- 31 Belloc comes closest to offering a 'solution' to the problems of contemporary society in Sections Three ('How the Servile Institution was for a Time Dissolved', pp. 71–84), Four ('How the Distributive State Failed', pp. 85–106), and Six ('The Stable Solutions of this Instability', pp. 121–126). See: Hilaire Belloc, *The Servile State* (Liberty Classics, 1977).
- 32 The actual title of Chesterton's book is *The Utopia of the Usurers and Other Essays*; the 'Other Essays' constitute about two-thirds of the volume.
- 33 G. K. Chesterton, *The Utopia of the Usurers and Other Essays*, in G. K. Chesterton: *Collected Works*, vol. v (Ignatius Press, 1987), pp. 405–409, 412–413.
- 34 Ibid, pp. 415–416
- 35 Ibid, pp. 417–420
- 36 Ibid, pp. 423–425; see also Chesterton's *Eugenics and Other Evils* (Dodd, 1922).
- 37 Ibid pp. 430–434.
- 38 G. K. Chesterton, *The Outline of Sanity* (IHS Press, 2001), passim, but particularly pp. 26, 42–43, 51, 55–56, 67, 70, 79, 85, 93, 98, 107, 111, 147, and 179–181.
- 39 Ibid, pp. 160–163.
- 40 Hilaire Belloc, *An Essay on the Restoration of Property* (IHS Press, 2002), passim but particularly pp. 56–58, 67–71, 78–83, 86–87, and 94–95.
- 41 The Distributists probably would have agreed with George Dangerfield that 'When Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman died in 1908, it was like the passing of true Liberalism. Sir Henry had believed in Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform, those amiable deities who presided so complacently over large portions of the Victorian era, inspiring their worshippers with so many generous sentiments.' See: George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 27.
- 42 Please see in this regard: John Davenport, 'G. K. Chesterton: Nationalist Ireland's English Apologist', in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, v. 103, no. 410 (Summer, 2014), pp. 178–192.
- 43 The following editions were consulted: Pope Leo XIII (Vincenzo Giocchino Pecci, 1810–1903, pope 1878–1903), *Encyclical Letter of His Holiness Pope Leo XIII on the Condition of the Working Classes: Rerum Novarum* (Pauline Books & Media, 2000; promulgated, 1891); and Pope Pius XI (Achille Ambrogio Damiano Ratti, 1857–1939, pope 1922–1939), *Encyclical Letter On Social Reconstruction [Quadragesimo Anno]* (St. Paul editions, 1939?).
- The latter document essentially repeats the teachings of the former, celebrates progress made over the past forty years, and issues new warnings both about socialism (pp. 53–55, 57–59), given the excesses of the Communist state in Russia since 1917, and about any return to the (from the papal perspective) heartless competition of Manchester-School Liberalism (see particularly pp. 29, 44) which eventually had led only to monopoly (pp. 50–52).
- Pius herein is ambivalent about the fascist 'Corporate State', which some Catholics saw an attempt to embody elements of Catholic social teaching in a 'third-way' system, neither capitalist nor socialist (see pp. 45–48). While both Belloc and G. K. Chesterton routinely condemned Hitler and the Nazis, they too initially were uncertain about the Italian, Austrian, and Spanish fascist regimes. Chesterton, of course, died in 1936, before the Spanish Civil War had run its course. He certainly was supportive of Dollfuss, but this was more as the leader of a 'small nation' against the imperialism of a greater one than anything. Please see in this regard his column of 8 July 1933, 'Austria and the Nazis' in *The Illustrated London News* to be found in G. K. Chesterton: *Collected Works*, v. xxxvi, *The Illustrated London News, 1932–1934* (Ignatius Press, 2011), pp. 300–304. In general, Belloc was more sympathetic to Mussolini than was Chesterton (who criticised Mussolini
- for his misunderstanding pre-war Italian Liberalism); Belloc supported Franco during the Spanish Civil War and also Charles Maurras' *Action Française*. See: Ian Ker, G. K. Chesterton: *A Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 659–660, 712, 715; and Joseph Pearce, *Old Thunder: A Life of Hilaire Belloc* (Ignatius Press, 2002), pp. 195–196, 254, 260–261.
- The blanket charge of anti-Semitism sometimes leveled at Belloc and both Chestertons, seems often connected to scurrilous ethnic remarks appearing in Cecil Chesterton's journal *New Witness* during the Marconi Scandal, 1912–1913, related to the Jewish background of Sir Rufus Isaacs (1860–1935), the Attorney General at the time, his brother, Godfrey Isaacs (1867–1925), managing director of the Marconi Company, and the Postmaster General, Herbert Louis Samuel (1870–1963), who also was a Jew. Both Belloc and G. K. Chesterton were critical of the anti-Semitic tone that the journal sometimes exhibited during the scandal, often attributable to contributions by Hugh O'Donnell (1846–1916), but certainly the ultimate responsibility of Cecil Chesterton, the journal's sometimes cavalier editor. Please see Pearce, *Old Thunder*, p. 152–153.
- G. K. Chesterton seems not have thought much in his earlier Anglican years of Pope Leo and his teachings, noting in *The Catholic Church and Conversion* (1929) that: "nobody in our really well-informed world took much notice" of the teaching of "the poor old gentleman" who represented the dregs of a dead religion, essentially a superstition.' Quoted by Ian Ker in G. K. Chesterton: *A Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 565–566. Clearly Chesterton was influenced by *Rerum Novarum*, wherein the concept of 'distributive justice' is clearly articulated (Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, p. 30).
- 44 Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, pp. 5, 15, 52–53.
- 45 Ibid, pp. 9–10, 14, 16, 26, 51
- 46 Ibid, pp. 33–34.
- 47 Ibid, pp. 12–13.
- 48 Ibid, pp. 16–17.
- 49 Ibid, pp. 18–19, 39.
- 50 Ibid, p. 33.
- 51 Ibid, pp. 21–22, 27, 37.
- 52 Ibid, pp. 27–28.
- 53 Ibid, pp. 36, 38.
- 54 Ibid, pp. 40–41
- 55 Ibid, pp. 41–42.
- 56 Ibid, pp. 42–50.
- 57 This essay can be read as a complement to David Boyle's article 'Hilaire Belloc and the Liberal Revival' in the *Journal of Liberal History* (Spring 2003), accessed in electronic form, 1 Dec. 2015 (<http://www.david-boyle.co.uk/history/belloc.html>).

Research in Progress

If you can help any of the individuals listed below with sources, contacts, or any other information — or if you know anyone who can — please pass on details to them. Details of other research projects in progress should be sent to the Editor (see page 3) for inclusion here.

Dadabhai Naoroji

Dadabhai Naoroji (1825–1917) was an Indian nationalist and Liberal member for Central Finsbury, 1892–95 – the first Asian to be elected to the House of Commons. This research for a PhD at Harvard aims to produce both a biography of Naoroji and a volume of his selected correspondence, to be published by OUP India in 2013. The current phase concentrates on Naoroji's links with a range of British progressive organisations and individuals, particularly in his later career. Suggestions for archival sources very welcome. *Dinyar Patel; dinyar.patel@gmail.com or 07775 753 724.*

The political career of Edward Strutt, 1st Baron Belper

Strutt was Whig/Liberal MP for Derby (1830–49), later Arundel and Nottingham; in 1856 he was created Lord Belper and built Kingston Hall (1842–46) in the village of Kingston-on-Soar, Notts. He was a friend of Jeremy Bentham and a supporter of free trade and reform, and held government office as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Commissioner of Railways. Any information, location of papers or references welcome. *Brian Smith; brian63@inbox.com.*

Charles Day Rose (1847–1913)

Charles Day Rose, a partner in the City banking firm of Morton Rose, was Liberal MP for Newmarket 1903–10 and 1910–13. Living at Hardwick House on the banks of the Thames in Oxfordshire, he may have been the model for Mr Toad in Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*. Rose died just before the First World War after being taken up for a spin in an aeroplane, leading the coroner to observe that 'aeroplaning' should clearly be left to 'the young, the vigorous and the robust'. Any documentary information bearing on any aspect of his multifarious life would be of interest. *Dr Michael Redley, 10 Norman Avenue, Henley on Thames, Oxfordshire, RG9 1SG; michael.redley@appleinter.net.*

The emergence of the 'public service ethos'

Aims to analyse how self-interest and patronage was challenged by the advent of impartial inspectorates, public servants and local authorities in provincial Britain in the mid 19th century. Much work has been done on the emergence of a 'liberal culture' in the central civil service in Whitehall, but much work needs to be done on the motives, behaviour and mentalities of the newly reformed guardians of the poor, sanitary inspectors, factory and mines inspectors, education authorities, prison warders and the police. *Ian Cawood, Newman University College, Birmingham; i.cawood@newman.ac.uk.*

Sir Edward Grey (1862–1933)

I am currently writing a biography of Sir Edward Grey, and I am keen to discover any letters or other documents relating to him that may be in private hands. *Thomas Otte, University of East Anglia; T.Otte@uea.ac.uk.*

The life of Professor Reginald W Revans, 1907–2003

Any information anyone has on Revans' Liberal Party involvement would be most welcome. We are particularly keen to know when he joined the party and any involvement he may have had in campaigning issues. We know he was very interested in pacifism. Any information, oral history submissions, location of papers or references most welcome. *Dr Yury Boshyk, yury@gel-net.com; or Dr Cheryl Brook, cheryl.brook@port.ac.uk.*

Recruitment of Liberals into the Conservative Party, 1906–1935

Aims to suggest reasons for defections of individuals and develop an understanding of changes in electoral alignment. Sources include personal papers and newspapers; suggestions about how to get hold of the papers of more obscure Liberal defectors welcome. *Cllr Nick Cott, 1a Henry Street, Gosforth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE3 1DQ; N.M.Cott@ncl.ac.uk.*

Four nations history of the Irish Home Rule crisis

A four nations history of the Irish Home Rule crisis, attempting to rebalance the existing Anglo-centric focus. Considering Scottish and Welsh reactions and the development of parallel Home Rule movements, along with how the crisis impacted on political parties across the UK. Sources include newspapers, private papers, *Hansard*. *Naomi Lloyd-Jones; naomi.n.lloyd-jones@kcl.ac.uk.*

Beyond Westminster: Grassroots Liberalism 1910–1929

A study of the Liberal Party at its grassroots during the period in which it went from being the party of government to the third party of politics. This research will use a wide range of sources, including surviving Liberal Party constituency minute books and local press to contextualise the national decline of the party with the reality of the situation on the ground. The thesis will focus on three geographic regions (Home Counties, Midlands and the North West) in order to explore the situation the Liberals found themselves in nationally. Research for University of Leicester. Supervisor: Dr Stuart Ball. *Gavin Freeman; gjf6@le.ac.uk.*

The Liberal Party's political communication, 1945–2002

Research on the Liberal party and Lib Dems' political communication. Any information welcome (including testimonies) about electoral campaigns and strategies. *Cynthia Boyer, CUFR Champollion, Place de Verdun, 81 000 Albi, France; +33 5 63 48 19 77; cynthia.boyer@univ-jfc.fr.*

The Liberal Party in Wales, 1966–1988

Aims to follow the development of the party from the general election of 1966 to the time of the merger with the SDP. PhD research at Cardiff University. *Nick Alderton; nickalito@hotmail.com.*

Policy position and leadership strategy within the Lib Dems

This thesis will be a study of the political positioning and leadership strategy of the Liberal Democrats. Consideration of the role of equidistance; development of policy from the point of merger; the influence and leadership strategies of each leader from Ashdown to Clegg; and electoral strategy from 1988 to 2015 will form the basis of the work. Any material relating to leadership election campaigns, election campaigns, internal party groups (for example the Social Liberal Forum) or policy documents from 1987 and merger talks onwards would be greatly welcomed. Personal insights and recollections also sought. *Samuel Barratt; pt10seb@leeds.ac.uk.*

Reports

The legacy of Roy Jenkins

Evening meeting, 27 June 2016, with John Campbell and David Steel. Chair: Dick Newby.

Report by **Douglas Oliver**

ON MONDAY 27 JUNE, the Liberal Democrat History Group met in Committee Room 4A of the House of Lords to discuss the legacy of Roy Jenkins. The timing was apt but deeply bittersweet, following as it did in the wake of Britain's decision to leave the European Union in its referendum, on the longest day of the year, the Thursday before. The discussion, thirteen years after the death of one of the most important facilitators of Britain's European engagement, reflected on how capricious events can turn history's perception of people upside down, even a long time after they leave the scene.

The timing was, however, accidental. The discussion of Jenkins' legacy was originally scheduled to coincide with the half-century anniversary of his first tenure as Home Secretary. This lasted only two years, between 1965 and 1967, but has an enduring salience to this day,

ushering in a self-proclaimed 'permissive society'. Jenkins is often seen as one of the most important British politicians never to have become prime minister, and this was reflected, also, in the third central issue of enduring relevance: Jenkins' efforts to realign the centre-left and centre of British politics.

The event was chaired by Dick Newby, who worked with the SDP in the early days after its establishment, and knew Jenkins well, before being elevated to the House of Lords in September 1997. Since the meeting was held, Newby succeeded Lord Wallace of Tankerness as the sixth Liberal Democrat leader in the House of Lords – the first was Jenkins.

The discussion was led by John Campbell, whose 2014 biography of Jenkins, *A Well-Rounded Life*, was met with acclaim, and did much to strengthen the impression of the former Labour Chancellor and Home Secretary – turned

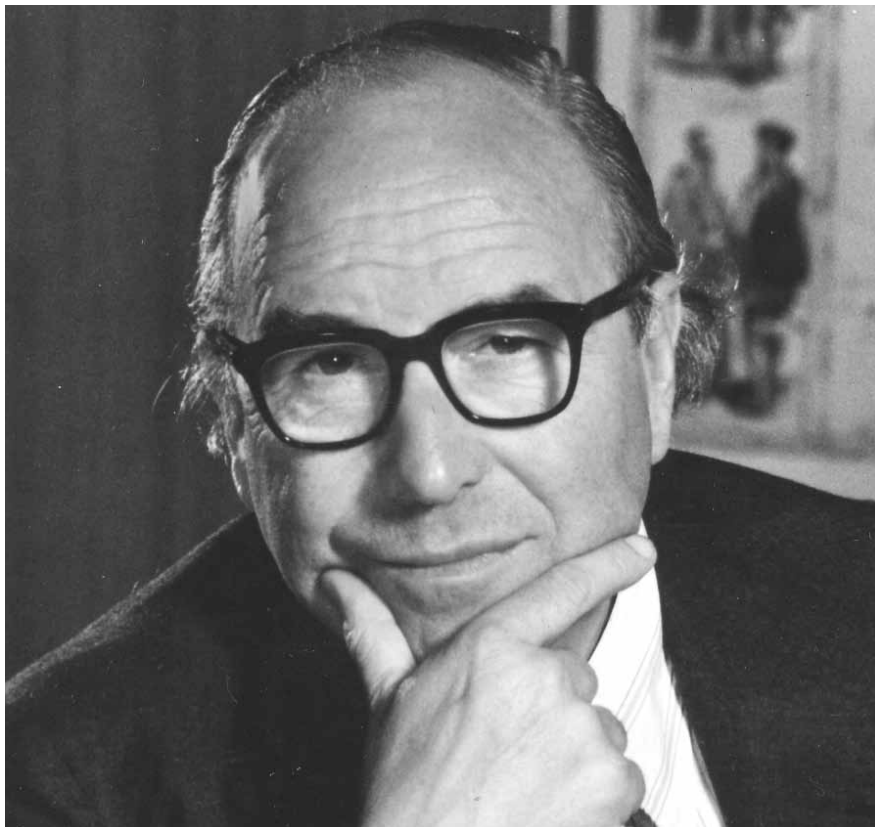
founder of the SDP and Liberal Democrats – as a giant of post-war politics. Campbell looked at the enduring resilience of Jenkins' three main themes. Campbell shared the platform with former Liberal leader, David Steel.

Campbell began with an exploration of Jenkins' legacy as Home Secretary in the 1960s, as well as his less celebrated but fruitful time in the role between 1974 and '76. Jenkins was, Campbell felt, 'the right man, in the right job at the right time'. Jenkins had always been a moderate and liberal-minded member of the Labour Party, and as early as 1959 had set out how he felt a future Labour government should seek to change Britain's social fabric for the better.

It is easy with hindsight to forget how difficult and radical some of Jenkins' changes were within the Labour Party, whose less liberal and less 'metropolitan' factions were more averse – or at best lukewarm – to ideas like liberalising homosexuality and abortion. Campbell praised the contribution of Harold Wilson – often underappreciated – who had given the crucial role to Jenkins.

Campbell did point out that Jenkins is sometimes accused of more than he actually did, not least by the reactionary section of the right-wing press. Jenkins did not, as is widely believed, end the death penalty or liberalise divorce: the former had already been abolished in a private member's bill by Sydney Silverman earlier in 1965, and the latter was not reformed until 1969.

However, he rightly defined his age, and probably did more to make 'the 1960s' happen than any other politician. He played a crucial role fostering Steel's private member's bill to liberalise abortion; Steel was only aged 29 at the time, and had placed third in the 1967 lottery for private members' bills. Jenkins' tutelage and guidance was also very useful for Leo Abse, Labour MP for Pontypool, who also introduced a private member's bill to legalise homosexuality.



Jenkins also abolished theatre censorship, introduced a Race Relations Act and ended flogging in prisons. Campbell noted that his latter period as Home Secretary in the 1970s was almost as productive as he helped along a new Race Relations Act as well as fulfilling an instrumental role in completing parliamentary approval for the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act.

Despite this, Campbell pointed out that Jenkins had a strong pragmatic streak, and did not see liberalism in gospel terms. Jenkins was tough on law and order, and controversially changed the requirement for unanimity in jury trials. Furthermore, he streamlined the organisation of the police, cutting local force numbers around the UK from 117 to 43. He introduced an independent police complaints commission, and though he was concerned by the prison population – then only about 40,000 in number – did nothing significant to arrest its growth.

Campbell then went on to look at Jenkins' catalytic role in ensuring that Britain joined the EEC in 1973, and its continued engagement with it thereafter. Jenkins' explicit support dated back to 1958, and he had backed Harold MacMillan's attempt to join in 1960. He had been deeply dismayed by the Euroscepticism of his leader and mentor Hugh Gaitskell. However, it was a decade later that Britain first joined the community during a Conservative government.

Jenkins supported Edward Heath's decision to join the Common Market enthusiastically, and was willing to pay

a hefty political cost by leading sixty-nine Labour rebels in support of the Tory prime minister's move: by doing so, Campbell felt, Jenkins effectively sacrificed his chance to lead his party and eventually move in to 10 Downing Street.

Two years later, after Labour had returned to government under Harold Wilson, Jenkins had opposed calls for an EU referendum, which he had felt was reckless. Nonetheless, he took on the role of leading the 1975 'Remain Campaign'. In contrast to the campaign of 2016, it was a genuinely ecumenical campaign and included Liberals like Jo Grimond and Jeremy Thorpe, along with Conservatives like Willie Whitelaw, Margaret Thatcher and Douglas Hurd. The campaign did not, as has been said in the intervening decades, deny that membership would involve some pooling of sovereignty. However, it did sell the positive benefits of cooperation with our nearest geographic, economic and strategic neighbours. Jenkins also showed himself as a strong leader, selling the case for Europe with clarity and conviction, unlike David Cameron.

Campbell accepted, however, that he did not always succeed in selling the EEC to the rest of Europe in the years thereafter. In 1976, Jenkins was appointed Britain's only European Commissioner. He was a key advocate of a single European currency, and played an important role in selling it to German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. Campbell suggested that he did at times speak too enthusiastically

about the EEC and EU, and often used terms like 'momentum' and 'energy' when in reality there was little strategic need for haste. Jenkins, felt Campbell, should be held responsible for some of the later problems in the Eurozone and even his strongest supporters in terms of EU cooperation would be troubled by his lack of foresight at the pooling together of eclectic economies in a common currency block.

Along with the EEC, the third pillar of Jenkins legacy also appears vulnerable, that of the attempt to 'break the mould of British politics' with the establishment of the SDP in 1981. Jenkins had always been on the right of his party, and following the failure of initiatives like *In Place of Strife* he had become frustrated by the left-wing drift of the Labour Party throughout the 1970s. His 1979 Dibleby Lecture, 'Home thoughts from abroad', spoke of a new 'radical centre' and this set the scene for the SDP's launch.

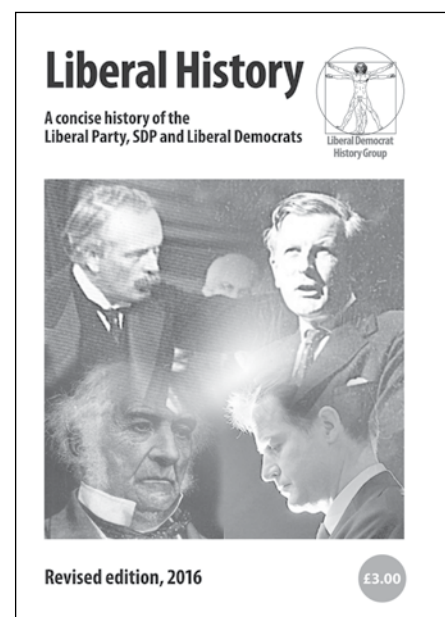
Whilst the SDP is not looked on as a great success in 2016, according to Campbell it played an important role in setting the scene for the 1990s, and the New Labour political philosophy. According to Campbell, whilst Jenkins believed in political ecumenicalism, he would have only reluctantly accepted the 2010 coalition government with the Conservatives. Nonetheless, he would have recognised it as being in the national interest and ultimately supported it. In many ways, Jenkins was a man ahead of his time who could see

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a coming fracture in the Labour Party – one which looks like being brought about again by Jeremy Corbyn.

In summary, Campbell described Jenkins as foremost an Asquithian Liberal who happened to have been born in a family in the heart of the Labour Party. When Jenkins set up the SDP it had become clear that the Labour Party was beginning to outlive its usefulness as a political concept. Since its emergence as a governing force in the 1920s, it had always been an uneasy mix of intellectual socialists and trade unionists, by 2016, its *raison d’être* really has passed. Indeed, according to Campbell, the Labour Party’s greatest achievements – the welfare state and mixed economy of Beveridge and Keynes – were philosophically and practically conceived by two members of the Liberal Party.

Campbell concluded that Jenkins was unsure he wanted multi-party politics; he really wanted a return to two-party

politics, but with a less harsh flavour, in keeping with the Victorian Liberal and Conservative party division. Lord Newby questioned whether such a distinction could be democratically sustained given the fragmentation of the electorate’s wishes on both the left and right wings of British politics. Former Labour voters are now looking to UKIP and the Greens in England as well as the SNP in Scotland.

Steel thanked Campbell for his analysis and recommended his book. He noted that he could not embellish the discussion significantly further. However, he commented that he knew Jenkins well and was happy to add colour to a discussion of a man he knew well.

Steel described his experience working with Jenkins over abortion reform in the 1960s, and praised Jenkins’ vision, competence and moral encouragement. Steel noted the passion with which Jenkins embraced liberal reforms and

commented on the party that Jenkins held to celebrate the passage of the private member’s bill.

Commenting on the formation of the SDP, Steel said that whilst he would have been glad had Jenkins defected from Labour to the Liberal Party, he recognised the impact of a new faction in politics was likely to be more seismic and profound. He was therefore glad to when Jenkins emerged as part of the ‘Gang of Four’ although his Liberal Party colleague John Pardoe was more frustrated.

Steel noted that in contrast to his occasional public image, Jenkins was a charismatic and witty man in private and proved himself a strong political street fighter when he stood as the SDP candidate with Liberal backing in the Warrington by-election. Although Jenkins lost, he reduced Labour’s majority to just 1,700 votes, a result which he described as ‘his first political loss and greatest victory’. Jenkins political leadership was later shown a short period later when he was elected as a member of parliament in Hillhead in Glasgow.

Whilst the SDP appeared to be on the brink of bringing about a radical change in politics in 1982, Margaret Thatcher’s political incumbency was much bolstered by her victory in that year’s war against Argentina in the Falklands and, according to Steel, everything changed from this point onwards. Despite missteps in the 1983 general election, Steel records that the campaign would have been difficult to improve upon. David Marquand suggested, he recalled, terming Jenkins ‘Prime Minister Designate’ and although this backfired to some extent, it was a logical description of a man who could readily have served as the nation’s political leader if required.

In the questions and answer session that followed, there was much discussion about Jenkin’s legacy, particularly in the context of Britain’s vote to leave the EU. Although the strongest political platform is Jenkins’ legislation for the permissive society, Steel commented that many of the sentiments of the Brexit campaign had echoes of the 1960s, and the dark reactionary impulses that Jenkins rightly reviled.

Birmingham member Alistair Dow reminisced about Jenkins’ skills and charisma as a platform speaker and that he would never run away from his famous speech impediment. Once he spoke in Inverary, and was perfectly happy to explicated it in his own idiosyncratic

style. Duncan Brack, editor of this journal, recalled the affection with which ‘Woy’ was treated, and Campbell highlighted his lack of pretence, which indicated an inner well of esteem and intellectual self-confidence. It was also pointed out by a member of the audience that he was well liked in a personal capacity by his political foes including Tony Benn – who attended his funeral after he died.

A member from Bedford questioned Campbell’s notion that Jenkins would really act as a proponent of two-party politics today, and was of the opinion that Jenkins’ efforts to realign the left would have to adapt to a new paradigm in 2016. The lesson of this year, he felt, was that Britain’s politics is splintered in to 10–12 ideologies, which cannot easily be divided by two parties. Furthermore, the real obstacle to Jenkins-ite politics is not conservatism, but nationalism and nastiness.

The panel also reflected on Jenkins’ predilection for the finer things in life including claret, intellectual stimulation, good food and the ‘fairer sex’. In a 1995 documentary, Jenkins had remarked on his admiration for ‘pleasure’ with a mischievous glint in his eye. After his death, details emerged of various affairs that Jenkins had had with women such as Caroline Gilmour, wife of his close friend Tory MP, Ian Gilmour. It was widely acknowledged amongst the room that Jenkins had made the most of his four score years and two, before his death.

Tony Little, chair of the History Group, questioned whether it was inevitable Jenkins would fall out with David Owen. The answer from Campbell was yes. Owen had been over-promoted too soon as Labour Home Secretary, and had always been more hostile than Roy to the Liberal Party. This meant that Owen and Jenkins were always likely to clash in

the 1980s when the younger man sensed his ambitions were under-sated.

After the discussion ended, the audience melted off into an overcast mid-summer evening. It was one with which Jenkins would have been familiar: a sonorous crowd of hundreds were packed out in Westminster Square in support of Jeremy Corbyn’s campaign to be re-elected leader of the Labour Party. Meanwhile, in the City of London, analysts were looking on in despair as the pound collapsed in value, soon to become the worst performing global currency of the year. As Jenkins quoted from Yeats in 1979, when ‘the best lack all conviction and the worst are full of passionate intensity, the centre cannot hold’. In 2016, Britain misses Jenkins’ leadership, intellect and liberal vision more than ever.

Douglas Oliver is Secretary of the Liberal Democrat History Group.

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Comparative review

Press, politics and culture in Victorian Britain

W. Sydney Robinson, *Muckraker: The Scandalous Life and Times of W. T. Stead – Britain's first investigative journalist* (Robson Press, 2012)

P. Brighton, *Original Spin: Downing Street and the Press in Victorian Britain* (I.B. Tauris, 2016)

G. Cordery and J. S. Meisel (eds.), *The Humours of Parliament: Harry Furniss' View of Late Victorian Political Culture* (Ohio State UP, 2014)

Comparative review by **Dr Ian Cawood**

THE ROLE OF the press in the political and cultural life of Victorian Britain has been the subject of ever-increasing scrutiny in recent years. This is largely because, in these days of the 'cultural turn' with its focus on the behaviours, mentalities and interactions of political life, no other source can provide such a rounded view of the priorities, the principles and the prurience of Victorian public experience. With the reduction in stamp duty on the press from 4d to 1d in 1836 and then the success of the Association for the Promotion of the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge in the 1850s, the national, the local, the satirical and the scurrilous press flourished throughout the second half of the nineteenth century providing a wealth of source material that has never really been fully exploited by historians.¹

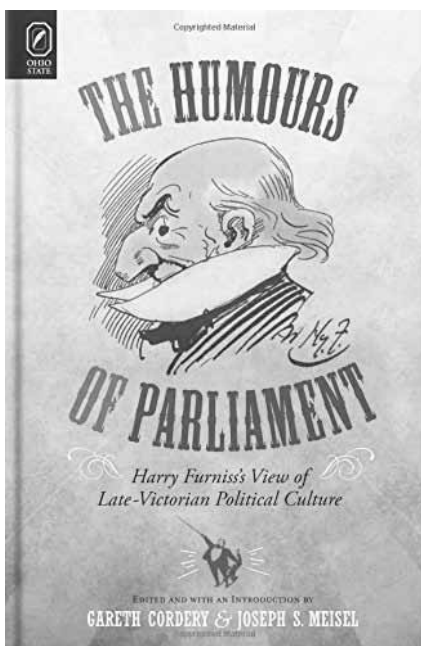
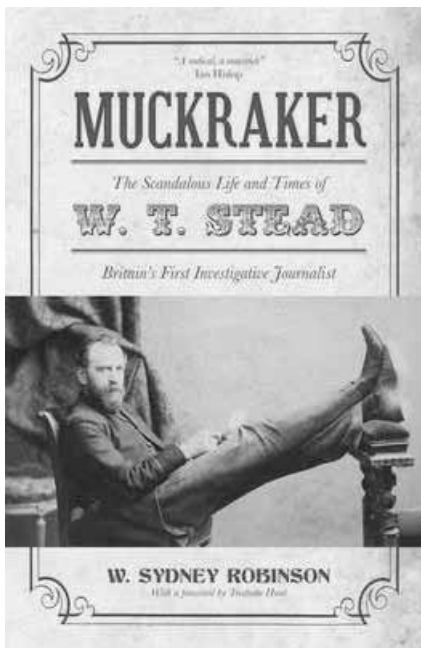
With the widespread digitising of certain sections of the press, beginning with the *Times Digital Archive* in 2003, the range of journalism available to the historian, both professional and amateur, has considerably expanded and access to this material has become immeasurably easier. There are still problems with the study of the press, of course, not least the relatively limited information as to the proprietors, the journalists and most of all the readers of the press. Although much is known about such details for the major London newspapers (and periodicals such as *Punch*), the interactions of the local, regional and 'underground' press remains largely unexplored.² Given that the British public tended to buy local media rather than national media (largely owing to the price), this has resulted in a rather lopsided view of the Victorian political media which only scholars such as Andrew Hobbs at the University of Central Lancashire have attempted to correct.³

Historians have, instead, hitherto chosen to analyse an issue that was of great concern to intellectuals and politicians in the first age of mass literacy that accompanied the introduction of compulsory elementary education in 1880. This was the coming of the 'new journalism' (as Matthew Arnold christened it), widely thought to have been imported from the US papers controlled by William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer. This was marked, according to the pioneering historian of the topic, Joel Wiener, by a less formal tone and less rigorous reporting of the content of public speeches, which were still printed verbatim in newspapers until the First World War. Instead, the 'yellow press' (as its detractors called it) attempted to focus on the more sensational aspects of public events, to examine the effects of these events on the individual, rather than from an ethical or religious perspective and to use a more direct and simple vocabulary to engage and to keep the reader's interest. It introduced the use of interviews with leading figures of the day and investigative journalism, as well as the greater use of visuals and headlines and subheadings in articles.⁴ In Britain, the single figure most closely associated with the 'new journalism' was W. T. Stead, who W. Sydney Robinson calls 'Britain's first investigative journalist' in his biography of 2012.

The biography, titled *Muckraker*, is in some ways reminiscent of Stead's rumbustious journalism. It is excessively prurient in its fascination with Stead's sex life and apt to focus on certain scandalous incidents rather than to fully explore Stead's true political and journalistic significance. It is also far too fond of conjecture, rather than certifiable fact. But, in its defence, like Stead's

work, it is highly readable, being well written, carefully structured and able to explain complex moral and legal matters with simplicity and clarity. This marks Robinson's book out from most studies of journalism of the nineteenth century – and Stead's reportage still reads fresh and vivid compared to the tedious prognostications and ponderous 'wit' of most the newspapers of the last quarter of the century. Unlike a lot of Stead's work, however, it is impeccably researched (when it isn't speculating on issues such as Stead's mental health), constantly overturning the self-aggrandising myths that Stead built around himself and the ready acceptance of these by subsequent historians. One merely needs to compare Robinson's book with the dry and lifeless text produced by the British Library to mark the anniversary of Stead's death on the Titanic in 1912, to realise how Robinson has not merely managed to portray Stead, but also to capture his essence in this book.⁵ The early chapters on Stead's career as editor of the *Northern Echo* – and especially the sections on the *Pall Mall Gazette's* famous 'Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' articles – hum with the restless energy of a man who could be shockingly callous in pursuit of a good story, but who one can never accuse of ignoring injustice. His later career is rather less well explored, as recent historiography has attempted to re-evaluate the significance of the *Review of Reviews*, which Stead established, largely single-handedly, after the sale of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. The section on Stead's flirtation with spiritualism could certainly have benefitted from greater familiarity with the work of historians such as Richard Noakes and Roger Luckhurst who have done much to treat such 'alternative' religions with greater respect than they received from the British media at the time.

If one accepts that a 'new journalism' had emerged in the 1880s, then the three newspapers that historians have associated with this innovative approach appeared to have been remarkably liberal in their politics. T. P. O'Connor's *The Star* endorsed the fierce Nationalism of its founder-editor, W. T. Stead kept the *Pall Mall Gazette* solidly Gladstonian until its sale to Lord Astor in 1893, and thereafter George Newnes offered a friendly Liberal refuge for the PMG's staff (though without Stead) in the heavily subsidised *Westminster Gazette*.⁶ Certainly all three rejected the arguments put forward by Chamberlain and



Hartington in 1886 and stayed loyal to Gladstone during the Home Rule Crisis after December 1885. As James Start has argued, however, any arbitrary distinction between ‘old’ and ‘new’ journalism is highly misleading. Established newspapers, such as the *Daily Telegraph* and *The Scotsman*, did much to imitate the less outrageous elements of the ‘new’ journalism in order to retain their readers, and even ‘stately’ papers like *The Times* underwent some substantial reforms to its presentation of the news in these years.⁷ John Walter and George Buckle were forced by the £200,000 legal bill left by the Parnell Commission to rebuild *The Times* and its reputation by combining its authoritative political focus with a slightly less pompous editorial tone and an increasingly sophisticated presentation style.⁸

The limited circulation of the pioneering titles of the ‘new journalism’ is indicative that they proved highly influential in the industry, but no long-term match for the established press, once the latter had learnt the lessons of how to appeal to a broader readership than hitherto. In 1887, Stead’s *Pall Mall Gazette* became the first newspaper to carry a satirical cartoon and the lasting legacy of *Westminster Gazette* was to make this feature a staple item in all but the most traditional British newspapers of the twentieth century.⁹ The identification of a distinctive ‘new journalism’ in Britain in late Victorian Britain has never really managed to reconcile the survival and flourishing of the older titles and the relatively high casualty rate among newspapers that appear to be the epitome of the ‘Americanised’ press. While there clearly was a gradual change in reading and writing habits in the period, most studies have been forced to conclude that these owe far more to broader changes in British society than to the evanescent fads of newspaper editors.¹⁰ The new titles which did prosper in the later years of the century, such as the *Daily Sketch* and, later, the *Daily Mail*, did so by offering an alternative to the ‘stately’ media’s fixation with party politics and thereby failed to have any significant effect on political behaviour in the pre-war period beyond the cultivation of apathy and indifference.¹¹

Stead famously claimed that journalism rather than parliament was the better representative of the will of the people but in fact he was expertly manipulated by Gladstone to support the outcry against the Bulgarian Atrocities in 1878

and to support home rule. This difficult relationship between the ‘Fourth Estate’ and the executive is the central theme of Paul Brighton’s study of attitudes towards the media on the part of the nineteenth century’s prime ministers, which has, perhaps unwisely, been titled *Original Spin*. It is organised chronologically by the prime ministers of the century and argues that some of the less well-celebrated First Lords of the Treasury, such as Russell, Derby and Rosebery were significant in developing the role of the press in the British polity. It also attempts to debunk the myth that only Tory PMs needed to practise the ‘dark arts’ of media manipulation. Both Palmerston and Gladstone emerge as arch-manipulators. Even Disraeli, no mean wire-puller himself, had to admit that ‘the once stern guardians of popular rights simmer in the enervating atmosphere of [Palmerston’s] gilded saloons’ in response to Pam’s sedulous courting of John Delane, the editor of *The Times*. That *The Times* had been usually referred to as ‘The Thunderer’ before Palmerston’s premiership, due to its outspoken attacks on corruption, government incompetence and the moral failings of minister, yet remained remarkably uncritical of the government for the duration of Palmerston’s occupancy of 10 Downing Street, seemed to illustrate the success of Palmerston’s strategy of exchanging information for support and of rewarding pliant journalists with honours and sinecures.

Unfortunately, the focus of Brighton’s text remains frustratingly narrow, mostly concentrating on the doings of the national press. There are allusions to the fecundity and influence of the local press but there is little sustained analysis. The press is depicted too frequently as the passive recipients of prime ministerial attention, which in the case of W. T. Stead stretches one’s credulity too far, considering that Stead considered himself the ‘uncrowned king of an educated democracy’. There is little understanding of the complex and changing relations between proprietors, editors and readers, to match those between politicians and journalists. There are also far too few examples of primary materials (which is odd, given how easy accessing Victorian journalism has become in the last ten years) and a far too frequent tendency to rely on the works of others, most noticeably Stephen Koss’s two-volume text, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain*, which is now over thirty years old. That said, Brighton’s



GETTING GLADSTONE'S COLLAR UP.

portrait of Lord Salisbury and his egregious bribery of such undeserving individuals as Alfred Austin, the leader writer for *The Standard*, exposes a side to the last Victorian premier which others such as Michael Bentley and David Steele have ignored. Salisbury spent far more time with Austin than anyone other than his chief agent and political fixer, 'Captain' Richard Middleton, and while Middleton was quietly rewarded with huge cheques at private Conservative dinners, Austin was given the position of Poet Laureate in succession to Tennyson despite the quality of his poetry being so terrible that even William McGonagall may have thought twice before publishing it.¹²

A far more talented, but far less rewarded and even less remembered media figure was Harry Furniss, an Irish caricaturist, who became one of the most prolific cartoonists of *Punch's* golden age in the late nineteenth century, alongside Sir John Tenniel and Linley Sambourne. His specialism was in exaggerating particular characteristics of his subjects and depicting them in a rather disrespectful but highly animated fashion. His images of the ever-active Gladstone, vaulting around his study, chopping down saplings and carrying up the coals in *Punch* in 1892 is an irresistible portrait of the Grand Old Man's ceaseless energy that drove his colleagues, such as the lugubrious William Harcourt, to distraction. Furniss attempted to turn his thousands of illustrations into a public entertainment by transferring some of his cartoons to magic-lantern slides and writing a scripted lecture. The surviving script of his 1891 'Humours of Parliament', together with either the illustrations he used, or educated guesses taken from his portfolio or other sources, forms the basis of a new book by two pioneering US

historians, Gareth Cordery and Joseph S. Meisel. There is an excellent introduction in which the editors explore the nature of political cartooning in the age of Gladstone and Chamberlain, the visual dimension of Victorian political culture, and the history of the performances that Furniss gave between 1891 and 1897 both in Britain and abroad. To give an example of the impact of his presentations, Furniss's exaggeration of the 'Gladstone collar' was so famous that the wing collar became uniquely associated with the G.O.M for the last fifteen years of his life and Furniss could merely draw a wing collar, for every reader to recognise the allusion.

Perhaps a slightly more detailed study of Furniss's personality might have helped to explain why his public performances were the exception for cartoonists rather than the rule in the period. There is a suggestion that Furniss was 'notoriously argumentative and egotistical', and when he gave a lecture on portraiture at the Birkbeck Institute in 1888, *The Times's* reviewer observed that 'everybody came in for a liberal share of downright criticism'¹³ In 1890, Furniss was sued by the journalist George Sala for belittling his abilities in a lecture on the Royal Academy, and, famously, he left *Punch* in 1894 over a 'minor misunderstanding'. Perhaps a character such as Furniss was more suited to the possibilities of solo theatrical performance than the constraints of journalistic collaboration?

Ultimately one is left from these three texts with the impression that the study of political journalism in the first age of mass literacy is in good, if underdeveloped health. Different methodologies, a wide variety of sources and a sustained scholarly analysis feature in all three.

Yet all three persist in focusing almost exclusively on the national media, with the exception of W. Sydney Robinson's chapters on Stead's apprenticeship at the *Northern Echo* in Newcastle. One can only hope that now the work of national journalists such as Stead, Furniss and the willing confidantes of premiers has been explored, more will be written about the hugely complex, cut-throat and strange world of the Victorian local media. Alan Lee estimates that the number of newspapers and periodicals increased from 109 in 1853 to 230 by 1913. The number of provincial magazines trebled between the 1860s and the 1890s.¹⁴ In 1887, *The Journalist* noted that there were several long-lived provincial journals that rivalled the London press, such as Glasgow's *Baillie*, Liverpool's *Porcupine* (1860–1915) and Manchester's *City Lantern* (later the *City Jackdaw*) (1874–1884).¹⁵ Most lie undisturbed in provincial public libraries, undigitised, unscanned and unread. From my readings of the *Dart*, the *Owl*, the *Town Crier* and the *Gridiron* in Birmingham, I can attest that they come far closer to revealing the political and cultural heart of the Victorian age, the cities of provincial Britain, than any more studies of *Punch* or *The Times* can manage.¹⁶

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1 M. Hewitt, *The Dawn of the Cheap Press in Victorian Britain: the End of the 'Taxes on Knowledge', 1849–1869* (Bloomsbury, 2013)

2 There have been more recent scholarly

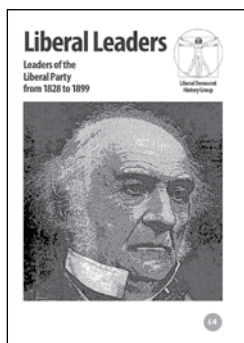
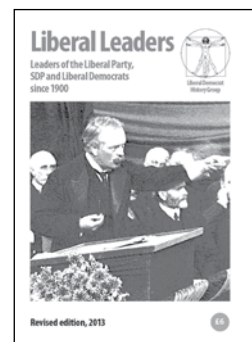
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Reviews

Same Sex Marriage

Lynne Featherstone, *Equal Ever After: The Fight for Same Sex Marriage – and How I Made It Happen* (Biteback Publishing, 2016)

Review by **Baroness Liz Barker**

BOOKS WRITTEN BY former ministers shortly after they leave office are often dissatisfying. The proximity of recent events and internal party score-settling often render them short on detail, or downright tedious. This is an exception, on both counts.

The subtitle tells you that this is Lynne's documentation of her personal crusade to get this Liberal Democrat policy through the coalition government in the Commons. It is not a detailed explanation of the campaign for LGBT equality, led for decades by Liberals and Liberal Democrats, which moved social and electoral opinion to the point where Tories would agree to do the right thing. It is not even a full account of the Liberal Democrat campaign for same-sex marriage. That remains a PhD thesis in the making. This is a snapshot of one Liberal Democrat minister's time in government, produced with alacrity in order to stop blatant attempts by the Tories to steal the glory.

The first question to be addressed is the most obvious: why did Lynne choose to make this her crusade? The answer is intriguing. Early in the coalition the Institute for Government put on an event for new ministers. At this event Michael Heseltine advised them to find an issue on which they wanted to make a difference, and to do so before the red boxes ground them down. Like any Liberal Democrat she has loads of LGBT friends whom she wanted to support, but she also realised that she was a Liberal Democrat minister with responsibility for equalities and there might not be many of those. So she seized the opportunity to do something big.

Lynne was helped considerably by *Pink News* acting as catalyst by questioning party leaders during the 2010 election about their commitment to same-sex marriage. Nick Clegg responded positively without hesitation. The Liberal Democrats were first to adopt this commitment as policy. We did so in our open, democratic fashion

and that is to our great credit. Stonewall, a charity founded to campaign for LGBT equality, actively opposed same-sex marriage until the Labour Party reluctantly changed its stance. Try as they do to hide it, that fact stands.

Same-sex marriage was not in the coalition agreement yet, remarkably, Lynne secured government support and time. Why? The answer lies not in this book but in the Liberal Democrat review of the 2015 election. From 2010 we had no money to do polls. The Tories did and must have known that supporting same-sex marriage would not only continue to detoxify their brand but help them win their target seats – ours. When the full and objective history of the coalition government is written it will show in detail how strategists like Cameron and Osborne used us as human shields to position the Tories as social liberals. In stark contrast even Lynne Featherstone, whose loyalty to Nick Clegg is evident throughout the book, cannot hide how ineffectual and unstrategic the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister was. Tuition fees, the AV referendum, boundary reviews ... The list of profound misjudgements which did serious damage to the party is depressingly long. But to learn from this book that on our strongest ground – social justice – the deputy prime minister was skewered by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, no Machiavelli even by CofE standards, is shocking.

The most interesting aspect of the book is the one which details the tortuous negotiations with faith organisations. Evangelical Christians, some members of the Anglican Church and some Sikhs condemned the legalisation of same-sex marriage as an assault on religious freedom. There were wild suggestions that churches would be taken to court if they refused to carry out same-sex marriages. The former Archbishop of Canterbury made some particularly distasteful remarks about Christians being persecuted by

proponents of same-sex marriage. The government was so anxious not to antagonise faith communities that the default setting on the bill was to concede as much as possible to them.

Previous legislation, also introduced by Lynne, had permitted civil partnerships to take place in religious premises when the religious organisation had freely decided that it wished to do so. It was assumed that this would suffice and that no religion would want to conduct same-sex marriages; and the Tories had agreed to same-sex marriage on the basis that it would go nowhere near the churches. However, liberal Jews, Unitarians and Quakers, argued strongly that marriage is different from civil partnership and that for them inclusion of same-sex marriage would be an acceptable profession of their faith. When the government's legal advisers made it clear that the consultation on same-sex marriage must include such a permissive provision, the Tories nearly pulled the plug on the whole thing.

They didn't because Lynne managed to convince Theresa May that religious organisations are largely exempt from obligations under the Equality Act. They could not be compelled to conduct same-sex marriages against their belief. Moreover the legislation which permitted civil partnerships in religious premises was not the thin end of a wedge, and no religious organisation had been forced into holding ceremonies of which it disapproved.

Lynne pays tribute to people within religious organisations who supported same-sex marriage as far as they could. It



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



Reviews

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.

William C. Lubenow, PhD, FRHistS, is Distinguished Professor of History, Stockton University, Galloway, New Jersey, USA and Visiting Fellow, Wolfson College, Cambridge. His books comprise: The Politics of Government Growth (1971), Parliamentary Politics and the Home Rule Crisis (1988); The Cambridge Apostles, 1820–1914 (1998); Liberal Intellectuals and Public Culture (2010); 'Only Connect': Learned Societies in Nineteenth-Century Britain (2015).

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)

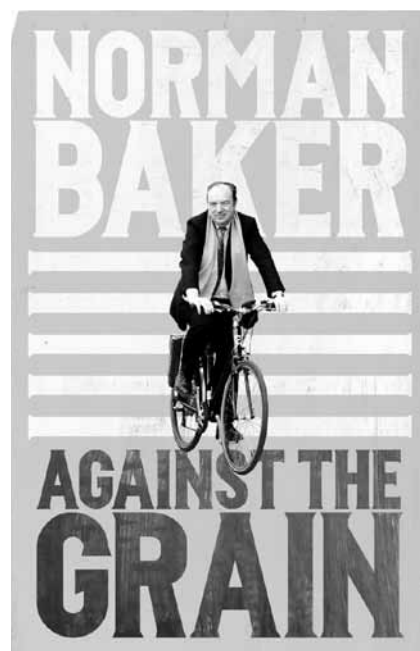
Review by **Mark Pack**

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



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other Lib Dem MPs are notably absent most of the time, even when he is talking about issues where his work closely overlapped with colleagues.

That absence reflects a theme which runs through both halves of the book, and the title too, namely Baker's instinctively individual approach. He gives the impression of being much happier ploughing his own furrow than working in a team with others, and the book certainly isn't an exercise in currying favour with former parliamentary colleagues.

From his battles to be allowed to ride a bicycle as a minister in place of a chauffeured car through to his views on how environmental campaigners got their approach wrong in the 2010–15 parliament (targeting the Lib Dems for not doing more rather than the Tories for doing almost nothing), the pages about being a minister are packed with insight.

As in the first half of the book, magnanimity to opponents is the norm, though notable exceptions are Theresa May's special advisors during coalition – far more so than Theresa May herself – and Tony Blair, especially for his record on Iraq.

That of course brings up Norman Baker's interest in conspiracy theories. Those who (like me) doubt his views on the death of David Kelly will not find anything in here to win them over to Baker's view, though his account of

other occasions of government cover-up and misdeeds are often rather more convincing. Certainly they do help explain his outlook – even if you view the time he was apparently followed and had a phone call cut off more likely a matter of bad luck and coincidence than of an attempt by dark forces to intimidate him.

Regardless of your view on that, there is much to commend in Baker's account of government – how coalition could or should really work behind the scenes and how to make canny use of media outlets liberals love to hate, such as the *Daily Mail*, to help achieve your

own political ends. Especially when up against as partisan and leak-prone opponents as Theresa May's special advisors.

For a politician as idiosyncratic as Norman Baker, the memoirs are rather packed with useful insights for both students of government (local and national) and for fellow Liberal Democrats.

Dr Mark Pack worked at party HQ from 2000 to 2009, heading up the party's online operation for the 2001 and 2005 general elections. He is author of 101 Ways To Win An Election and the party's election law manual, as well as co-author of the party's general election agents' handbook.

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A Liberal Democrat History Group evening meeting

'Jeremy is Innocent'

The Life and Times of Jeremy Thorpe and Marion Thorpe

Jeremy Thorpe led the Liberal Party over three general elections from 1967 to 1976. Immensely charismatic, he more than doubled the Liberal vote. Yet following a scandal, his career ended in a criminal court case. Why?

On the fiftieth anniversary of Thorpe's rise to the party leadership, **Ronald Porter** (obituarist for *The Independent* and a regular speaker at National Liberal Club events) will present an illustrated talk covering the life of Jeremy Thorpe and his second wife, Marion, who was married to Jeremy from 1973 until her death in 2014. Chair: **Michael Steed**.

7.00pm, Monday 6 February 2017 (following the History Group AGM at 6.30pm)
Lady Violet Room, National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2HE

A Liberal Democrat History Group fringe meeting

Who Rules?

Parliament, the People or the Prime Minister?

Parliamentary supremacy, hard won in the seventeenth century, is being challenged by the government response to Brexit, placing under question whether Parliament or the executive – or the popular will, expressed through a referendum – should have the ultimate say.

Discuss the Liberal approach to who rules with English Civil Wars historian **Professor Michael Braddick** and **Lord Martin Thomas**. Chair: **Baroness Lynne Featherstone**.

8.15pm, Friday 17 March 2017

Meeting Room 4, Novotel Hotel, Fishergate, York YO10 4FD (no conference pass necessary)
