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# Journal of Liberal HISTORY

## The Forbidden Ground

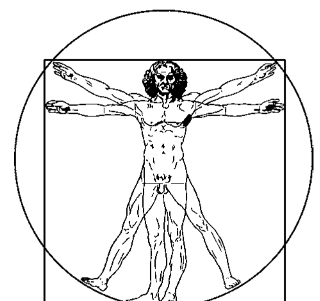
Tony Little
**Gladstone and the Contagious Diseases Acts**

J. Graham Jones
**Lord Geraint of Ponterwyd** Biography of Geraint Howells

Susanne Stoddart
**Domesticity and the New Liberalism in the Edwardian press**

Douglas Oliver
**Liberals in local government 1967–2017** Meeting report

Alistair J. Reid; Tudor Jones
**Liberalism** Reviews of books by Michael Freeden amd Edward Fawcett



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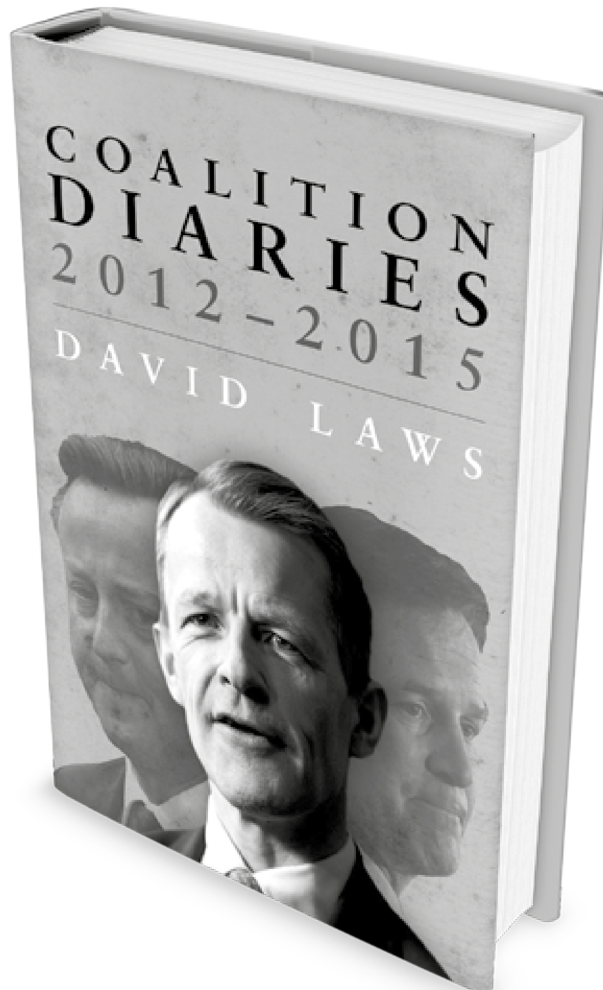


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# Issue 97: Winter 2017–18

## Liberal history news 4

Obituary of Bill Pitt; events at Gladstone's Library

## The Forbidden Ground 6

**Tony Little** examines Gladstone's role in the introduction and abolition of the Contagious Diseases Acts

## Lord Geraint of Ponterwyd 16

Biography of Geraint Howells; by **Dr J. Graham Jones**

## Domesticity and the New Liberalism in the Edwardian press 26

**Susanne Stoddart** analyses how the Liberal government's introduction of labour exchanges and maternity benefits was viewed in the press

## Liberal archives at Flintshire Record Office 36

by **Dr J. Graham Jones**

## Report 39

Liberals in local government 1967–2017, with Kath Pinnock, Tony Greaves, Richard Kemp, Sarah Bedford, Matt Cole and Ruth Dombey; report by **Douglas Oliver**

## Letters to the Editor 41

Nelia Penman (**Graem Peters**); Lloyd George and Nonconformity (**Kenneth O. Morgan**); French elections (**Ian Stuart**); The 2017 election (**Trevor Jones** and **Richard Pealling**)

## Reviews 42

Reekes, *Two Titans, One City*, reviewed by **Philip Davis**; Freeden, *Liberalism: A Very Short Introduction*, reviewed by **Alistair J. Reid**; Fawcett, *Liberalism: The Life of an Idea*, reviewed by **Tudor Jones**

Cover pictures: Josephine Butler and William Gladstone (see pp. 6–15)

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**Liberal Democrat History Group**

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

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

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# Liberal History News
# Winter 2017–18

**Bill Pitt, 17 July 1937 – 17 November 2017**

More personal obituaries of Bill Pitt are appearing in *The Guardian* and in *Liberator*. I am concerned here with the historical significance of the Croydon North West by-election, on 22 October 1981, and of Bill's role in it.

Bill was a long-serving, popular and convivial Liberal Party member who was a member of a number of party committees. For a time he edited the party's internal briefing paper, *Radical Bulletin*. He was the prospective Liberal candidate for his home constituency of Croydon North-West which was, technically, a marginal Conservative seat with the Labour Party almost but never quite succeeding in gaining it. By no stretch of the imagination could the Liberals have envisaged winning it in any 'normal' circumstances; indeed, Bill had lost his deposit at the previous, 1979, general election, though he polled 23 per cent at the May 1981 Greater London Council election in the same constituency – a fact rarely acknowledged.

The Alliance between the SDP and the Liberal Party was envisaged from the launch of the SDP in late March 1981, though it was not formally launched until the two parties' conferences that autumn. Late in May 1981 Sir Tom Williams resigned his Warrington seat in order to become a High Court judge. The Liberals had always struggled to save their deposit in Warrington so it was perceived a good seat in which the SDP could test the water. Shirley Williams hesitated and eventually said 'no', whereupon Roy Jenkins bravely stepped in and fought an excellent campaign, just failing to win by under 2,000 votes.

Robert Taylor, the Conservative MP for Croydon NW, died on 19 June 1981, just one month before the polling day in Warrington. The informal understanding between the Alliance parties was that they should take turns in fighting by-elections, hence Croydon was assumed to fall to the Liberals to fight. Immediately doubts were cast on this. First, Bill Pitt was thought to be a pedestrian candidate with a poor track record and incapable of winning. Second, Shirley Williams indicated her willingness to fight. Third, David Steel, as Liberal leader, indicated that he was in favour of Shirley being the candidate. Typically, he failed to consult his party but tried to bounce it into accepting Williams. Steel always neglected the party, which he did not rate as at all important,[1] and he paid the price on this occasion. The quarterly Liberal Party Council meeting in Abingdon passed a resolution overwhelmingly affirming the party's support for Bill Pitt as the by-election candidate. I met David Steel the Tuesday after the Abingdon meeting and asked him what he intended to do. He replied, 'I suppose I'll have to bow to democracy'! Had he chatted up the party immediately the seat became vacant and had he had a better relationship with it, he would have probably convinced it – and Bill Pitt – to give way. This incident rankled with Steel ever after.[2]

Bill duly continued as the candidate. Shirley Williams and the SDP loyally campaigned for him and he won a remarkable victory on 22 October. The point was well made that if the Alliance could win a by-election in a Conservative–Labour marginal seat with a non-celebrity candidate, it augured well for its electoral future.

Bill's tenure was short-lived, however, and he lost the seat in May 1983. He moved to Kent and fought, unsuccessfully, Thanet South in 1987 and 1992. He then, somewhat perversely, joined the Labour Party.

There was a sub-text to this whole episode. Some of us in the Liberal Party were determined to protect the party against the SDP. In 1981 and early 1982 there was a real danger that the SDP would dominate the Alliance and, through by-election successes, run away with it to the detriment of the whole status and future of the Liberal Party. Hard on the heels of the Roy Jenkins near-miss in Warrington, an SDP victory in Croydon would have provided a real springboard for other victories and the possible eclipse of the Liberal Party. I was always immensely relieved that sitting Labour MPs who defected to the SDP did not resign and fight by-elections, starting with David Owen and Bill Rodgers, to be followed by each of the twenty-six further defectors. In my view

Owen and Rodgers would have won and created a real momentum for most of the rest. This was not simply a narrow loyalty to the Liberal Party for the sake of it; my philosophical and policy reasons were set out in a booklet published at the time.[3]

There is also a postscript to Bill Pitt and the Croydon by-election. On 1 October 1981 the MP for Crosby, Graham Page, died. In his chapter in the 2010 book David Steel states that the Liberal candidate, Anthony Hill, 'graciously stood down' for Shirley to fight and win the by-election.[4] That is not the case. When the news of Page's death became public, the rolling SDP conference had reached Southport. I was talking to Anthony Hill, the prospective candidate for Crosby, in the bar adjacent to the conference hall when we heard Shirley Williams announce from the platform that she intended to fight the by-election. Anthony, a loyal Liberal of twenty years standing, was simply pushed aside, but felt that it would be futile to try to 'do a Croydon'.

*Michael Meadowcroft*

1 See Steel's autobiography, *Against Goliath* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989), p. 135.
2 See his chapter in *Making the Difference – Essays in honour of Shirley Williams*, ed. Andrew Duff (Biteback, 2010), p. 69.
3 *Social Democracy – Barrier or Bridge?* (Liberator Publications, 1981) (Available as a pdf via http://www.bramley.demon.co.uk/liberal.html).
4 *Making the Difference – Essays in honour of Shirley Williams*, p. 69.

## Gladstone's Library

Gladstone's Library is Britain's only Prime Ministerial library and was founded by William Gladstone in 1896, just before his death in 1898. The library now holds 150,000 printed items – 32,000 of which belonged to Gladstone himself, with nearly 10,000 containing his annotations. Situated in the Welsh village of Hawarden, where Gladstone lived for some forty-five years, Gladstone's Library is a refuge for liberal values which, under the current climate, feel somewhat under attack.

The Library offers a range of courses and events every year. At the heart of the programme is history and current affairs, theology, and nineteenth-century literary culture – the areas that William Gladstone's collection of books and journals itself centres around. The 2018 programme offers a variety of evening talks, residential courses and literary festivals galore.

Here is a taste of the upcoming events for which tickets are still available:

- Brexit, Trump and the Common Good on Friday 26th to Saturday 27th October 2018, led by Michael Northcott
- Understanding Rare Books on Monday 19th February 2018, led by librarian Gary Butler
- The Gladstone Umbrella on Friday 13th – Sunday 15th July 2018
- Gladfest: Summer Literature Festival on Friday 7th – Sunday 9th September 2018
- Understanding Islam on Saturday 22nd – Sunday 23rd September 2018 led by Zia Chaudhry
- Blue Sky God: The Evolution of Science and Christianity on Friday 17th – Saturday 18th 2018 led by Don MacGregor

These are just some of the events and courses taking place at Gladstone's Library in the coming year. The full events programme, as well as more information about the library, can be found on the Gladstone's Library website: www.gladstoneslibrary.org.

## 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**.

### January

*3 January 1802*: Birth of Charles Pelham Villiers, Whig/Liberal/Liberal Unionist MP for Wolverhampton 1835-85 and Wolverhampton South 1885–98. A strong and early advocate of free trade, Villiers initiated debates on the abolition of the Corn Laws before Richard Cobden and John Bright were elected to parliament. *The Times* observed in 1853 that: 'it was Mr Charles Villiers who practically originated the Free Trade Movement'. Villiers achieved ministerial office under Lord Aberdeen and served in the cabinets of Palmerston and Russell as President of the Poor Law Board. He left the Liberal Party over Irish Home Rule and joined the Liberal Unionists. He was Father of the House from 1890 and when he died, aged 96, in 1898 he was still an MP and the last MP to have served during the reign of King William IV.

### February

*26 February 1987*: Rosie Barnes wins the Greenwich by-election for the SDP/Liberal Alliance. The by-election was caused by the death of the sitting Labour MP Guy Barnett. Labour had held the constituency since 1945, although their majorities had been declining and at the previous general election in 1983 Barnett had only been 1,211 votes ahead of the Conservatives. Rosie Barnes, the SDP candidate, had strong links with the local area and her husband, who was also her election agent, was a local councillor. The Alliance targeted the Tory vote, which collapsed, and Barnes was elected with a majority of 6,611. She held the seat at the general election four months later but lost it to Labour in 1992.

### March

*13 March 1791*: Re-print and first large-scale publication of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*. Paine's work asserts that when a government does not guarantee people their personal natural rights, a political revolution is permissible. Paine's book is inspired by the continuing French Revolution and was a response to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, which was more sceptical about rapid social upheaval and its consequences.

**Social policy**

Tony Little examines Gladstone's role in the introduction and abolition of the Contagious Diseases Acts

# The Forbidd
# Gladstone and the Con

Despite their quiet passage, the Contagious Diseases Acts proved to be some of the most controversial of Victorian laws and the campaign against them is viewed as a pioneering feminist crusade.

After a Commons debate on military spending in May 1864, Sir John Trelawny, the Radical MP, recorded in his diary, 'I took occasion to mention the necessity of providing measures to protect soldiers near large towns from some contagious diseases & several members confirmed my advice'.[1] Three weeks later the government chief whip[2] persuaded Trelawny to delay a critical motion for a week to allow the navy minister[3] 'to introduce 2 bills he has prepared & get them read a second time.' Trelawney assured him that he 'was only concerned to see government move in the matter'.[4] On 18 July 1864 he concluded,

> A morning sitting, whereat passed in committee the Contagious Diseases Bill. Ayrton made a long & excellent speech in which he stated numerous objections to the scheme. The committee being in a singular practical state of mind & determined to abate a nuisance if its abatement were possible, went through all the clauses without a division.[5]

Two days later, the bill received the royal assent.

The Contagious Diseases Act applied in eight English garrison towns, mostly in the south, and three in Ireland. A police inspector could bring a woman before a magistrate as a common prostitute, obliging her to be medically examined. If she suffered from a venereal disease she could be detained in a 'lock' hospital for up to three months. The woman could avoid a court appearance by voluntarily submitting to examination. When the Act was renewed in 1866, hospital detention was increased to six months with moral and religious education provided and Windsor was added to the specified towns. The medical examination could be repeated at regular intervals for up to year. A further Act, in 1869, added six further towns, and raised the maximum detention to nine months.[6] A number of colonies adopted similar arrangements but Scotland had its own regime.

Despite their quiet passage, the Contagious Diseases Acts proved to be some of the most controversial of Victorian laws and the campaign against them is viewed as a pioneering feminist crusade. Gladstone is not usually associated with the Contagious Diseases Acts. But he was Chancellor of the Exchequer in Palmerston's government which passed the initial legislation. When Russell's government passed the second Act, he was Chancellor and Leader of the House. By the final Act, he was Prime Minister. Gladstone was an informed participant in policy formation. The campaign against the Acts was mainly a quarrel among Liberals, commanded, on both sides, by Liberals; the repealers better organised, their opponents better connected. No more than 10.7 per cent of Conservative MPs supported repeal in any division.[7] Consequently, it was Gladstone's ministries that felt the impact of the campaigns primarily through the activities of their own supporters.

Richard Shannon titled the second volume of his Gladstone biography *Heroic Minister*[8] and heroic leadership is the image that fairly describes Gladstone's battles for constitutional and fiscal reform. But politics is, often, more concerned with damage limitation than famous victories. This article re-examines the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts as an exercise in timid if not cowardly government. How did Gladstone

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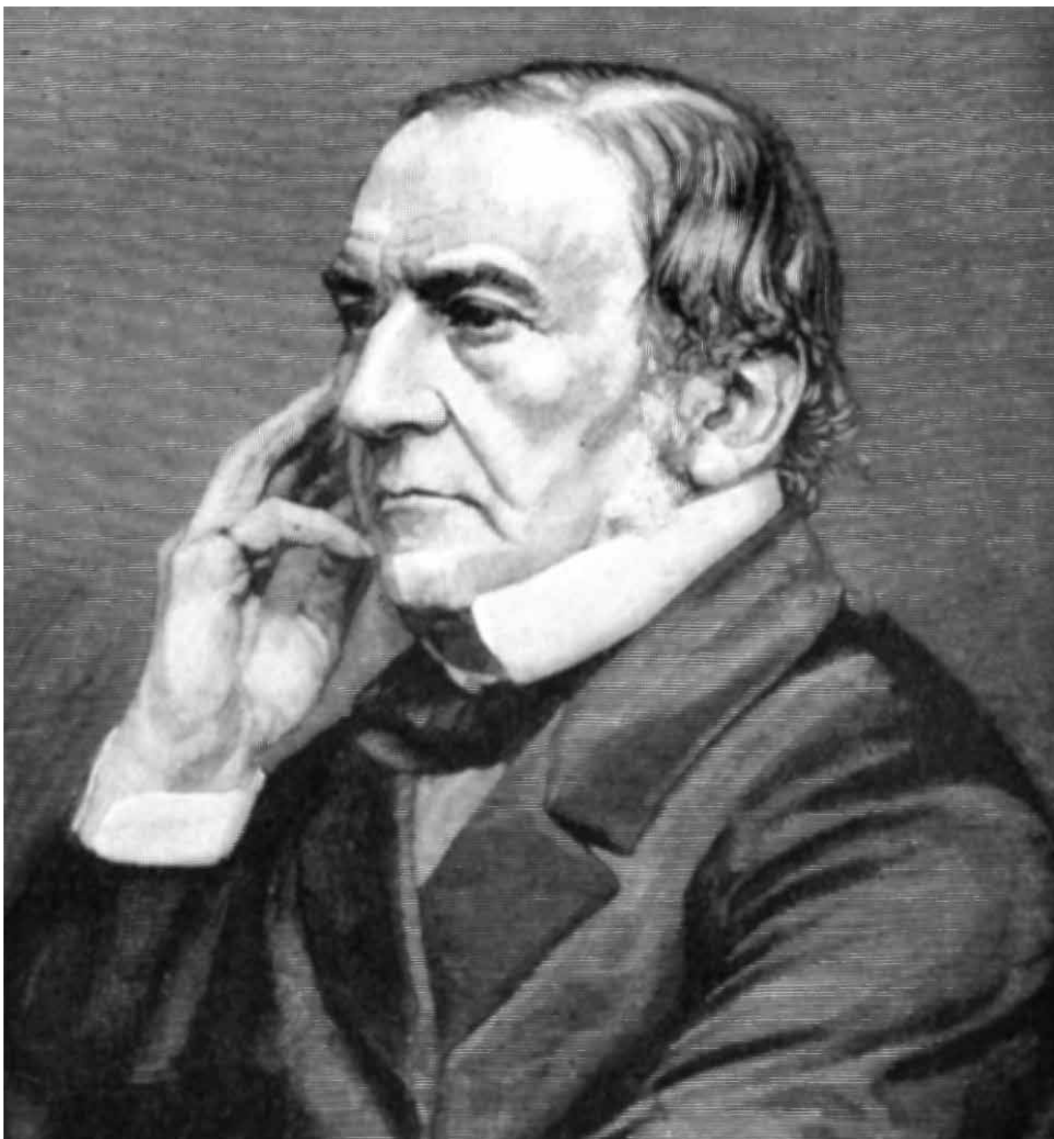

William Ewart Gladstone (1809–98) in 1868

manage his government to meet the conflicting demands of the repealers and of the medical establishment who wished to extend the legislation?

## The mischief may be reduced

With some of his university friends, Gladstone had from the mid-1840s undertaken to perform 'some regular work of charity'. Gradually this developed into rescuing of prostitutes in conjunction with the House of Mercy at Clewer. His wife was fully associated with this work but was probably unaware of his anxiety about the temptations of the work that he confided to his diaries.[9] Private concern about a moral evil became a public responsibility after the Crimean War.

Following the poor performance of the army in Crimea, in 1857, a Royal Commission on the Health of the Army 'noted the high level of venereal disease among certain troops'.[10] The commission collected statistics, discovering that roughly one-third of army sick cases were venereal, though for the navy it was only one in eleven.[11] At the prodding of Florence Nightingale, a departmental committee met, in 1862, and recommended the establishment of specialist hospitals, improved sanitary conditions and 'innocent' occupations to relieve the tedium of life in barracks; but Sir John Liddell, director general of the naval medical department, advocated a regulatory system to 'arrest disease at its source'.[12]

Gladstone participated from the beginning. He disclosed his concerns about prostitution during the 1857 divorce law debates, 'I am afraid, as respects the gross evils of prostitution, that there is hardly any country in the world where they prevail to a greater extent than in our own'.[13] He was similarly realistic about military behaviour, doubting 'the possibility of making a standing army a moral institution'.[14]

Responding to Miss Nightingale's Committee, Gladstone wrote, in a minute of 18 February 1862:

> … we in this country multiply three or fourfold a frightful evil among servants of the State whom we induce and invite to place themselves in that class, while we know that by adoption of means which are elsewhere adopted under the direct authority of the Crown, the mischief may be reduced within limits comparatively moderate.

He suggested a parliamentary committee of the 'weightiest and most sensible men' meeting 'with closed doors' to consider 'a measure providing that in the principal garrisons and arsenals of the United Kingdom these women should be examined and sent into hospital until cure'. He added that 'soldiers and seamen having the disease should be subject to a special stoppage to meet the expense of their treatment'.[15]

When two back benchers opposed the 1866 bill, regretting the lack of provision for reclaiming the 'unhappy creatures', as leader of the House, Gladstone cut short the debate, proposing they leave the details for the committee stage since the measure merely renewed the existing Act.[16] With the additional clauses for the moral and religious education, the bill quickly passed its remaining stages.

**With some of his university friends, Gladstone had from the mid-1840s undertaken to perform 'some regular work of charity'. Gradually this developed into rescuing of prostitutes in conjunction with the House of Mercy at Clewer.**

Not satisfied, advocates of regulation founded an Association for Promoting the Extension of the Contagious Diseases Act of 1866 to the Civil Population, backed by the *Lancet* and the Harveian Medical Society, the vice-chancellors of Oxford and Cambridge and thirty MPs.[17] 'The Contagious Diseases Act should be extended to the civil population', William Acton argued, 'for by means of its machinery alone can we discover and detain till cured the women afflicted with syphilitic diseases, and in no other way that has occurred to me can the supervision necessary for enabling us to work a gradual improvement in their lives be obtained.'[18]

Gladstone's first government extended regulation a final time despite emerging opposition to the legislation. In 1868, Dr John Simon, the medical officer of the Privy Council advised against extension. The Rescue Society presented *A Memorandum of Objections* to the home secretary, circulating copies to members of both Houses of Parliament, though their secretary feared that 'very little effect was produced. The utmost apathy prevailed; people would not believe our words and would not stir.'[19] On 25 July 1868 Gladstone read Senior on Ireland and Tracts on Contagious Diseases.[20] He did not record his reaction.

When questioned on the Acts, in February 1869, Gladstone responded cautiously 'that Government had under their consideration the course to be taken with respect to that Act'.[21] 'Contagious Diseases Act Extension' was the eleventh item on the cabinet agenda for Saturday 24 April and, in May, they bought further time by appointing a select committee to consider the Acts.[22] This produced the 1869 statute, which received the Royal Assent in August.

## The path of evil made more easy

Opposition now began to mobilise. After the 1869 Social Science Congress, Dr Charles Bell Taylor and Dr Charles Worth launched the National Anti-Contagious Diseases Acts Association.[23] The movement took flight at the end of 1869 when the *Daily News* published a letter from 126 women summarising liberal, moral, feminist and utilitarian objections to the regulations. The women claimed that:

- The Acts 'remove every guarantee of personal security which the law has established and held sacred, and put their reputation, their freedom, and their persons absolutely in the power of the police.'
- By registering and inspecting prostitutes 'the path of evil is made more easy to our sons'.

'Moral restraint is withdrawn the moment the State recognises and provides convenience for the practice of a vice.'

- 'It is unjust to punish the sex who are the victims of a vice, and leave unpunished the sex who are the main cause both of the vice and its dreaded consequences.' 'We consider the liability to arrest, forced surgical examination, and where this is resisted, imprisonment with hard labour, to which these Acts subject women, are punishments of the most degrading kind.'
- 'The advocates of the system have utterly failed to show, by statistics or otherwise, that these regulations have in any case, after several years' trial, and when applied to one sex only, diminished disease, reclaimed the fallen, or improved the general morality of the country.'

Florence Nightingale, Harriet Martineau, Elisabeth Wolstenholme and Josephine Butler were the most prominent signatories. Quakers such as Priscilla McLaren, Ursula Bright and Mary Priestman, all related to John Bright, were well represented. Many signatories had previously petitioned for the women's right to vote. The letter announced the formation of a Ladies' National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act (LNA) with Josephine Butler as secretary and Ursula Bright as treasurer.[24]

### We must move in the matter

Josephine Butler, charismatic, resolute, though physically frail, was the 41-year-old daughter of John Grey, Earl Grey's cousin and an anti-slavery campaigner. In 1852 she married George Butler (1819–1890) an Anglican clergyman and Oxford examiner. Reacting against the sexual double standards of the university's masculine culture, Josephine began to rescue 'fallen women'.[25] Josephine's health forced the Butlers to move, initially to Cheltenham and, then, after her daughter's tragic accidental death, to Liverpool where Josephine intensified her rescue work, establishing a small factory to provide alternative employment. Josephine's feminism was aroused by the inadequate economic opportunities for poorer women and the gender barriers to university education. She signed the 1866 women's suffrage petition and was president of the North of England Council for Promoting Higher Education for Women.

Mrs Butler hesitated to act as secretary to the new committee. Afraid of damaging her husband's career, she wrote for his permission. She reported: 'we agreed together that we must move in the matter, and that an appeal must be made to the people'.[26]

In her first year Mrs Butler addressed ninety-nine public meetings and published '*An Appeal to The People of England*', the first of many pamphlets. Repeal groups were quickly formed in most cities. The campaigners, a coalition of 'trade unionists, parliamentary and intellectual radicals and outraged Nonconformists',[27] promoted mass meetings, signed petitions, lobbied parliament and subverted the Acts in naval towns.[28] Friendly MPs orchestrated deputations to ministers, repeal bills and motions to deny funding for the Acts.

**'It is unjust to punish the sex who are the victims of a vice, and leave unpunished the sex who are the main cause both of the vice and its dreaded consequences.'**

Gladstone, inadvertently, contributed to the repealers' first triumph. On 18 August 1869, he explained to Granville his plans for a ministerial reshuffle including the 'War Department' which Cardwell felt 'ought to be more fully represented in the House of Commons … The way to do this would be I believe to make Storks a political officer.'[29] Cardwell was about to introduce a series of major reforms to the army in response to Prussian victories in 1866 and reinforced by the defeat of France in 1870. Major General Sir Henry Storks, Gladstone's successor as high commissioner of the Ionian Islands, had been governor of Malta[30] where he enforced contagious diseases regulations with 'severe efficiency'.[31] Storks was proposed for a spring 1870 by-election at Newark. At the nomination, 'about 3,000 persons were present', according to *The Times*, 'and with the exception of a little fighting the crowd was generally good-tempered. Sir Henry Storks retired from the contest, his support of the Contagious Diseases Act having damaged his popularity, and rendered his success impossible.'[32]

Capitalising on their victory, William Fowler, Quaker and Liberal MP for Cambridge tabled a bill to rescind the Acts. Before the debate, repealers bombarded parliament with petitions totalling 270,000 signatures and one MP yearned for an end of 'that stream of offensive literature which has flooded our houses for several months past.'[33] Worried, the government bought time. At cabinet on 21 May, Gladstone noted 'Commission in lieu of Mr Fowler's Bill'.[34] Fowler introduced his bill, on 24 May, beneath prudishly cleared public galleries.[35] But after just two more speakers, the adjournment was moved, almost preventing the government announcing its royal commission. This sparked further debate requiring Gladstone to reassure MPs that the commission would consider the 'the moral aspect of the question'.[36]

### Due allowances for executive difficulties are refused

Although the royal commission provided respite, the government remained under pressure. In November, Josephine Butler sabotaged an attempt to elect Storks at Colchester; a campaign made infamous by the mob which attacked her hotel. 'Forming the Commission of right materials', caused delay and in December Gladstone complained to Bruce 'But when popular feeling is excited, due allowances for executive difficulties are refused & I am fearful lest attempts should be made, if the tide continues to rise, to discredit the Commission altogether.'[37]

Although the LNA regarded the commission as a trap, opponents of the legislation were encouraged to suggest questions and witnesses. It finally began taking evidence in January 1871. The eighty-three witnesses included the police, doctors and military men who implemented the Acts, representatives from rescue missions, John Stuart Mill and Josephine Butler, pitching administrative expertise against moral outrage. Despite feeling like 'Paul before Nero, very weak and lonely',[38] Mrs Butler stated her position unequivocally: 'We know that to protect vice in men is not according to the Word of God … We shall never rest until this system is banished from our shores'.[39] Mill treated the commission to a philosophical discussion.

The royal commission disappointed any hopes of creating consensus. In May, Gladstone refused to meet a deputation before it reported but, finally, on 17 July 1871, announcing the imminent publication, Bruce revealed that:

> Two-thirds of the Members were in favour of qualified compulsory application of the Acts, one-third – or rather, seven – were in favour of strengthening rather than weakening the Acts; six were in favour of repealing all compulsory legislation, and all were in favour of further legislation, with a view of modifying the law to make it applicable to the whole country.[40]

It was too late in the session, he concluded, for the government to introduce a bill. The report had been on the cabinet agenda for 1 and 5 July 1871 but postponed. When it was finally considered on 8 July, Gladstone noted 'Contagious Diseases Act report: signed by 23. Allowances(?) of dissent. In the cabinet – for now repealing the later acts & revising the Act of (18)64 – no one.'[41] The cabinet were unconvinced by the commission's main recommendation.

While at Hatfield the following weekend, Gladstone wrote a memorandum exploring alternative measures such as strengthening the current 'repressive' but effective law on brothels in preference to the Contagious Diseases Act or, ever the economical chancellor, deducting pay from soldiers or sailors suffering venereal disease or even adopting 'what I understand to be the French system, namely that the vice shall be self-supporting: that the cost of dealing with those who have ill fortune in its practice shall be borne by the mass of those who practice it.'[42]

Importantly, in the same memo, he conceded the moral case: 'The Acts do not merely fail to corroborate or enforce the existing law: they operate against it; as they tend to establish a class of approved brothels, subsisting under a kind of concordat with public authority, hardly open to any possibility of being put down, and likely to grow, as the French brothels tend to grow, into a vested interest.'[43] Over the summer he continued to reflect on the Acts, reading

It appears from the Handbills issued by MR. CHILDERS this morning, that

HE IS AFRAID TO MEET US,

And answer our questions on the Contagious Diseases Acts.

THEREFORE

MRS. BUTLER

REQUESTS THE

WOMEN OF PONTEFRACT

TO MEET HER AT THE

LARGE ROOM, IN SOUTHGATE,

(USED BY MR. JOHNSON AS A SPINNING ROOM),

THIS EVENING AT SEVEN O'CLOCK.

MRS. BUTLER will shew that the Bill of which MR. CHILDERS says he is now a supporter, while pretending to Repeal the "Contagious Diseases Acts" is an extension of their principle to the whole country.

MRS. BUTLER will shew that MR. CHILDERS belongs to a Government which has extended these Acts not only to this Country but to the Colonies and Dependencies of the British Empire.

JOSEPHINE E. BUTLER, Hon. Sec. of the Ladies' National Association.

From top:
'Voluntary' inspection under the Contagious Disease Acts
Josephine Butler (1828–1906)
Poster advertising a meeting to be addressed by Josephine Butler, Pontefract, 1872

Josephine Butler's address to the LNA, *Sursum Corda*.[44]

Towards the end of September, Gladstone received a letter from Henry Manning, the Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, seeking a discussion on 'two social not political subjects' – education and the Contagious Diseases Act where Manning was 'on broad social, and ethical grounds very decidedly against the Act'. In his response from Balmoral, Gladstone concedes the feminist case against the acts:

> … with regard to the Cont[agious] Di[seases] Act, you will certainly have no adverse prejudices on my part. They exist, & the exact mode & time of dealing with them are matters of considerat[io]n. But I cannot say I regard them with much favour at any point. In part, I hate and nothing less, this new and flagrant use of unequal dealing as between men and women. Let this be very private. I write to you as an old friend.'[45]

## A most signal example of bigotry

The cabinet contemplated the 'exact mode & time of dealing' with the commission report the following month. On 27 October, Bruce was asked to propose a plan. At this stage 'Cabinet nearly all prepared to give up all compulsory exam[inatio]n'. A week later they considered 'provisions to be made if and when Compulsory Examination given up. Proposed and discussed.' Just before Christmas, a decision was reached: 'Ripon [Lord President of the Council] proposed to maintain the Acts. Determined: to repeal the Acts. New provisions considered.'

Following the cabinet meeting of 30 January 1872, Gladstone advised the chief whip that Bruce would introduce a bill on 13 February, four days after the secret ballot bill, but it was not until the beginning of February 'that Provision as to detention (was) considered' and 'Disposed of.'[46]

The bill contained Gladstone's 'repressive' elements but not his plan to make sin pay its costs. It strengthened the law against solicitation, provided penalties for keeping 'bawdy houses', raised the age of consent to 14 and toughened the law on procuring and assault. It proposed ending compulsory examination, but extending enforced hospital detention across the country.[47]

Bruce argued the choice lay between repealers, 'who, however unreasonable their opposition might have been, were backed by many persons of calm and serious habits of thought' or 'by far the largest part of the medical, naval, and military profession'. Destroying any possibility of consensus he then characterised repeal campaigners as 'persons entitled to little belief', who were 'impugning the conduct of those' administering the Acts, making 'wild and random charges', adding 'that the agitation was due mainly to a monstrous system of perversion and exaggeration'.[48]

MPs among the repealers argued that 'the good that was in the bill must be secured' and used as a 'lever for obtaining still more'.[49] However, Bruce's outburst and the residual detention powers led Mrs Butler to the opposite conclusion. 'Satan might sometimes deceive us, but not when he hid his cloven hoof so clumsily',[50] 'I and my ladies will not in any way countenance Bruce's Bill'.[51] Although initially in the minority, Mrs Butler's intransigence eventually held sway. On the opposing side, 'over 2000 doctors … signed a memorial in favour of the acts now in force.'[52] A deputation of three peers and 147 MPs of both parties, led by Trelawny, encouraged Bruce to preserve the Acts.[53]

When, in July, Gladstone abandoned the bill, there was little surprise but he had lost the best chance of a quick solution. Gladstone gave his verdict when he sought Bright's help for Charles Lyttleton in the 1874 general election: 'I do not believe him to be an Advocate of the Act: but the party opposed to them refused our Bill of 1871(or 2) which gave them nearly all they asked but which withheld a little *modicum*. It was a most signal example of bigotry on their part'.[54]

## She must win her way

When approached by yet another deputation in the late autumn of 1872, the baffled cabinet considered reintroducing their bill but as Gladstone noted 'Sub(ject) postponed – we are not ready to decide the matter yet – Mr Bruce to give a dilatory answer to his deputation on Thursday'.[55] Just before Christmas, Gladstone headed north for the prize-giving at Liverpool College, where George Butler was Head, and where he met Mrs Butler, possibly, for the first time.[56]

At the time, Gladstone recorded 'At 12.15 I delivered my Address which lasted an hour as I meant. The prizes, divers speeches and the luncheon afterwards. 2,700 persons present.'[57] Since the Tory governors of the school would not provide lunch for the Gladstones, the Butlers obliged. Josephine sought value for their money. As Gladstone later recalled, 'she through Mr Stansfeld, then my colleague, asked leave to converse with me on the Acts. I begged to be excused. But at the entertainment which followed the function, I sat by her for the best part of two hours, and passed the bulk of the time in conversation with her. She never came near the forbidden ground'.[58] Afterwards he noted in his diary: 'But I am not sure that ever during my life I was so impressed, in a single conversation, with the fine mind, and the noble, pure, and lofty character of a woman. She seemed to me one who wherever she goes, must win her way and carry all before her.'[59]

Her recollection was that 'she led him as close as she possibly could', 'but got no encouragement from Gladstone to go further' and so she 'seized

**With what must have been considerable restraint, Gladstone recorded in his diary for 10 May 1874, 'Read Mrs Butler's remarkable pamphlet.' *Some Thoughts on the Present Aspect of the Crusade Against the State Regulation of Vice* powerfully urged Christians to organise against the Acts in every constituency.**

upon related subjects, such as marriage, domestic life … Christ's law of purity as binding on all.' 'He seemed struck, and took fire, as it were when I spoke. Indeed he would have become so absorbed, that the guests, I saw, were wondering, and for decency's sake I twice turned the other way and talked to the Tory mayor on my other side.' At the end of the meal, Gladstone proposed a toast thanking the Butlers. Grabbing the opportunity, George Butler responded 'that it was not merely as his wife but as his companion in efforts for social reform that he felt thankful & proud to be thus publicly mentioned together with' Josephine by the premier. The stunned silence of the governors was broken by Gladstone's shouted 'hear, hear'.[60]

### A silent vote

The failure of Bruce's bill spurred on the repeal campaign. In 1873 over 250 public meetings were held.[61] Growing Liberal divisions were exposed when, in May, Fowler tabled another bill to overturn the Acts. On 17 May, Gladstone recorded that the cabinet would treat repeal as an open question. More Liberal MPs voted for repeal than against,[62] but Fowler lost 130 to 253 overall. [63] Three cabinet ministers voted for repeal, five voted to retain the acts, including Bruce, Cardwell, at the War Office, and Goschen, at the Admiralty, three abstained including Gladstone.[64]

With what must have been considerable restraint, Gladstone recorded in his diary for 10 May 1874, 'Read Mrs Butler's remarkable pamphlet.'[65] *Some Thoughts on the Present Aspect of the Crusade Against the State Regulation of Vice* powerfully urged Christians to organise against the Acts in every constituency, but its opening paragraph proclaimed:

> A retrospect of the last four years' work, and its effect upon the late general election, cannot fail to be encouraging. In spite of the suddenness of the dissolution, which took us all by surprise, and gave us no time to increase or organize our agencies, our question played a much more prominent part in that general election than most of us had anticipated or dared to hope.[66]

The election had produced the first Conservative majority since 1846, put Disraeli into power and Gladstone onto the backbenches. Mrs Butler's later *Reminiscences* were more downbeat: 'The year 1874 was a period of great depression and discouragement for our cause … Our faithful parliamentary leader, Mr W Fowler, lost his seat in the General election … Several of our best friends in the House also failed to secure their return to Parliament.'[67] With repeal indefinitely postponed, Mrs Butler took her campaign to the continent, the heart of state regulated prostitution.

Opinion in the new House was tested in 1875 when Harcourt Johnstone, an undistinguished Liberal, divided the House on a repeal bill. The number of opponents had increased to 310 but repealers had dropped only two to 128. Disraeli's opposition confirmed that little could be expected from the Conservatives. The Liberal ex-Service ministers Hartington and Goschen continued to support regulation, but Childers joined former ministerial colleagues Stansfeld, Bright and Forster in opposition. In voting against the acts, Gladstone and his eldest son signalled their public conversion, boosting repeal morale.[68]

### Malsano

Gladstone's next, inadvertent, contribution to abolition came when he replaced Stansfeld, as a representative Radical in his 1880 government, with Chamberlain. That omission freed Stansfeld to apply his ministerial skills to leading the parliamentary repeal campaign, a role labelled by the *Sheffield Independent* as 'a hobby too nasty to be touched'.[69]

Although the new Liberal government avoided fresh initiatives, its supporters would not permit the debate to remain unresolved. Consequently, in May 1880, Gladstone reappointed a Contagious Diseases select committee, whose government nominee stalled its report until the summer of 1882, giving the administration the pretext not to debate Stansfeld's private member's bill or to produce its own measure that session. Nevertheless, Stansfeld took the opportunity to remind Gladstone and Childers of their support in 1875: 'I interpret the votes given by the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for War as nothing else than an admission that "we cannot stand where we are".' Responding for the government, Childers preserved their flexibility 'to decide as we may think fit, after considering that Report and the evidence'.[70] Though when Gladstone considered the issue in January 1883, he cryptically noted 'Conclave on Contagious Diseases Act: Malsano' – 'in an unhealthy state'.[71]

Stansfeld concluded that the select committee had undermined the medical case for the Acts and thus 'the neck of this iniquity is broken' and that 'it is comparatively child's play to deal with the moral and religious evidence, because they cannot possibly fight us upon that ground'. Simultaneously, Hartington was writing to Lord Ripon that the report 'evidently points to a future extension in the United Kingdom of the Acts in the direction of increased protection of the civil population …'.[72]

A resolution that 'this House disapproves of the compulsory examination of women under the Contagious Diseases Acts', was crowded out in February 1883 by the Kilmainham Treaty but was submitted again by Stansfeld in April. Lord Derby captured the flavour of the cabinet's reaction:

> Talk of the C.D. Acts, which are to be an open question: Chamberlain violent against them,

> Gladstone doubtful, Harcourt strongly for. Comic confusion caused by Carlingford being suddenly appealed to: he had not been listening, thought the C.D. Acts relating to animals were concerned, & began to talk about slaughtering at the port of landing, & importation being forbidden. A general laugh followed, which I noticed left the Premier very grave.[73]

Gladstone's own diary was rather more laconic: '2 pm Cabinet: 1. Contagious Diseases – Open Question? Yes. R. Grosvenor to make this known. Wait issue of debate for further consideration. Minimise over intervention in the debate.'[74]

The repealers stepped up their lobbying. On 17 April, Derby noted that:

> At 3.00 Stansfeld brought with him a deputation on the Contagious Diseases Acts, which swelled from a small number to more than 100: Sir W Lawson, Smith, the new member for Liverpool, Dean Butler, & other known names being among them … Stansfeld told me privately that he knew he would be beaten in the House, but he thought a strong agitation would spring up in the country.[75]

On 20 April, as Josephine Butler reported to her sister:

> It was a long debate, the tone of the speeches both for and against, was remarkably purified and with one exception they were altogether on a higher plane than in former debates. Many of us ladies sat through the whole evening till after midnight; then came the division … When Mr. Cavendish Bentinck was speaking against us I noticed an expression of pain on Mr. Gladstone's face. He seemed to be pretending to read a letter, but at last passed his hand over his eyes and left the House. He returned before Mr. Stansfeld made his noble speech, to which he listened attentively.[76]

Gladstone attended parts of the debate but left at half past eleven, having 'paired for Mr Stansfeld'.[77] Stansfeld's prediction proved wrong. His resolution was carried by 184 to 112.

The resolution created rather than solved problems because, as Hartington confirmed in the debate, its passing did not change the law. The cabinet needed to find a fix. On Saturday 21 April, Gladstone noted, 'Agreed we must move. H[artington]n to ans[wer] on Monday that we have taken res[olution] into imm[ediate] cons[ideration] & will in due time announce result'. A week later the cabinet met again. 'Hartington mentioned the conclusions as to Contagious Diseases Act. They were approved: Metropol[itan] Police withdrawn.'[78] The Acts were no longer enforced but the hospitals continued treatment.

Inevitably, the statutes' defenders reacted strongly, obliging Gladstone to explain that the government considered the Acts discretionary and that, following Stansfeld's resolution, it believed the Commons would refuse to pay for enforcement.[79] Hartington introduced a bill abolishing compulsory inspection but preserving powers for detaining infected prostitutes. Once again this aroused suspicions among repealers and like Bruce's bill it was withdrawn. Gladstone's second government fell in 1885 with the Acts still in limbo but with the climate irrevocably changed by Stansfeld's resolution and W. T. Stead's sensational exposure of trafficking in children headlined 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon'.[80]

The Contagious Diseases Acts died as quietly as they were born, a by-product of the 1886 home rule crisis. On 12 March 1886, the new Secretary of State for War, Campbell Bannerman, urged colleagues that 'In the interests of the Health of the Army and the moral conditions of the garrison towns, it is most desirable that the Acts should be repealed.'[81] On 16 March, Stansfeld introduced a repeal resolution. Gladstone fended off a Conservative amendment obliging the government to provide hospitals by defending the existing permissive regime. [82] His majority of 114 cleared the way for a new bill which received the Royal Assent on 16 April. In Britain, the Acts were no more.

Throughout the debates, the two sides kept up a contradictory barrage of statistics on the effectiveness of the Acts and neither conceded the case. Infection rates declined in both regulated and non-regulated areas but wider improvements in hygiene, changing conditions of military service and alternative employment opportunities for women complicate any explanation. More importantly, the medical profession was overconfident about the effectiveness of available treatments. The primary focus was on syphilis but the infectiousness of its secondary stage was not fully recognised. The severity of gonorrhoea was underestimated. The bacterium causing syphilis was not identified until 1905 and the first proven cure, the arsenic-based Salvarsan, was discovered in 1910. Penicillin, an effective antibiotic discovered by Fleming in 1928, was not widely utilised until the Second World War.

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### Kicked into it?

When Stansfeld spoke to his resolution on 16 March, he complained, '17 weary years had passed, in which many hundreds of persons, both men and women, had spent their time, some their lives, and some had broken their hearts, in the endeavour to get these Acts repealed'.[83] An alternative perspective is that under assault from well-organised campaigners, from a substantial minority within their own party and with their own ranks divided, Gladstone and his governments had delayed for seventeen years the overthrow of a policy which, their experts believed,

**In his memoir of his grandmother, A. S. G. Butler suggests that Josephine believed 'that Gladstone could never see a question rightly until he was *kicked* into it.' This tells more about Mrs Butler's uncompromising persistence than Gladstone.**

preserved the health of the country's defence forces.

The weapons ministers used then would still be recognised by politicians today. Postponement is so common that the cliché used to describe it has been shortened to a verb – awkward issues are 'long-grassed'. Gladstone had no such inelegant jargon but inertia and prevarication through royal commissions and select committees served the purpose. Then as now, time created opportunities to build consensus or, where that failed, to provide evidence to defend the status quo. Delay also purchased the opportunity for compromise. Bruce's and Hartington's bills were realistic offers of worthwhile concession. These techniques are not heroic but they are frequently effective and were used in Gladstonian governments more often than historians notice.

Then as now it helps to brand activists as extremists, as when Bruce characterised repeal propaganda as a 'monstrous system of perversion and exaggeration'. The prominence and leadership of women in the repeal movement was itself shocking but the shock was doubled when combined with the 'nauseous', 'noisome' nature of the legislation[84] and the fanaticism of the social purists attracted by the campaign.

In his memoir of his grandmother, A. S. G. Butler suggests that Josephine believed 'that Gladstone could never see a question rightly until he was *kicked* into it.'[85] This tells more about Mrs Butler's uncompromising persistence than Gladstone. Gladstone started as a convinced proponent of regulation but one who reassessed his position in reaction to new evidence. After his 1872 visit to Liverpool, Gladstone explained to Stansfeld why he had made the Acts forbidden ground: 'There is no use in an arrangement by which a leader of any movement warmly presses his views on any member of the government, who is already well disposed towards that movement, unless he can, which I cannot, become a propagandist of it in the Cabinet.'[86] Gladstone remained 'well disposed' despite the kicking given to Bruce's bill rather than because of it. When he publicly revealed his support for repealing the Acts, in 1875, Gladstone was out office, not expecting future office and certainly not under pressure.

After the royal commission was announced, Stansfeld wrote to *The Times* that:

> Mr. Gladstone authorizes me to add the expression of his own personal opinion that it is by the ascertained moral tendency of this exceptional legislation that it ought ultimately to be judged. If the Acts can be shown to be in the words of your resolution, 'immoral in their principles and tendency,' no supposed physical advantages consequent upon their operation can justify their continuance, and they must be repealed.[87]

Gladstone and Mrs Butler shared a moral and feminist understanding of the legislation, but tempered, for Gladstone, by the necessity of compromising a 'little *modicum*' for practical reasons. When Mrs Butler acknowledged the need to compromise a little modicum – accepting that:

> In a matter of Parliamentary policy I should prefer to be guided by our leader, Mr. Stansfeld, who certainly proved himself worthy of all confidence; and I should prefer to act so as not to discourage by any needless hostility, those members of the Government who may be coming to our side, although slowly it may …'

– repeal became possible.[88]

Gladstone never became 'a propagandist' of repeal in the cabinet but, just as he had fostered and facilitated the birth of the Contagious Diseases Acts, his known sympathies and cautious, patient management facilitated their painless demise.

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1 T. A. Jenkins (ed.), *The Parliamentary Diaries of Sir John Trelawny, 1858–1865*, Camden Fourth Series vol. 40 (Royal Historical Society, 1990), p. 276. Abbreviations have been expanded.

2 Henry Brand.

3 Clarence Paget, First Secretary of the Admiralty.

4 Jenkins, *Diaries of Sir John Trelawny*, p. 280.

5 Ibid., p. 302.

6 Derived from William Acton, *Prostitution* (Macgibbon & Kee, 1968, originally published 1857), p. 232, and J. L. Hammond and Barbara Hammond, *James Stansfeld: A Victorian Champion of Sex Equality* (Longmans Green & Co., 1932), pp. 121–2. The designated towns were:
1864: Aldershot, Chatham, Colchester, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Sheerness, Shorncliffe, Woolwich Cork, The Curragh, Queenstown
1866: Windsor
1869: Canterbury, Dover, Gravesend, Maidstone, Southampton, Winchester

7 Paul McHugh, *Prostitution and Victorian Social Reform* (Croom Helm, 1980), p. 235; table 9.1 refers to the division on 24 May 1870.

8 Richard Shannon, *Gladstone Heroic Minister 1865–1898* (Allen Lane, 1999). Given Shannon's often critical and exasperated assessment of Gladstone, I wonder whether his intention was ironic.

9 See H. C. G. Matthew, *Gladstone 1809–1874* (OUP, 1986) p. 89ff.

10 Cited in Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women Class and the State* (CUP, 1980), p. 74.

11 Ibid., pp. 49, 75.

12 Ibid., pp. 75–6. Only approximately 7% of soldiers were allowed to marry (see Acton, *Prostitution*, p. 125).

13 Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 3), vol. 147, c. 854 (31 Jul. 1857).

14 Cecil Woodham Smith, *Florence Nightingale* (Reprint

Society, 1952), p. 315.

15 Add Ms 44752, f263. Printed in H. C. G. Matthew (ed.), *The Gladstone Diaries*, vol. 6, 1861–1868 (OUP, 1978), p. 183. Henceforth diary references are given as date of entry.

16 Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 3), vol. 182, cc. 814–6 (22 Mar. 1866).

17 Trevor Fisher, *Scandal: The Sexual Politics of Late Victorian Britain* (Alan Sutton Publishing, 1995), p. 21.

18 Acton, *Prostitution*, p. 27.

19 Josephine E. Butler, *Personal Reminisces of a Great Campaign* (Horace Marshall & Son, 1910), p. 5, accessed on 11/6/2013 at http://archive.org/stream/personalreminiscoobutliala#page/n3/mode/2up.

20 *Gladstone Diaries*, 25 Jul. 1868

21 Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 3), *vol. 194, c. 303 (25 Feb. 1869)*.

22 Matthew, *Gladstone Diaries*, 24 Apr. 1869; Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 3), vol. 196, cc. 808–9 (13 May 1869).

23 Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, pp. 86, 92.

24 *Daily News*, 31 Dec. 1869.

25 See Keith Thomas, 'The Double Standard', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 20, no. 2, April 1959, pp. 195–216.

26 Jane Jordan, *Josephine Butler* (John Murray, 2001), p. 109; Josephine E. Butler, *An Autobiographical Memoir* (J. Arrowsmith Ltd., 3rd edn, 1928), p. 69.

27 Eugenio Biagini, *Liberty Retrenchment and Reform* (CUP, 1992), p. 160.

28 Fisher, *Scandal*, pp. 25–7; Butler, *Personal Reminisces*, p. 262; Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, p. 151ff.

29 Agatha Ram (ed.), *The Political Correspondence of Mr Gladstone and Lord Granville 1868–1876*, Camden Third Series vol. 1 (Royal Historical Society, 1952), p. 45.

30 He also succeeded Eyre as governor of Jamaica following Eyre's brutal suppression of the Morant Bay rebellion, before returning to the War Office.

31 Fisher, *Scandal*, p. 23.

32 *The Times*, 1 Apr. 1870, p. 12.

33 Anthony Mundella in the debate on 24 May.

34 Matthew, *Gladstone Diaries*, 21 May 1870.

35 *The Times*, 27 May 1870, p. 9.

36 Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 3), vol. 201, cc. 1304–48 (24 May 1870).

37 Letter to H. A. Bruce dated 3 Dec. 1870 from the Aberdare MSS printed in Matthew, *Gladstone Diaries*, 3 Dec. 1870.

38 Josephine E. Butler, *Recollections of George Butler* (J. W. Arrowsmith, 1892), p. 234, accessed on 14/6/2013 at http://archive.org/stream/recollectionsofgoobutluoft#page/n5/mode/2up.

39 Parliamentary Papers 1871 XIX, answer to Q. 12,932. Mrs Butler's evidence was from Q. 12,841 to Q. 13,115 on 18 Mar. 1871.

40 Matthew, *Gladstone Diaries*, 2 May 1871; Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 3), vol. 207, cc. 1886–7 (17 Jul. 1871).

41 Matthew, *Gladstone Diaries*, 1 Jul. 1871, 5 Jul. 1871, 8 Jul. 1871.

42 Ibid., 15 Jul. 1871.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid., 12 Aug. 1871.

45 Peter C. Erb (ed.), *The Correspondence of Henry Edward Manning and William Ewart Gladstone 1861–1875*, vol. iii (OUP, 2013), pp. 276, 277. Manning to Gladstone, 25 Sep. 1871; Gladstone's response, 27 Sep. 1871.

46 Matthew, *Gladstone Diaries*, 27 Oct. 1871, 3 Nov. 1871, 19 Dec. 1871, 30 Jan. 1872; Memo to Glyn, Add MS 44541, f. 61, 3 Feb. 1872.

47 Hammond and Hammond, *James Stansfeld*, pp. 167–8.

48 Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 3), vol. 209, cc. 330–46 (13 Feb. 1872).

49 C. Hopwood, as quoted in Hammond and Hammond, *James Stansfeld*, p. 173.

50 Hammond and Hammond, *James Stansfeld*, p. 171.

51 Josephine Butler to Mrs Wilson, Women's Library 3JBL/04/05, c.1 Mar. 1872.

52 T. A. Jenkins (ed.), *The Parliamentary Diaries of Sir John Trelawny, 1868–73*, Camden Fifth Series vol. 3 (Royal Historical Society, 1994), p. 455, diary entry for 23 Mar. 1872.

53 *The Times*, 13 May 1872.

54 Letter to J. Bright, 8 Feb. 1874; Matthew, *Gladstone Diaries*, 5 Feb. 1874. Lyttleton lost in Worcestershire East.

55 Matthew, *Gladstone Diaries*, 26 Nov. 1872.

56 In George Butler's *Dictionary of National Biography* entry, H. C. G. Matthew claimed 'The Butlers met W. E. Gladstone at Exeter College in 1853, and played some part in the movement to reform the university' (accessed at http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4184?docPos=31 on 17/6/2013) but writing to Dean Wellesley, Gladstone claimed 'I never saw her before or since' (Matthew, *Gladstone Diaries*, 26 Jun. 1882).

57 Matthew, *Gladstone Diaries*, 21 Dec. 1872.

58 Letter to Dean Wellesley, Matthew, *Gladstone Diaries*, 26 Jun. 1882.

59 Matthew, *Gladstone Diaries*, 26 Jun. 1882.

60 Jordan, *Josephine Butler*, pp. 142–3, using a letter from Mrs Butler to Henry Wilson of 23 Dec. 1872.

61 Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, p. 93.

62 McHugh, *Prostitution and Victorian Social Reform*, Table 9.1, p. 235.

63 Including tellers.

64 *The Times*, 23 May 1873.

65 Matthew, *Gladstone Diaries*, 10 May 1872.

66 Josephine E. Butler, *Some Thoughts on the Present Aspect of the Crusade Against the State Regulation of Vice* (T. Brakell, 1874), accessed on 18/6/2013 at http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/vwwp/view?docId=VAB7174&doc.view=print.

67 Butler, *Personal Reminiscences*, p. 55. Jacob Bright, another leading repealer, also lost his seat.

68 *The Times*, 25 Jun. 1875, p. 8.

69 Hammond and Hammond, *James Stansfeld*, p. 189.

70 Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 3), vol. 272, cc. 1027–30 (19 Jul. 1882).

71 Matthew, *Gladstone Diaries*, 9 Jan. 1883.

72 Hammond and Hammond, *James Stansfeld*, pp. 225, 228.

73 John Vincent (ed.), *The Diaries of Edward Henry Stanley, 15th Earl of Derby (1826–93) between 1878 and 1893* (Leopard's Head Press, 2003), p. 532.

74 Matthew, *Gladstone Diaries*, 14 Apr. 1883. Contagious diseases (animals) were item seven on the agenda. The cabinet decided against prohibiting the importation of live animals.

75 John Vincent, *Derby Diaries*, p. 533. Dean Butler was Josephine's husband.

76 Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, pp. 134–6. Hansard records Stansfeld speaking before Cavendish Bentinck.

77 Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, p. 135; Matthew, *Gladstone Diaries*, 20 Apr. 1883.

78 Matthew, *Gladstone Diaries*, 21 Apr. 1883, 28 Apr. 1883.

79 Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 3)*, vol. 279, cc. 52–75 (7 May 1883)*.

80 See, for example, Fisher, *Scandal*, ch. 3–4.

81 J. A. Spender, *The Life of the Right Honourable Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman GCB*, vol. i (Hodder & Stoughton, 2 vols., 1923), p. 105.

82 Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 3), vol. 303, cc. 981–98 (16 Mar. 1886).

83 Ibid.

84 C. Newdegate MP, Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 3), vol. 201, cc. 1343–5 (24 May 1870).

85 A. S. G. Butler, *Portrait of Josephine Butler* (Faber & Faber, 1953), p. 99.

86 Hammond and Hammond, *James Stansfeld*, p. 179.

87 *The Times*, 25 Jul. 1871, p. 11; Letter to Edward Crossley concerning resolutions passed in the Mechanics Hall.

88 Hammond and Hammond, *James Stansfeld*, pp. 238–9.

**Biography**

Dr J. Graham Jones examines the life and political career of Geraint Howells, the Lord Geraint of Ponterwyd (1925–2004)

# Lord Geraint o

# of Ponterwyd

Geraint Wyn Howells, later the Lord Geraint of Ponterwyd (1925–2004), was born on 15 April 1925, the son of David John and Mary Blodwen Howells (née Davies), of Brynglas, Ponterwyd, Cardiganshire, on the slopes of the Pumlumon mountains, where his family had been Welsh-speaking farmers for seven generations. His background and upbringing were modest and simple, bordering on poverty. He was educated at Ponterwyd Primary School, where his strict headmaster was the father of Gareth Williams, the future Labour minister Lord Williams of Mostyn,[1] and then at Ardwyn Grammar School, Aberystwyth, before he returned to farm full-time with his father. Geraint Howells and his parents always used Welsh as their first language, and they were closely involved in the vibrant cultural life of the small village. David John Howells served as secretary of the Ponterwyd Eisteddfod, and his son was proud of the fact that he also later served as its secretary right through from 1944 until 2001.

Geraint Howells earned his living as a hill farmer at Glennydd, Ponterwyd in Cardiganshire, a substantial holding of some 750 acres, where he kept about 3,000 sheep, many of them prize-winning Speckled Faces, and where he boasted that he planted five acres of trees each year. Howells proved to be a very successful farmer despite working in the difficult terrain of the Welsh hills. In his youth, he was a champion sheep-shearer. He enlarged considerably the original holding, which he had inherited from his father, and he became a substantial figure in the Welsh woollen industry, serving as member for Wales on the British Wool Marketing Board from 1966 to 1987, and as its vice-chairman from 1971 to 1983. He was also the chairman of Wool Producers of Wales Ltd from 1977 to 1987. At one Liberal Party Assembly in Llandudno, probably the 1981 Assembly, Geraint Howells expertly caught a sheep which had escaped from its field and came running down a hillside towards a road![2] From 1966 to 1983 he was the managing director of the well-known Manchester-based meat wholesalers Wilkinson and Stanier. He was renowned for his large flock of Speckled Face sheep. As president of the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society, he proudly welcomed Queen Elizabeth II to the Society's annual show at Builth on 22 July 1983.

The fact that he came from modest, local farming stock automatically ensured for Geraint Howells a warm and affectionate place in the hearts of the people of Cardiganshire: 'I remember farming 250 acres on my father's farm when the net takings were only £60, and we were paying farm workers £5 a year'.[3] At a relatively young age, Howells first entered political life as an independent councillor on the Cardiganshire County Council in 1962 – at this time it was normal practice in Welsh rural counties for Liberal members to stand as independents – and he soon became very well known and respected throughout the county, especially within its substantial farming community. His heartfelt adherence to the Liberal Party was an amalgam of the party's strong following and traditional power base in the county since the late nineteenth century, the political loyalties of his family, and his own reading and personal convictions. After Roderic Bowen, the Liberal MP for the county ever since 1945 and a prominent south Wales barrister, had lost Cardiganshire in the general election of 1966, he had no wish to return to political life thereafter.[4] And Geraint Howells, by then quite a prominent public figure in the county, stood in the ensuing selection contest to become the next Liberal candidate for Cardiganshire. Although well known and personally popular, he received no more than four votes at the selection meeting as the local Liberal executive, claimed Howells himself, was packed with the relatives and personal friends of Huw Lloyd Williams, a native of Tregaron and the product of local farming stock. Howells attempted, too, at this time to gain the Liberal nomination for the neighbouring constituency of Merionydd – 'Once again I lost. This was a real pity as I felt I could have won that seat back for the Liberals. Instead

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they chose J. E. Thomas who put us into third position behind the Nationalists [in the 1970 general election]'.[5]

Selected there back in 1968, he eventually stood as the Liberal candidate for the Brecon and Radnor division in the June 1970 general election against the sitting Labour MP Caerwyn Roderick, but he came a poor third in the election, after the Labour and Conservative candidates, with just 18.9 per cent of the vote. Howells was the first Liberal candidate to contest this seat since the 1950 general election, and party organisation in the constituency had become almost derelict. In that election campaign he expressed his personal Euro-scepticism, which was striking for a member of a pro-European party, through urging a delay in EEC entry. Howells had built up much goodwill towards the Liberals in the Brecon and Radnor division and he set up the basis of a first-class organisation there, which eventually led to the recapture of the seat by the Liberals in the form of Richard Livsey (later the Lord Livsey of Talgarth) in a by-election in June 1985. During this period Howells became one of the central players in the Welsh Liberal Party. He campaigned vigorously, mainly in Welsh, in favour of local improvements such as better rural transport, famously asserting in February 1973 that members of the general public should be permitted to make full use of school bus services, and later pressing for travel concessions for old age pensioners in December 1974.[6] He had played a major part, too, in sorting out the numerous problems brought about by the abject failure of the experiment to have an Aberystwyth-based headquarters, so far removed from Cardiff and London and thus highly unpopular, for the recently established Welsh Liberal Party in 1968–69. He provided stalwart service in collecting and working through all the paperwork at the Aberystwyth office, personally settling most of the outstanding bills from his own pocket, and making lists of subscribers and council members for the use of the party treasurer. As late as April 1970, it was estimated that the unpaid bills at the former party headquarters at Aberystwyth amounted to no less than £1,155, the settlement of which caused huge embarrassment and difficulty for the fledgling Welsh Liberal Party.[7] Following these unpleasant experiences, the Welsh party then resolved to move its Welsh headquarters to St Mary Street in Cardiff.[8]

Geraint Howells was clearly highly regarded both within the party in Wales and indeed nationally. Emlyn Hooson even then regarded him as 'a shrewd observer' of political life and trends and one who possessed 'strong feelings' on many issues.[9] He was then nominated as the Liberal candidate for Cardiganshire in 1972, now facing no opponent for the nomination, having ensured that the local Liberal executive comprised many of his own friends and supporters.[10] From the moment of his selection, he displayed determined tenacity to rebuild the county as a Liberal stronghold, and in the 1973 county council elections he persuaded several of the old 'independent' councillors to stand under the formal 'Liberal' banner. Nine of these were elected, thus becoming the largest Liberal block on a local council anywhere in Wales. Howells's personal optimism surged as a result of Liberal Party by-election victories at Sutton and Cheam and Rochdale in 1972, 'The present position is that 16 per cent of the electorate – about six million people – are resolute Liberals. That is the finding of a recent NOP poll and it represents the highest percentage since Orpington. Something between 30 and 40 per cent of the electorate would like to vote Liberal if they thought there was a chance of success'.[11] When the provocative 'Westgate' suggested in his widely read *Western Mail* column in August that both the Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire constituencies might witness an electoral pact between the Liberals and Plaid Cymru, Howells was predictably aghast: 'I wish to point out and emphasise that no such pact has been considered and, contrary to Westgate's suggestion, no such meeting has been held to discuss the possibility. … Not only do we intend to fight these constituencies, we intend to win!'.[12] His commitment to the cause of devolution was also unwavering. While the goal of 'the Nationalists' was, in his view, 'a separatist Wales which would take the Welsh people into the wilderness', the realistic aim of the Welsh Liberal Party was 'a Welsh Parliament [sitting] in Cardiff within the next few years'.[13]

At the February 1974 general election, capturing fully 40 per cent of the popular vote there, Geraint Howells won a rather surprising, but memorable, victory over the sitting Labour MP D. Elystan Morgan who had represented the division with much distinction since 1966. Howells's election was, it would seem, rather a startling departure from the well-established practice of sending well-spoken, professional men to represent Welsh constituencies at Westminster. (And in his background David Penhaligon, the Liberal MP for Truro from 1974 until 1986, also diverged from the familiar pattern.) There were many at the time who rued Howells's spectacular success in ousting an obviously rising Labour star who had already held junior ministerial office within the Home Office during an all-too-brief parliamentary career. He was widely known and generally highly respected. Both men were distinguished old boys of Ardwyn Grammar School, Aberystwyth – although Howells was seven years older than Morgan. Like Howells, Morgan was a son of the county and a member of a family which had 'farmed in the area for 400 years'.[14]

Throughout Wales in February 1974, the Liberals had captured their largest share of the popular vote ever since the general election of October 1931.[15] Howells's friend, Emlyn Hooson, the Liberal MP for Montgomeryshire since 1962, recalled:

**Geraint Howells was clearly highly regarded both within the party in Wales and indeed nationally. Emlyn Hooson even then regarded him as 'a shrewd observer' of political life and trends and one who possessed 'strong feelings' on many issues.**

**Geraint Howells had made his maiden speech in the House of Commons on 14 March 1974 during that part of the debate on the Queen's Speech dealing with agriculture and prices. He pointed out to the House that he was the first MP from Cardiganshire for fifty years who did not belong to the legal profession, but that he was immensely proud to be a farmer.**

> Howells had a high reputation among farmers and he had also shown a sharp business acumen building up a very successful sheep- and cattle- dealing business and that he was also by this time a county councillor in Cardiganshire. The more I saw him the more I thought of him as a possible Liberal candidate for Cardiganshire, his native county. Elystan Morgan, the popular Labour Member for Cardiganshire who had ousted Roderick Bowen QC, would be difficult to defeat, but Geraint Howells could be the man to do it. For he was a very well-built, handsome man with a genial personality, and an attractive and cultured wife and two charming daughters all deeply involved in work in the community, particularly at his native Ponterwyd. His devotion to the welfare of the community there was just a foretaste of what he would achieve in Cardiganshire as a whole. I therefore did all I could to try to enable him to secure selection as the Liberal candidate for Cardiganshire at the 1970 election, which I believe he would have won. However, there was always a strong tendency in rural Wales, possibly particularly in the Liberal Party, to look for parliamentary candidates who had achieved academic, legal or other professional distinction, but had emerged from a sound Welsh rural background. … From the 1974 general election onwards, when he was elected MP for Cardigan, Howells and I worked particularly closely together. Our private discussions were always conducted in Welsh and it was rarely that we disagreed on any subject.[16]

In some circles in the county, especially nationalist ones, Elystan Morgan was viewed as a 'turncoat' or 'traitor' as he had 'defected' from Plaid Cymru in 1965, shortly before capturing the division the following year, and he had recently expressed firm opposition to the establishment of the Welsh-medium school Penweddig at Aberystwyth, a move which Howells had warmly endorsed. Indeed the local general election campaign degenerated into a decidedly unpleasant affair, with many nasty personal attacks and much backbiting. The local Labour Party had attempted to portray Howells unfairly as 'a bumbling peasant unfit to stand for Parliament'. When illness prevented Howells from turning out for a vital pre-election rally at the Great Hall of the Aberystwyth Arts Centre on the Sunday afternoon preceding the poll, and Winston Roddick had to put in a last-minute appearance to represent him, Elystan Morgan callously accused his opponent of 'being afraid to face him', enraging the numerous Liberal students present who then attempted to 'boo' Morgan off the stage. When Howells did win through on election night, his victory speech at the count was repeatedly interrupted by infantile sheep noises which detracted somewhat from his spectacular victory.[17] It was, however, the first time the Liberals had regained a Welsh seat since the end of the Second World War. A proud Emlyn Hooson commented on his friend's victory at the polls, widely tipped in Liberal circles, 'I am delighted that Cardiganshire is back in the Liberal fold. We are coming back as a major force in Welsh political life'.[18] Howells himself, fully appreciative of 'the tremendous enthusiasm throughout the campaign … all the effort and goodwill', was predictably exuberant and proud, hailing the local outcome as 'a landmark in the history of Cardiganshire'.[19]

Eight months later, in October 1974, Howells, who had much impressed his constituents as an effective, responsive constituency MP in the intervening months, held the seat against a further challenge from Elystan Morgan. At both these general elections, his majority was around 2,500 votes. By the following summer Elystan Morgan, fully preoccupied with his burgeoning professional career as a barrister, had resolved that he had no wish to stand again in Cardiganshire. Plans were laid to receive nominations and select a successor Labour candidate for Cardiganshire.[20] In 1979, Howells held the seat by a little over 2,000 votes above the Conservative candidate Emlyn Thomas who polled fully 30 per cent of the vote. Thomas had actually been the first general secretary of the Welsh Liberal Party back in 1969, based at its Aberystwyth headquarters with a staff of just two. Aberystwyth had been chosen as the location of the party headquarters partly because it was the Liberals' top target seat in Wales at this time. The failure of the outfit had seen Thomas, previously the secretary of the Farmers' Union of Wales, lose interest in the cause and later join the Conservatives.[21]

Geraint Howells had made his maiden speech in the House of Commons on 14 March 1974 during that part of the debate on the Queen's Speech dealing with agriculture and prices. He pointed out to the House that he was the first MP from Cardiganshire for fifty years who did not belong to the legal profession, but that he was immensely proud to be a farmer. The main theme of the speech was his concern for the state of agriculture, but he also spoke for the devolution of power from London to Wales and on the necessity for the setting up of a land bank. Howells asserted powerfully that one of the main reasons for the implementation of the Kilbrandon Report for the setting up of a Welsh parliament was its potential authority 'to establish Welsh government offices in mid-Wales. They would attract back some of the ablest people of Cardigan[shire]'.[22] He maintained these two key themes – agriculture and devolution – throughout his political career. As the debate on devolution gathered momentum in the mid-1970s, Howells was vocal and consistent in his support, reacting vigorously to the Labour Party proposal in the autumn of 1974 that Scotland should be given a 'legislative assembly', while Wales could make do with a mere 'executive assembly': 'In Wales we want a legislative assembly and nothing less. Wales will not accept

Mr Wilson's devolution crumbs. We are not going to accept the role of being second-class citizens in Wales'.[23] From the very beginning of his parliamentary career, Howells had put down a long succession of questions on Welsh issues and affairs.[24]

Jeremy Thorpe, the Liberal leader, appointed Geraint Howells to be the party's spokesman on Wales in the House of Commons. When Thorpe resigned the party leadership two years later, Howells supported David Steel (rather than John Pardoe) during his successful campaign to become party leader in June 1976. He eagerly applauded Steel for his 'down-to-earth radical approach to British politics which comes across to the man in the street. Liberals and non-Liberals alike will respond to his sincerity of purpose and forthright style'.[25] Howells was one of four Liberal MPs at this time to come out publicly in support of David Steel's candidature.[26] The membership of the Cardiganshire Liberal Association, clearly following the lead of their MP, voted by the wide margin of forty-four votes to six in favour of Steel, who also won substantial majorities among the Liberal activists of the Carmarthenshire and Wrexham divisions.[27]

The following month, to reward him for his support and in part because there were so few Liberal MPs (which meant that each had to be given some area of responsibility really), Steel appointed Geraint Howells to the post of Liberal spokesman on agriculture and Wales. Howells supported a bill to prevent farm workers from being ousted from tied cottages, he deplored the end of the pig subsidy, and he campaigned effectively on behalf of small businessmen. He was a strong supporter of the 'pact' between the Liberal Party and the Labour government under James Callaghan in 1977–78 because he hoped that the government would pursue a policy of devolution, a course which now seemed more likely with the consistently pro-devolutionist Michael Foot (MP for Ebbw Vale) as the Leader of the House of Commons. Howells also hoped, perhaps rather forlornly, that Prime Minister James Callaghan, as the Labour MP for Cardiff South, would lend his active support to the cause of devolution. In July Geraint Howells pressed for a firm deadline on Welsh devolution within the context of the 'Lib–Lab' pact. Initially he insisted that his support for the highly contentious agreement would be wholly conditional upon the response of the Labour government to 'the request for a minister for the self-employed and the setting up of the land bank'.[28] Howells's fellow Liberal MP Cyril Smith (Rochdale) was hostile to the conclusion of any such pact. At a Liberal Party meeting to review the Lib–Lab pact after it had been operational for three months, David Steel noted, 'Geraint Howells said that the agreement had gone down badly at first in Wales, but was now more popular'.[29] In fact, there were many opponents to the idea of the pact throughout the Liberal Party, but they were especially numerous and vocal in Wales. Indeed, in January 1978 Welsh Liberals called for an end to the arrangement – to be implemented long before the calling of a general election.[30] Both Geraint Howells and Emlyn Hooson had argued strongly and consistently that the perpetuation of the Lib–Lab pact was sustaining interest in devolution and delaying a likely Conservative victory at the next general election.

Geraint Howells was also able, during the period of the Lib–Lab pact, to secure recognition for the Farmers Union of Wales (the FUW), formed way back in 1955 to safeguard the interests of the Welsh farming community, as one of the official unions for government negotiations. On being given a lift in the ministerial car, he persuaded John Silkin, the Labour Minister of Agriculture, to grant official recognition to the FUW as henceforth an official negotiating partner with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and also with the Welsh Office. The FUW thus enjoyed the same status as the far more powerful and numerous National Farmers' Union (the NFU), an achievement of which Geraint Howells remained immensely proud throughout his life and often mentioned even in his old age. When the devolution bills were under consideration at Westminster in 1977, Howells argued strongly that the Scotland Bill and the Wales Bill should come to the House of Commons at about the same time or otherwise he would not support the government. In an interview published in the Welsh periodical *Barn*, he said that if the government and MPs of all parties turned against devolution, then he himself would turn to support Plaid Cymru or to another political party in Wales – 'He says that for him the goal of a Welsh parliament is the most important part of Liberal policy'. He had, he insisted, pressed the matter upon David Steel:

> Whatever happens we must ensure that the two devolution bills [for Scotland and for Wales] should have their second reading at the same time, or within a day of one another. *If we were to fail completely to get a parliament for Wales within the next ten years, and if I saw the Government and the members of all parties turning against devolution, then I would turn to Plaid Cymru or to another party that represented Wales. That is the way I would go.* But I do not think that we will fail this time. We must get a Parliament for Wales next time round.[31]

Indeed, by December 1978, by which time the Lib–Lab pact had formally come to an end, he was the only Liberal still voting consistently with the Labour Party in the House of Commons. Meanwhile, he continued to campaign vigorously on behalf of Welsh hill farmers and he was fiercely opposed to the abolition of the Meat and Livestock Commission. He also served effectively during his first term in parliament as chairman

From top:
Geraint Howells after his re-election in 1987.
Howells with Richard Livsey (MP for Brecon & Radnor 1985–92 and 1997–2001)
Howells as a member of the House of Lords

of the Liberal Party's Committee on Small Businesses and the Self-employed and as a member of the British Agricultural Export Council.

Like his fellow Liberal MP from Wales Emlyn Hooson, Montgomeryshire, Geraint Howells campaigned strongly for a 'Yes' vote in the referendum of 1 March 1979. Following the abject failure of the devolution proposals in the 1979 referendum, Howells continued to argue for devolution and for measures to support the Welsh language. At the Cardigan Eisteddfod in 1976, he had urged local authorities to give Welsh culture its proper place in the education of every child: 'We must stand firm to our tradition and our Welshness'. When the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs produced a report on the provision for Welsh language programmes on the new fourth television channel, Geraint Howells and Geraint Morgan, the Conservative MP for Denbighshire, presented a minority report urging that Welsh language programmes should be increased by five hours a week each year until one channel in Wales was broadcasting entirely in the Welsh language.[32] In July 1980, Howells pressed Margaret Thatcher, the prime minister, to capitulate to Gwynfor Evans's starvation threat in relation to the establishment of a Welsh language television channel.[33] Indeed, one historian of the Liberal Party in Wales has described Geraint Howells as 'the Welsh Nationalist Liberal' MP.[34] Interviewed in 2003, Howells himself said, 'I was a Welsh nationalist and a Liberal as well. There was no need to join Plaid Cymru with those credentials. Liberalism was in my blood and that of my family. My grandmother was nearly thrown off her farm for voting Liberal in the 1880s by the Conservative landlord. I never thought of being in any other party'.[35]

After Emlyn Hooson had lost Montgomeryshire in the May 1979 general election, Howells was left as the sole Liberal MP in the whole of Wales. As David Steel told a party rally at Cardiff in April 1980, 'The centre ground of politics has not lain so empty for decades. It's waiting to be occupied, and we're there in growing strength to do this'.[36] Geraint Howells recalled the situation vividly, 'I was both the leader of the Welsh party and agriculture spokesman. It was very hard: you ended up speaking everywhere. I was glad, therefore, when Alex [Carlile] won Montgomeryshire back in 1983. It got even better in 1985 when Richard [Livsey] won Brecon & Radnor and there were then three Liberal MPs in Wales'.[37] Indeed Howells had made a significant contribution to Livsey's 1985 by-election victory by travelling to the Brecon and Radnor constituency to address public meetings on his behalf, and sternly warning his fellow sheep-farmers there of the likely outcome of a Labour victory at the poll.[38]

This was also the period which saw a spate of fires at second and holiday homes in parts of rural mid-Wales. Geraint Howells spoke out sensibly:

> The recent spate of arson carried out against second homes in remote areas must be strongly condemned by all Liberals. It is a very sad situation when small, closely knit communities die away, when work is scarce, and money in short supply. Local people will naturally resent a situation where house prices are forced up by people from prosperous areas, who visit their second homes for barely one month in a year, and for the rest leave them empty, while people have to remain on council house waiting lists sometimes for years. I believe that local councils should be actively encouraged to buy up available properties within village boundaries, renovate it, and offer it for rent to local inhabitants.[39]

The formation of the Social Democratic Party (the SDP) in March 1981 had challenged the Liberal Party for the centre ground of British politics. The two parties were then brought together in 'the Alliance', a group formed in September 1981 in order to pool their electoral efforts. A traditional Liberal, Howells was not at all enthusiastic about the formation of the Alliance. He believed that his party should concentrate its resources within Wales on some nineteen key seats at the forthcoming general election rather than putting up candidates in all the Welsh constituencies as had happened back in 1979.[40] His scepticism in relation to the concept of the Alliance was confirmed at the 1983 general election when only six Alliance candidates from the Social Democratic Party were among the twenty-three Alliance members returned to parliament. Now Howells offered the electors of Cardiganshire 'an end to the stale old adversarial politics practised by the Tory and Labour Parties and … a totally new approach based on co-operation and partnership'.[41] It would appear that by this time he was rather more enamoured of the SDP than previously.

Beneath his amiable and relaxed exterior, Howells could be a tough fighter when the occasion demanded. He did not warm at all to David Owen, leader of the Social Democratic Party after 1983, and his long-term loyalty to David Steel over many long years did not prevent him from accusing Steel of playing second fiddle to David Owen.[42] His barbed comments were his gut reaction to Steel's apparent abandonment of the traditional Liberal loyalty to the setting up of a Welsh assembly. In 1985, he complained that 'David Steel has ratted on us' in retreating from the Liberal commitment to a Welsh assembly, because he was, claimed Geraint Howells, 'a puppet in David Owen's waistcoat pocket'. This wounding comment received widespread currency at the time. However, the Liberal–SDP alliance persevered with Howells, making him spokesman for Wales in its pre-election team in January 1987 (again partly due to the lack of Liberal MPs); the next month he proclaimed the Alliance plan for a Welsh 'senedd' (parliament).

Howells's doubts about the party leadership were confirmed again at the 1987 general election when only twenty-two Alliance candidates were elected to the House of Commons, now including six members of the SDP. Following this election, David Steel called for a merger of the two parties, a move which was eventually achieved on 3 March 1989. A key member of the Liberal team responsible for negotiating the merger with the SDP, Howells fought very hard to guarantee the survival of the name 'Liberal', knowing the strong feeling about it in Lloyd George's west Wales.[43] (Indeed, Howells's favourite seat in the House of Commons tearoom was beneath a portrait of David Lloyd George, and he was outraged when this was later removed in April 1981, protesting virulently against the move.) During the protracted merger talks, he was heard to complain bitterly that the former SDPer Bob Maclennan 'won't give way on anything'. But, after the tortuous negotiations had finally reached a successful conclusion the following month, Geraint Howells proclaimed jubilantly at the launch gathering of the newly formed party, perhaps tongue-in-cheek, 'We will be in government by the turn of the century'.[44]

Howells supported Alan Beith, the party's treasury spokesman and the deputy leader of the old Liberal Party, a Welsh speaker too, as the leader of the new party. Indeed, Howells readily became Beith's campaign manager in the party leadership contest.[45] However, he worked well with Paddy Ashdown, the successful candidate for the leadership. Howells was determined to retain the party's Liberal traditional identity and he played a key role in establishing 'Liberal Democrats' as its new name. When the new party's annual conference convened at Blackpool at the end of September 1988 voted to adopt the short title of 'The Democrats', Geraint Howells was one of five MPs who rebelled against the contentious decision, proclaiming their intention to 'operate as a distinct group within the parliamentary party, pursuing an independent line although retaining their front-bench spokesmanships'.[46] A whole year later, the issue was still dividing Welsh Liberals as party members received ballot papers on the divisive and contentious subject. Howells felt so strongly on the matter that he even threatened to resign from the party and 'form a "breakaway" party unless the name "Liberal" is kept in the title'.[47] There was further dissension at the same time over a proposal from Dafydd Elis Thomas, the Plaid Cymru president and MP for Merionydd Nant Conwy, to Howells that the two parties might form 'an electoral pact' not to fight each other in selected constituencies. As both parties now had three MPs apiece in Wales, the Plaid Cymru national executive was supportive of such an agreement, but Howells and other prominent Welsh Liberals were most reluctant.[48] Howells was still very much a Euro-sceptic. And he continued to campaign on behalf of the Welsh

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language (he successfully lobbied for a Welsh-language guidebook to the House of Commons) and a parliament for Wales. He was also a member of the National Eisteddfod's Gorsedd of Bards and a past President of the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show. He gladly became a deacon at Ponterwyd Calvinistic Methodist chapel.

Geraint Howells also had an avid interest in third world politics and he denounced the introduction of milk quotas in 1983 as a major political blunder, arguing that the surpluses should be used to help the starving millions in the third world.[49] He remained highly sceptical about the European Union and he fought the European proposals that would have crippled British sheep farmers. Howells was at his best in December 1991, when, as agriculture spokesman appointed by Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown, he fought proposals by EC agriculture commissioner Ray MacSharry that would have crippled sheep farmers in the less-favoured areas of Wales, Scotland, Northumberland and the Borders. From 1987 to 1992, Howells had served as a member of the Speaker's Panel (responsible for chairing public bill committees and other general committees), and early in 1992 he led a deputation to Brussels to discuss the problems of Welsh farmers with the Agricultural Commissioner there. Some months later, during the debate on the Maastricht Treaty in November 1992, he, by now in the House of Lords, opposed Paddy Ashdown's policy of voting with the government and he wrote to all Liberal Democrat MPs, urging them to vote with the Labour Party or else to abstain.

By the time of the 1987 general election, the Ceredigion constituency had been enlarged to include North Pembrokeshire, which extended down as far as the town of Fishguard. Howells held the seat with a fine majority of 4,700 votes over the Conservative candidate. His Westminster secretary and agent was Judi Lewis (later to become the Welsh Liberal Democrat chief executive from 1992 until 1997), whilst one of his parliamentary researchers for a five-year stint from his graduation at Aberystwyth in 1987 until 1992 was Mark Williams who was later to recapture the Ceredigion seat for the Liberal Democrats in 2005, retaining the now marginal seat until his defeat in the June 2017 general election when it reverted to Plaid Cymru.

On 9 April 1992, however, Howells, by now something of a Liberal Party elder statesman at Westminster, lost his seat when Cynog Dafis, the Plaid Cymru candidate, came from fourth place in 1987 to win a surprising and decisive victory with a majority of 3,100 votes over Howells, who came second with just a hundred votes more than the Conservative candidate. Cynog Dafis stood on the novel joint platform of Plaid Cymru and the Green Party. 'Let's make history on our own doorstep' was the rallying election cry of the new, dynamic joint candidature: 'To get action on the things that latter most – for Wales and the Planet. It's an opportunity not to be missed'.[50] If Geraint Howells was rejected in 1992 by the electorate, it was in part because heart trouble had slowed him down, though he later benefited from a triple by-pass operation. Afflicted by arthritis in the knee from an old football injury and suffering from severe angina, Howells had slowed down conspicuously during his last term in the House of Commons, and, for the April 1992 general election campaign, he participated in too few public meetings in his enlarged Ceredigion and North Pembroke constituency. Widespread local rumours that Howells was by now seriously ill and conjecture that he was, as a result, neglecting his constituency work had helped to unseat him. Interviewed in 2003, he openly admitted, 'I knew I had lost my seat because my campaign team was weak. They thought that they'd won, but I knew that in my heart that this wasn't going to be the case. Everyone seemed convinced we'd won except me. Cynog Dafis (Plaid Cymru) was able to more than double his vote from the previous election. My key supporters who had won the seat for me in 1974 had by then died off. The seat is winnable again for us though. Mark Williams has brought the vote back up; we'll get the seat back again'.[51] The outcome was one of the shock results of the 1992 general election.

Howells was then made a life peer in the dissolution honours list published on 6 June 1992 and, remembering his loyalty to his native village, he took the title of Lord Geraint of Ponterwyd in the County of Dyfed. The highly popular move to the Lords – warmly applauded both in the constituency, where he was highly regarded personally and so many rued his recent electoral defeat, and in the Liberal Party nationally – meant that there was to be no real break in his parliamentary career. Shortly after being created a life peer, he told the House of Lords, 'For those who live and work in the countryside, the reality is too often grinding poverty, compounded by poor housing, inadequate services, non-existent public transport and a chronic low-wage economy which drives away youth and enterprise'.[52] He was appointed Deputy Speaker of the House of Lords in 1994. He also served in the Upper House as Deputy Chairman of Committees and as his party's spokesman on Welsh rural affairs.

In the House of Lords, as previously within the Commons, Howells was never over-anxious to speak in debates, and he kept to his main enthusiasms – notably the Welsh language, a parliament for Wales, and agriculture, most notably the plight of the Welsh hill farmers. He was eminently commonsensical and pragmatic, displaying insight, shrewdness and first-rate judgement. He was a strong supporter of the new Welsh Language Act of 1993, although he continued to press for full parity with English, and he was much enamoured of the devolution proposals placed before parliament by the Labour government in 1997. Until almost a month before his death, he

**In the House of Lords, as previously within the Commons, Howells was never over-anxious to speak in debates, and he kept to his main enthusiasms – notably the Welsh language, a parliament for Wales, and agriculture, most notably the plight of the Welsh hill farmers. He was eminently commonsensical and pragmatic, displaying insight, shrewdness and first-rate judgement.**

**'But more than anything Geraint really had the heart of the party. People just cared about him because he cared about them'.**

attended the House of Lords regularly; at that time, he signed, with other Welsh peers, a letter to the *Western Mail* which asked for a swift and positive response to the proposals of the Richard Commission on devolution which had been set up in July 2002:

> The Richard Commission Report on Welsh devolution, published today, is a pioneering document of constitutional reform. It deserves a swift and positive response. Richard shows how measures sought by the Welsh Assembly are seldom taken up at Westminster. Usually, they vanish without trace: only a quarter of the Assembly's proposals have found room on the Westminster agenda. Another problem is the role of the Wales Office, potentially a barrier rather than a conduit. With changes of government and diversity of policies between Westminster and Wales this could lead to a major political crisis. Richard's logic is for the extension of primary powers to the Welsh Assembly over a period of time. We warmly endorse this. The extended functions of the Assembly should be made crystal clear. … Richard's searching analysis can make Welsh devolution a reality and create a vibrant democracy.[53]

On 19 March 1998, he was appointed one of the five peers, from all parties, chosen to be Extra Lords in Waiting who carried out ceremonial duties for the Sovereign. He was the first Liberal to hold this position for a full century. In one of his last speeches in the House of Lords in April 2002, he called for realistic livestock prices and the stamping out of illegal meat imports. He was a close personal friend of both Richard Livsey and Emlyn Hooson, both of whom he served with at Westminster in the House of Commons and the House of Lords.[54] He made his last appearance in the House at a St David's Day luncheon in February 2004.

Lord Geraint continued to play an active part in Cardiganshire life after he had entered the House of Lords. When a new unitary authority was formed under the name of Cardiganshire on 1 April 1996, he was disappointed when his campaign to retain the old name failed and the County Council changed the name to Ceredigion. While still a member of the House of Commons, he had launched an appeal to provide a scanner for Bronglais Hospital, Aberystwyth. He raised more than £1,000,000, and, in recognition of his remarkable efforts, the new palliative care resource centre, opened at Bronglais Hospital in August 2006, was named the Tŷ Geraint Palliative Care Resource Centre. About £45,000 raised by the appeal was also donated to help build and equip Tŷ Geraint.[55] He launched the scanner and cancer appeal in 1990 to raise money for the hospital, exceeding the £1m target he had set for the Millennium. Dr Alan Axford, Ceredigion and Mid Wales NHS Trust's medical director, said, 'Lord Geraint was particularly supportive of the cancer ward so we thought it was appropriate that there should be some recognition of his major contribution to this hospital'.[56] He was very active in his local community, spearheading several other worthwhile fundraising campaigns. At the very time of his electoral defeat in the spring of 1992, Geraint Howells, a long-term member of *Gorsedd y Beirdd*, was acting as the active chairman of the finance committee of the Ceredigion Aberystwyth National Eisteddfod due to be held the following August.

A large man, with a slow rolling walk, Lord Geraint had immense personal warmth and he was widely known within his constituency and throughout Wales simply as 'Geraint'. At the same time, he was an astute politician who spoke sparingly in parliament and generally only on subjects within his expertise. When he joined a delegation of parliamentarians on a fact-finding mission to the Falkland Islands soon after the war with Argentina back in 1982, he visited a remote sheep farm and amazed the islanders with his expert knowledge of peat drying and sheep farming. Matthew Parris, then a Conservative MP, recalled admiringly, 'Geraint did something to restore our reputation by visiting an isolated sheep farm with me, inspecting their peat-drying arrangements, and for the next half-hour talking peat with his hosts with such happy expertise that they admitted themselves amazed at his knowledge. They had not known there was peat in Wales too, they said. Geraint would have made an excellent governor of the colony'.[57] He had married Mary Olwen Hughes Griffiths, the daughter of M. A. Griffiths, on 7 September 1957; they had two daughters, Gaenor, born in 1961, who became a newsreader with the BBC World Service, and Mari, born in 1965. They were a notably close-knit family. Lord Geraint continued to live at Glennydd, Ponterwyd; he died on 17 April 2004, and his funeral was held on 24 April at Ponterwyd Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, where he had served as deacon for many years. A large number of mourners from Cardiganshire, from Welsh public life, and from the Liberal Party, were present. He left an estate of £937,757 net.

Described by Michael White as 'the Robert Mitchum of the sheep fells', this genial, shrewd Welsh hill farmer much enriched Westminster life for more than thirty years. Dubbed 'big, shambling [with a] weather-beaten face, tweedy clothes [and] heavy footed', he will always be remembered for his unwavering commitment and devotion to the interests of farmers and small businesses, his own constituency and to the cause of Welsh devolution.[58] Another commentator, Bruce Anderson, accurately described him in *The Spectator* as possessing 'an archetypal Welsh mixture of charm and cunning'.[59] Matthew Parris neatly dubbed Howells 'a tremendous, lumbering, ageing, wily, amiable Liberal from Wales, with huge ears'; while another political commentator

described him as 'popular, respected, genial-shrewd Welsh-speaking hill farmers' friend, more passionate in Welsh and more canny than he dissembles'.[60] Howells's warmth and friendliness made him widely popular in all parties. At the time of his death, Lord Hooson recalled:

> He was a fine man, a good friend and exuded warmth and generosity of spirit wherever he went. He will be missed greatly in Wales and in the Lords; from his colleagues to all the staff who were obviously appreciative of his ever kindly and natural and rural approach. To the counsels of the Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Party, Geraint Howells brought a shrewd mind and a stubborn resistance to any tendency to take the short- as opposed to the long-term solution to political problems.[61]

Paying tribute to Lord Geraint, the then leader of the Liberal Democrats the late Charles Kennedy described him as a 'treasured Celtic cousin. … With Geraint's passing our party has lost a good and instrumental figure – and his beloved Wales has lost an authentic son of its soil'.[62] Lembit Opik, then the Welsh Liberal Democrat leader and Montgomeryshire MP, said, 'For most of us in the party Geraint was a mentor, a sort of political uncle. If you were trying to do something, Geraint had usually had a go a few years before. But more than anything Geraint really had the heart of the party. People just cared about him because he cared about them'.[63]

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12 NLW, Liberal Party of Wales Archive, file B11, Geraint Howells, chairman of the Welsh Liberal Party, to the editor of the *Western Mail*, 20 Aug. 1973.
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22 See the report of Howells's maiden speech in *The Times*, 15 Mar. 1974, p. 14.
23 *The Times*, 13 Sep. 1974, p. 4.
24 See examples in the NLW, Liberal Party of Wales Archive, file A8.
25 *The Times*, 15 Jun. 1976, p. 4.
26 The other three were Clement Freud (Isle of Ely), Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight) and Emlyn Hooson (Montgomeryshire). The caretaker party leader Jo Grimond and recently deposed leader Jeremy Thorpe refused to commit themselves. Three Liberal MPs supported John Pardoe.
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36 *The Guardian*, 28 Apr. 1980.
37 Deacon, 'Interview: Lord Geraint of Ponterwyd', p. 23.
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44 Roth, *Parliamentary Profiles*, p. 723.
45 *The Times*, 9 May 1988, p. 2.
46 *The Times*, 27 Sep. 1988, p. 1.
47 *The Times*, 14 Sep. 1989, p. 8.
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53 *Western Mail*, 31 Mar. 2004.
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55 *Western Mail*, 7 Aug. 2006: 'New care centre named after loyal supporter'.
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58 Cited in Jones, 'Geraint Howells', p. 190.
59 Andrew Roth, 'Lord Geraint'.
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62 BBC website, Mid Wales pages, consulted 26 Feb. 2013.
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## Social policy

Susanne Stoddart analyses how the Liberal government's introduction of labour exchanges and maternity benefits was represented in the press, in terms particularly of gender status, gender roles and domestic identities

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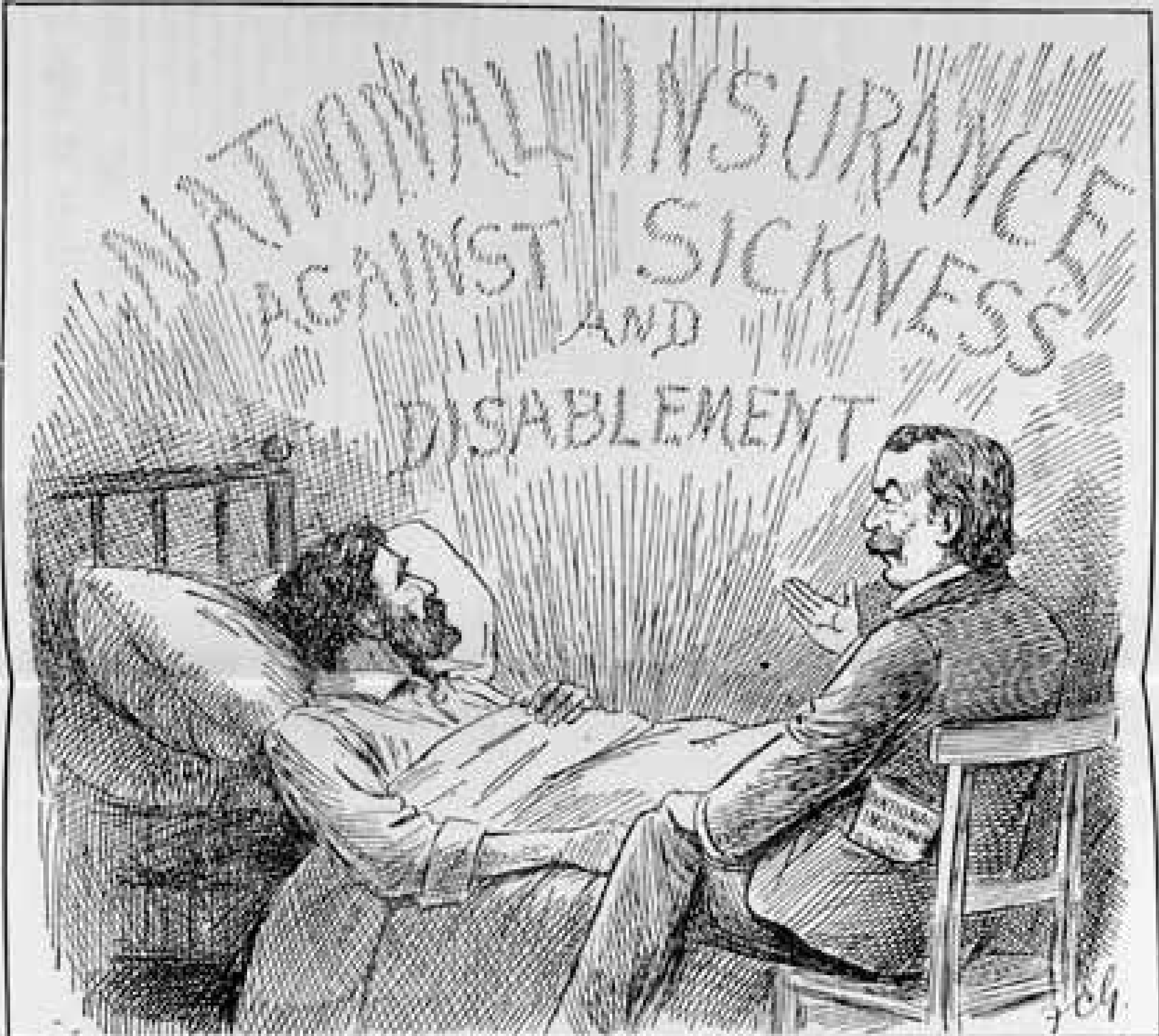


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# Domesticity and the New Liberalism in the Edwardian Liberal Press

Liberal Party poster advertising the 1911 National Insurance Act

Between 1906 and the outbreak of the First World War, the Liberal Party in power paved the way for the development of a more socially active state. Influenced by social investigators such as Charles Booth, who found that 30 per cent of those surveyed in London were living in poverty,[1] the radical Liberals introduced a range of reform measures aimed at improving the lives of workers, their dependents and the elderly. Increasingly termed 'new Liberals' by contemporaries, they laid the foundations of the welfare state through initiatives such as the Old Age Pensions Act 1908 and the National Insurance Act 1911. These social reforms represented a watershed in the political history of modern Britain. Household economies became the important business of leading politicians to an extent that was never before conceived of.[2] Indeed, in celebration of welfare reform, the *Liberal Monthly* boldly asserted in January 1912 that, 'we say Liberalism has gone to the cottage door; nay! It has done more than that. It has lifted the latch and entered'.[3]

Considering the importance that had long been placed upon the masculine status of the self-reliant and independent husband, father and head of household (not least in terms of validating a man's claim to a vote),[4] the above statement might be interpreted as a brave comment to be conveyed from the pages of *Liberal Monthly*: a popular journal designed to convert working men to the Liberal cause. As John Tosh notes, independence was the 'key nineteenth-century indicator of masculinity achieved … combining as it did dignified work, sole maintenance of the family, and free association on terms of equality with other men'.[5] Jon Lawrence shows that Edwardian Conservative propaganda often sought to raise fears about the negative impact that the new Liberal shift towards welfare reform had upon the Victorian ideal of manly independence and domestic patriarchy. Propaganda stressed the working man's right to status as head of his household, protected from the unwanted intrusions of an increasingly collectivist and interventionist state.[6] The Conservative *Spectator* warned in November 1912 that, 'Englishmen to-day are in serious danger of selling their individual liberty – the birthright of every Briton – for a mess of Radical legislation … Is it really becoming a matter of indifference whether an Englishman's house is to remain his castle or not?'.[7]

Prominent new Liberal theorists, including sociologist L. T. Hobhouse and politician Herbert Samuel, did seek to reconcile the shift towards collectivism with the individualism characteristic of the classical Liberalism. They distinguished their collectivism from socialism by propounding the organic view of society. The organic view emphasised that the progress of individuals was only truly possible if it did not conflict with the wider harmony and welfare of society.[8] However, despite these efforts at outlining a consistent ideology of the new Liberalism, concerns and confusion about the practical boundaries of the redefined relationship between the state and the individual were not only raised in Conservative propaganda. An individual writing under the pen name of 'A Radical of '85' explained in 1908 that the Liberals were, 'in danger of being left without a catch word (or catch phrase) which would express their attitude towards the [social] problem of the hour'. They elaborated, 'politicians of weight, who in the Commons support the collectivist schemes of the Liberal Cabinet, if they are addressing meetings in the country, leave it

to be inferred that they endorse the individualistic and self-assertive notions which were the stock-in-trade of official Liberalism twenty years ago'.[9] Physician and social reformer Havelock Ellis reflected in 1912 that, 'every scheme of social reform … raises anew a problem that is never out of date': 'the controversy between Individualism and Socialism'.[10]

Championed by the often impulsive and emotional David Lloyd George – renowned for his passionate platform performances – it is perhaps not surprising that Edwardian progressivism could appear haphazard and lacking consistency of thought within the context of the new relationships that were being negotiated between the state and the individual. As Martin Pugh argues, Lloyd George 'showed no *intellectual* interest in economic ideas or in Liberalism … It was his unsystematic habit of jumping from one subject to another that first led his officials to dub him "The Goat"'.[11] A. G. Gardiner, editor of the Edwardian Liberal *Daily News*, commented in his lively 1908 pen-portrait of Lloyd George that, 'he is the improviser of politics. He spins his web as he goes along. He thinks best on his feet … He is no Socialist, for, as I have said, he has no theories, and Socialism is all theory'.[12]

A. G. Gardiner was writing here not as a detached political commentator, but rather as one of a number of Edwardian Liberal newspaper editors who held a close personal relationship with Lloyd George. Indeed, Lloyd George relied heavily upon a network of Liberal writers for their outspoken support for social reform. His close confidants included Gardiner, the *Daily Chronicle*'s Robert Donald and C. P. Scott of the *Manchester Guardian*.[13] In 1913 Lloyd George gratefully acknowledged the 'warm and loyal friendship' that Gardiner provided, and was confident in 1911 that he could 'always rely on the powerful influence of the *Daily News*'.[14] Correspondences such as these lend much support to Ian Packer's view that, in effect, the Edwardian Liberal press acted as 'an extension of the party'.[15] The closeness of the Liberal Party and press, in addition to the mass-circulation newspaper industry that was developing in Britain by the turn of the twentieth century, means that the newspapers provide an invaluable source for helping to unpick the subtle and complex relationships between the state and the individual that were not programmatically outlined, but were nevertheless being tested, renegotiated and communicated when new Liberal welfare measures were introduced.

This article uses the Edwardian Liberal press to explore the representation of two key new Liberal reforms aimed at alleviating the social struggle endured by adult men and woman. Although some references are made to Conservative titles, most of the evidence for this article is drawn from four of the key Edwardian Liberal national daily newspapers – the morning *Daily News* and *Daily Chronicle* and the evening *Westminster Gazette* and *The Star* – in addition to a hugely influential provincial daily, the *Manchester Guardian*. The first Liberal reform to be considered in this article is the opening of a national network of labour exchanges in February 1910. Secondly, the first allocations of national insurance maternity benefits in January 1913 will be explored. The article questions how the newspapers sought to reduce any sense of shame, or loss of status, for men through their interactions with state social reform measures, or through their wives' receipt of welfare provisions. By considering press representations of these relationships between the state and the individual, the article explores how the new Liberalism as a popular political discourse was portrayed in Edwardian culture and how it was influenced by ideas about gender status, gender roles and domestic identities.

**Championed by the often impulsive and emotional David Lloyd George – renowned for his passionate platform performances – it is perhaps not surprising that Edwardian progressivism could appear haphazard and lacking consistency of thought within the context of the new relationships that were being negotiated between the state and the individual.**

### Labour exchanges

1908 saw a severe downturn in trade and employment. Unemployment figures were at their highest since the depression of the mid-1880s, standing at 9.5 per cent by October 1908. The Conservatives promoted their slogan of 'tariff reform means work for all' as the cure for these embarrassing statistics.[16] However, on the recommendation of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law, which convened between 1905 and 1909, the Liberals responded with the Labour Exchanges Act 1909, organised by Winston Churchill as the president of the Board of Trade. The commission urged the formation of 'a labour exchange, established and maintained by the Board of Trade, to provide efficient machinery for putting those requiring work and those requiring workers into prompt communication'.[17] Both the Majority and Minority Poor Law Commissioners' reports acknowledged that employers and workers did not have a satisfactory means of distributing and finding information about available jobs.[18]

The Employment Exchanges Committee of the Central (Unemployed) Body of London had already established some labour exchanges in London, following the passing of the Conservative 1905 Unemployed Workmen Act. However, the Poor Law reports singled out the exchanges' common association with relief and charity as one of the major factors accounting for their overall failure to attract those seeking work. The commissioners reported that there was a tendency to confuse the exchanges with Distress Committees, repelling those who objected to 'a system of "State-created work"'.[19] Therefore, a key aim of the Board of Trade was to improve the perception of, and remove prejudices surrounding, the new national network of labour exchanges, providing them with a more positive, rather than shaming, image for respectable workers.[20]

Indeed, introducing the Labour Exchanges Bill into the House of Commons in 1909, Churchill explained that:

One of the earliest labour exchanges

> Those who know the sort of humiliation to which the genuine working man is subject, by being very often indistinguishable from one of the class of mere loafers and vagrants, will recognise as of great importance the steps which can sharply and irretrievably divide the two classes in our society'.[21]

Illuminating this division was a vital aim of the national network of labour exchanges not only to reduce any sense of shame surrounding interactions with the exchanges but also because they were designed as the necessary preliminary step before unemployment insurance legislation was introduced (into some trades in 1912). Labour exchanges provided the mechanism for testing willingness to work, thereby distinguishing between applications for assistance put forward by the deserving, able-bodied unemployed and the undeserving loafer. If an individual was registered at a labour exchange and the exchange could not find them a job then they were to be considered unemployed against their will and entitled to unemployment benefit.[22]

When the new labour exchanges opened across Britain in February 1910, newspaper journalists were present as crowds of unemployed people queued to register. In a similar fashion to the introduction of state pensions in 1909, the scenes at the new labour exchanges were portrayed by the Liberal press as 'a great national event' and achievement. Indeed, the setting caused the Liberal halfpenny *Daily Chronicle* to draw immediate comparisons between the 'new industrial era' marked by the opening of the exchanges and 'the first day of January last year [which] saw the dawn of a new period … for the veterans of labour by the payment of the first old age pensions'.[23] The so-called 'new journalism' style of reportage that emerged by the turn of the twentieth century encouraged newspapers to seek out the more personalised human interest side of news stories, rather than documenting them in a detached and authoritative tone, in order to capture larger audiences in an increasingly competitive market.[24] Thus a journalist reporting on the labour exchanges for the halfpenny *Daily News* commented on being 'struck by the sound, businesslike demeanour of the men … There was a look of untold suffering on many faces, and the gleam of hope in many tearful eyes, as I looked down the queue'.[25]

The hopeful reportage provided by the Liberal press in response to the labour exchanges acted as an antidote to other dismal depictions of unemployed men that were also published in the newspapers at the time. The *Westminster Gazette*, an influential Liberal evening newspaper, drew attention to the plight of out-of-work men in February 1910, in addition to their loss of masculine status as provider for their families. Despite the *Westminster Gazette's* status as a moderate rather than outspokenly radical organ, compared with titles such as the *Daily News*, the newspaper's Liberal Imperialist stance was allied with support for a rational programme of social reform, not least in order to address the question of national efficiency.[26] The newspaper explained that men 'willing and anxious to work were wasting time and confidence and strength in fruitless search

**In contrast to these reports, the Liberal newspapers placed much emphasis on the idea that interactions with labour exchanges, unlike relief provided under the draconian Poor Law Amendment Act 1834, helped to positively promote masculine respectability and their head-of-household status.**

for employment, from factory to factory, works to works, and town to town'. This was resulting in 'loss in attrition of self-respect' and 'heavy charges upon the poor-rate for the maintenance of wives and children'.[27] Additionally, one week after the opening of the exchanges a pen portrait by the *Daily Chronicle* drew attention to the fact that the scourge of unemployment meant for many the inability to settle down and acquire the coveted domestic masculine status of husband, father and provider. The article explained that the unemployed man often 'lurks in the cheap lodging-houses' or 'in "apartments for single gentlemen"'. The human-interest article went on to acknowledge the negative emotions of shame, terror and fear that were felt by the unemployed:

> The unemployed gentleman … does not exhibit his poverty, but hides it – hides it with shame, with a terror lest it should be openly revealed, with a haunting fear that it may be seen by people who pass him in the street … He knows that if he loses his "respectability" all is lost.[28]

In contrast to these reports, the Liberal newspapers placed much emphasis on the idea that interactions with labour exchanges, unlike relief provided under the draconian Poor Law Amendment Act 1834, helped to positively promote masculine respectability and their head-of-household status. The exchanges provided the appropriate conditions to enable willing workers to keep their families together and to maintain their status as domestic patriarchs. Unemployed men often faced periods of separation from their families during the search for employment outside of their locality, or even enforced separation through their eventual admission into the gender-segregated workhouse. However, the *Daily Chronicle* provided details of the new labour exchange procedure, drawing attention to the fact that the focus was upon keeping families together and reducing 'the tramp from town to town in search of employment' at the expense of 'hope, confidence, respectability, and independence'. The newspaper explained that the unemployed man simply needed to register himself once 'at the nearest bureau' and then he might be dispatched immediately to a local job. 'Suppose employment is only to be found at the end of a railway journey', the article continued, 'the Board of Trade has powers to draw upon the Treasury for the expense of such journey, even to the extent of procuring tickets for the workman's family and defraying the cost of the removal of his goods and chattels to the new home in the fresh sphere of labour'. Such costs could then be repaid in small instalments once the workman was settled in employment.[29]

The Liberal labour exchanges were designed to provide both out-of-work men and women with assistance. However, reportage in the Liberal press focused upon male interactions with the new exchanges, with little more than passing references to the separate facilities provided for women. Reinforcing the adult male breadwinner model, the influential Liberal *Manchester Guardian* noted that 'very few women' were registering to find work at the Stockport exchange.[30] The *Daily News* also explained that 'one of the most noticeable features' at a labour exchange in Leeds 'was the absence of women applicants'. The depiction of this busy exchange as a masculine space was reinforced by the report that at 'about midday the crush outside the building became so great that one of the windows gave way under the pressure, and the police were sent for'.[31] The Conservative press also drew attention to operational difficulties surrounding the opening of the exchanges, but these reports were designed to highlight poor planning. *The Times* noted that arrangements at the exchanges 'were not working as smoothly as could be wished as there were not enough officials to cope with the rush of applicants'.[32] The popular Conservative halfpenny *Daily Mail* also commented on a great 'siege' as men 'struggled to get inside' the new exchanges, with some acknowledging 'the impossibility of registering their names' and leaving disheartened.[33]

As noted above, scenes at the opening of new exchanges in February 1910 – with the presence of journalists and large queues of people ready to interact with the state in a new and beneficial way – caused immediate comparisons to be drawn with the queues of elderly people who arrived at post offices across the country to collect their first state pensions in January 1909. However, there were important differences in the Liberal newspapers' reportage of these two events. It is undoubtedly true that the introduction of old age pensions was commonly discussed in Liberal discourse as a right conferred upon those who had worked hard for the state and paid their taxes, and therefore now, when they were less able, deserved a share in the national wealth. Nevertheless, a non-contributory system of state pensions was by no means universally supported. Even William Beveridge – the future architect of the welfare state – commented that it 'sets up the state in the eyes of the individual as a source of free gifts'.[34] In January 1909 the Liberal press continually used one key word to depict the new pensioners (60 per cent of whom were female) and the stories that they told journalists of their life struggles and current distress: *pathetic*.[35] The newspapers were alluding to the pensioners' pathos and their ability to evoke pity, sympathy and sorrow. Indeed, the human-interest-based stories that the newspapers reported sought to evoke huge sympathy for the emotional distress and physical suffering of many of the pensioners in order to publicly justify the tax-funded pensions. As the *Daily News* observed, 'the little scenes and dialogues which fill the newspapers must have brought home to any who still doubted the immense importance of the pension'.[36] In contrast, detailed accounts of

emotional suffering, job loss and physical injury were absent from reports about the opening of labour exchanges – the dominant emotion associated with the exchanges was not sympathy but rather (as previously alluded to) *hope*.

Hope actually became a highly visible symbol of the labour exchanges. Indeed, discussing the establishment of the exchanges in January 1910, the *Daily News* commented that, 'green – the colour of hope – is the distinctive hue of the fronts of the new exchanges, both in London and the country'.[37] It was reported that Churchill reiterated this sentiment in speeches that he made outside the newly opened exchanges as he toured London: 'they are painted in green – the colour of hope', he explained.[38] Writing on the most esteemed Victorian manly virtue – character – in 1871, Samuel Smiles identified hope as the 'chiefest of blessings' and 'the parent of all effort and endeavour … It may be said to be the moral engine that moves the world and keeps it in action'.[39] In a 1913 discussion, patience and hope were similarly discussed as 'the chief requisites in the slow but sure process of Self-development'.[40] Focusing upon hope in their reports, the labour exchanges were therefore not represented by the Liberal newspapers as the apparatus of collectivism or one-way state assistance for unemployed men. The hope-focused reportage actually provided a challenge to traditional narratives of (particularly male) unemployment, which are normally presented in terms of weakness, sadness and helplessness.[41] The hope-focused reportage, with all of hope's masculine Victorian connotations, served to portray registration at the labour exchanges as a proactive and vital test of individual character and virtue, signifying the ability to independently remain hopeful in the face of adversity.[42]

In contrast to this hope-focused reportage, the Conservative *Daily Mail's* depiction of the new labour exchanges portrayed them as a cruel and inevitably motivation-sapping experience for great numbers of unemployed men because they only offered false hope. For example, in one letter printed by the newspaper, a correspondent referred to the 'terrible disappointment to hundreds, possibly thousands, of working men seeking employment' when they became aware of the limited numbers of jobs actually available at the exchanges. Indicating that this false hope would not provide an energising test of masculine character and virtue, the correspondent continued, 'I will go as far as to say that the outlook afforded by the labour bureau to a man who has been out of employment for months in some instances may be the last blow which will finally thrust him down among the submerged'.[43]

The Liberal press did draw attention to some hopeless or despairing men, often as single or isolated cases. These men were portrayed as unable to patiently and constructively apply themselves to the job-seeking process for the sake of their family. Reports about these men were sometimes used to contrast them with, and highlight, the positive characters of the hopeful and independent men who engaged with the exchanges – such men were depicted as in the majority. Indeed, the *Manchester Guardian's* correspondent explained that, 'applicants at the exchanges were hopeful, and in most cases appreciative', although 'here and there' a despondent man was met 'who had been robbed of his delusion that labour exchanges were going to perform the much-craved miracle of the twentieth century and find work for all'.[44] Elsewhere, the *Daily News* reported on a hopeless man from Walthamstow with five children to keep. He was sentenced to a month's hard labour having sworn at, and then struck, an exchange manager when he was provided with no immediate work.[45] Conversely, *The Star* reported on a man who committed suicide in his front room having been promised work by his labour exchange. 'He appeared depressed and nervous about undertaking the work after he had been idle so long', the newspaper explained.[46]

### National insurance maternity benefits

The opening of new labour exchanges in February 1910 represented the first instalment of the new Liberal three-part programme to relieve distress and prevent destitution for the willing worker and his family. The final stage saw the passing of legislation to introduce unemployment insurance into some trades in 1912.[47] The second stage, the National Insurance Act of 1911, established compulsory insurance for workers over 16 years of age, earning less than £160 per year. This scheme was financed through weekly contributions of 4*d*. from male workers, or 3*d*. from female workers, in addition to 3*d*. from the employer and 2*d*. from the state. The initiative provided sick pay, entitled workers to free treatment by a doctor and treatment in a sanatorium for tuberculosis. The wife of an insured man was also entitled to a maternity benefit of 30*s*. The contributions began in July 1912 and the first maternity benefits were paid in January 1913.[48]

The national insurance scheme sought to secure the nation's working population against illness, adversity and sudden increased pressures on their family budgets. To some extent Liberal discourse surrounding the scheme emphasised the self-help nature of the policy, portraying it as an extension of the drive that had produced friendly and building societies during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Yet the government-led nature of the 1911 compulsory insurance scheme did mean that collectivist rhetoric had a huge role to play,[49] even at the expense of publicly reinforcing notions of manly independence and domestic patriarchy. As the *Liberal Monthly* explained in 1911, the watchword of the 'great national scheme' was 'brotherhood' and the working man should be motivated by the

**The national insurance scheme sought to secure the nation's working population against illness, adversity and sudden increased pressures on their family budgets. To some extent Liberal discourse surrounding the scheme emphasised the self-help nature of the policy, portraying it as an extension of the drive that had produced friendly and building societies during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.**

Liberal Party poster advertising the 1911 National Insurance Act

prospect of helping to 'strengthen the fund and relieve his sick neighbour'.[50] The *Liberal Monthly's* bold assertion that the party had 'lifted the latch and entered' the workman's cottage came following the introduction of national insurance.[51]

However, in reports surrounding the payment of the first national insurance maternity benefits, provided for the wives of insured men who gave birth from 13 January 1913, the merits of state machinery and collectivism were not focused upon by the Liberal newspapers. Instead, the rhetoric of individual good fortune, bad luck, chance, opportunity and insecurity dominated the newspapers' human-interest-based coverage of events. This served to discretely disconnect the payments from a planned state intervention, putting a different focus on the occasion. The halfpenny Liberal evening newspaper *The Star* explained on 13 January 1913 that today's newborn babies were 'not, at present, old enough to realise the importance of having been born this morning instead of a few ticks of the clock on the Sunday side of midnight'.[52] The sense of good fortune rather than community conscious collectivism surrounding the payment was further highlighted in personal stories provided to the press. A new father told a *Daily News* reporter that, '"it seems to me that it's luck, this money – it just fell in at the right time"'. Another father told the reporter of his relief at finding out that his daughter had been born '"one minute over the time"'.[53] Conversely, a woman discussing the benefits with a *Star* journalist commented 'enviously' that she '"wished my last [child] had come eight months later"'.[54]

The *Daily News'* pledge to 'send a further message of joy and goodwill' to the first maternity babies also served to add an additional layer of (non-state-funded) excitement and opportunity to the occasion. The newspaper announced that it would devote a total of 200 guineas to be paid in sums of £3 each to the parents of the first 'benefit baby' born on 13 January 1913 in seventy towns and districts across Britain.[55] Critics identified newspaper competitions and the 'artful schemes of stimulating circulation by the distribution of money gifts' as a 'journalistic hooliganism' marking one of the worst gimmicks of the 'new journalism', often involving hidden treasure hunts and the creation of public nuisances.[56] The *Daily News* adapted this technique, advertising and promoting excitement surrounding the newspaper, but within a political context and through the more civilised means of requesting that telegrams were sent to the newspaper at the earliest convenience announcing the times of births. The newspaper explained that it 'relies upon its readers throughout the United Kingdom to make the Bounty known in every home that can possibly be concerned, so that it may fall into the right hands'.[57]

As Pat Thane highlights, the cash maternity benefit was initially only going to be made payable to the insured man himself. However, following a campaign against this policy the benefit

was paid directly to the wife of the insured man when it was finally introduced.[58] Once introduced, the Liberal press continually highlighted that the benefit was to directly aid mothers rather than fathers. On the one hand, this focus can be viewed as part of the wider feminist celebration of an independent monetary resource provided for wives and mothers, which could not be withheld by a brutal or irresponsible husband.[59] On the other hand, or perhaps additionally, this focus in the Liberal reportage served to subtly disconnect working men from this new type of cash handout from the state.[60] *The Star*'s correspondent reported a conversation with Dr Richmond, an esteemed doctor in Bermondsey. Implicitly re-establishing masculine independence in the breadwinner role, the doctor explained that, '"before to-day the mother would often be back at work a week after the birth of her child. The Insurance Act has altered all this. The invalid will be relieved of all work."'.[61] The *Daily Chronicle* discussed the welfare provision under the headlines of 'New Era For Mothers' and 'Mother's Day',[62] while the *Star* reporter's line of questioning was, '"What is mother going to do with the 30*s*?"'.[63] *The Star* also referred to 'the thirty shillings maternity benefit which every insurance baby brings its mother',[64] and the *Daily News* acknowledged the babies 'whose mothers are insured under Mr. Lloyd George's beneficent Act'.[65] Reciprocally, the newspapers reported mothers thanking the state for the benefits. One mother pledged to the *Star* reporter that she would name her son '"Lloyd George Churchill!"', while another contemplated naming her daughter Georgina 'with compliments and thanks to Mr. Lloyd George'.[66]

**Yet importantly, the newspapers did not simply reflect gender norms – they also helped to shape and progress them too. As domestic care and family budgets became the important business of high politics, women were able to develop more public, political identities.**

### Conclusions and wider reflections

The exploration of new Liberal press representations provided in this article highlights the value that a gendered lens can offer political history and vice versa – what the study of political identities can contribute to our understanding of gender history. It is fair to conclude that press representations of the new Liberalism largely sought to confirm or reassert the traditional and much valued role of working men as heads of households and providers for their families – the newspapers provided no suggestion that this role was being assumed by the state. The hope – as opposed to sympathy – based reportage accompanying the opening of labour exchanges in 1910, in addition to the absence of extensive reportage about a female presence at the exchanges, helped to reduce any sense of shame or embarrassment surrounding male interactions with the provision. Furthermore, in reports concerning the first maternity payments in 1913 the focus was upon luck and competition as opposed to a planned state intervention. There was also a clear emphasis upon wives and mothers as direct recipients of the maternity benefits rather than fathers as insured workmen. This helped to bypass any new and difficult questions surrounding the future of masculine independence in the face of state cash handouts.

Through this focus upon women as wives and mothers the press was also presenting women with very traditional domestic identities. Yet importantly, the newspapers did not simply reflect gender norms – they also helped to shape and progress them too. As domestic care and family budgets became the important business of high politics, women were able to develop more public, political identities. Indeed, the newspapers' human-interest stories surrounding the allocation of the first maternity benefits often put women at the centre of the political stage, empowering them as reporters sought to find out how they would spend their money and why it was needed. Such accounts may well have achieved the desired aim of impacting upon public opinion, in terms of providing vital justification for state intervention into the lives and homes of working people and the poor.

Finally, it is now the intention to provide some tentative observations and wider reflections on how this article can contribute to historiographical debates surrounding the new Liberalism and liberalism with a small 'l' into the twentieth century. It is no overstatement to note that the Edwardian new Liberalism has received an enormous amount of attention from historians. J. A. Thompson asserted in 1990 that this area of research was proving so compelling partly because of the 'ideal battlefield' that it provided 'for testing a range of "approaches", "styles of argument", and "techniques" … in the writing of political history'.[67] The new Liberalism laid the foundations of the welfare state in Britain, and it is also closely linked to one of the most perplexing conundrums that the political historian of twentieth-century Britain has grappled with. That is, how to account for the fall of the Liberal Party as a vital force in politics, and its replacement by the Labour Party, consolidated during the interwar period. Long-running historiographical debates surrounding the Edwardian new Liberalism traditionally focused upon the issue of Liberal decline: a consideration of whether, and the extent to which, the Edwardian period witnessed the emergence of class-based politics (with the formation of the parliamentary Labour Party) and thus the inevitable onset of the Liberal demise. Or, conversely, whether the Edwardian new Liberalism was successful in forging a popular working-class appeal to contain Labour, and it was in fact the First World War that dealt the deathblow to Liberalism.[68]

In more recent decades, developments in the field of the 'new political history' – with its post-structuralist emphasis on political identities as unstable and consciously constructed through language and culture – has encouraged a much more nuanced understanding of nineteenth- and

twentieth-century Liberalism, the emergence of Labour, and the place and continuities of liberalism more widely.[69] In line with these developments, this article has drawn attention to the importance of suspending preconceptions and estimations about the various weaknesses of Edwardian Liberalism, aware of its interwar decline, in order to explore what can be revealed about not only the nature of the new Liberalism, and the relationships between the state and the gendered individual that were being introduced, but also what can be revealed about the presentation and representation of liberalism and popular political debate more widely at the turn of the twentieth century.

This article has highlighted the human-interest based reportage that accompanied the opening of labour exchanges in 1910 and the distribution of maternity benefits in 1913, in addition to the *Daily News'* maternity benefit competition. The Edwardian Liberal newspapers' presentation of popular politics shown here can be seen as providing an important precursor, and possibly a model, for how mainstream newspapers with leftist sympathies went on to combine accessibility and human interest with meaningful political content about the state and the individual as the twentieth century progressed. As press historians have shown, popular interwar newspapers such as the *Daily Herald* and the *Daily Mirror*, positioned to varying degrees on the left, sought to combine human interest and readability with serious political discussion in order to convey their liberal messages, aid the growth of the Labour Party and capture large audiences in an increasingly competitive newspaper market.[70] The Edwardian Liberal newspapers' willingness to adapt, innovate and enliven their presentation of politics for the democratic age, (in ways that would help the Labour Party to thrive during the interwar period when the circulation of daily newspapers increased substantially), indicates that the Edwardian Liberals were not culturally stagnant or irrelevant in the face of emerging Labour and mass politics, within the context of the party's newspapers at least.

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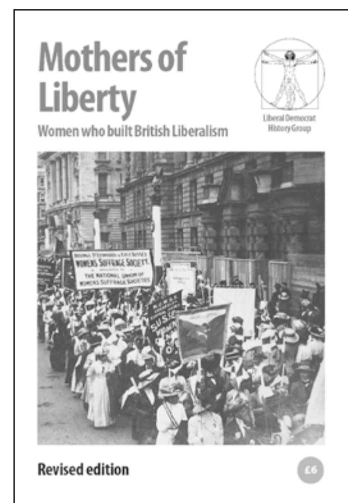
# Mothers of Liberty
## Women who built British Liberalism

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48 Sick pay benefits consisted of 10*s*. per week for men and 7*s*. 6*d*. per week for women for a total of thirteen weeks. This was followed by a 5*s*. allowance for a further thirteen weeks, and finally a 5*s*. disability benefit. See Pugh, *Lloyd George*, pp. 56–57.

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**Archive sources**

Dr J. Graham Jones lists the archival collections of interest to students of the Liberal Party held at the Flintshire County Record Office

# Liberal archives at Flintshire Record Office, Hawarden

Flintshire Record Office was established in 1951 and moved in 1956 to its present location at the Old Rectory, Hawarden, an eighteenth-century, grade II listed building set within its own grounds.

## Glynne-Gladstone MSS (GG)

Family and estate correspondence and papers of the Glynne and Gladstone families of Hawarden Castle, including Glynne family correspondence, c.1660–1875; Gladstone family correspondence, 1786–1952; Glynne family papers, 1593–early twentieth century; Gladstone family papers, 1532–1960; the Gladstone papers, 1821–c.1971; papers re. national memorial to William Ewart Gladstone, 1898–1925; papers re. St Deiniol's Library, 1889–post 1938; papers re. Catherine Gladstone Convalescent Home, Mitcham, c.1910–1923; estate and household papers, 1612–1953; business papers, 1760–1974; Newcastle Trust, 1822–1888.

Includes correspondence concerning the Liberal Party, 1934–5. Correspondents include H. W. Acomb (librarian, National Liberal Club), Lord Davies (treasurer, The New Commonwealth), W. Robert Davies (secretary, National Liberal Federation), F. E. Hamer and James J. W. Herbertson (secretaries, The New Commonwealth), John Henderson and Commander T. A. Longford (secretaries, National Liberal Club), F. W. Hirst (secretary, Public Economy League), John H. Humphreys (secretary, Proportional Representation Society), Harcourt Johnstone, MP, F. Llewellyn-Jones (MP for Flintshire), Sir Donald Maclean, Sir Charles Mallet, Geoffrey Le M. Mander, MP, Ramsay Muir (president, National Liberal Federation), Vivian Phillipps (secretary, Liberal Council), Sir Herbert Samuel, Leonard H. Smith (secretary, Chester Division Liberal Association), Harold Storey (Liberal Publication Department), and Thomas Waterhouse (Flintshire Liberal Association). (**GG/B/13/2/11**)

*Posters, handbills, etc. (printed).* Concerning elections and mostly in the Liberal interest, issued by candidates in various parliamentary elections: West Kent, 1880; South Lancashire, 1865; South-West Lancashire, 1868; Middlesex, 1880; Newark, 1846; Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1877–80; North Northumberland, 1880. (**GG/D/6/21/13**)

*Posters, handbills, etc. (printed).* Concerning elections and mostly in the Liberal interest, issued by candidates in various parliamentary elections: Peterborough, 1880; Salford, 1869–80; Stalybridge, 1885. (**GG/D/6/21/14**)

*Posters, handbills, etc. (printed).* Concerning elections and mostly in the Liberal interest: general elections and general political matters. (**GG/D/6/21/15**)

## Hawarden Estate Collection (H-DA)

Deeds for Flintshire, 1786–1928; estate papers of Hawarden Castle, Hawarden Settled and Burton Manor estates, including rentals, 1817–1955, surveys, valuations and inventories, 1738–c. 1959, tenancy agreements, 1828–1939, rate books and assessments, 1829–c. 1911, accounts, 1699–1960, sale particulars and plans, 1830–1929, correspondence, 1843–1977, maps and plans, 1733–1970, papers relating to Flintshire turnpike roads, 1828–c.1839 and Hawarden and District Waterworks, 1882–1884; Hawarden Rectory tithe and other papers, 1817–1931; Oak Farm, co. Staffs and Farmcot, co. Salop estate papers, 1800–1874; mineral leases (coal, ironstone, fireclay) and industrial records for collieries and brickworks in Hawarden, 1830–1944, and collieries and ironworks in Staffordshire, 1836–74; leases for railways and tramways in Buckley and Hawarden parish, 1835–1912; election papers relating to Sir Stephen R. Glynne's candidature and other campaigns, 1831–57; Flintshire Yeomanry Cavalry muster rolls, parade reports and returns, 1831–7, 1873; general financial and legal papers, 1829–1924.

## Sir John Herbert Lewis MP Papers (D-L)

Lewis entered parliament in 1892 as a Liberal, representing Flint Boroughs until 1906, Flintshire until 1918 and the University of Wales, a seat for which he had campaigned, until his retirement in 1922. His persistent advocacy and campaigning led to the establishment of a National Museum in Cardiff, a National Library in Aberystwyth and the obtaining of a Royal Charter establishing the University of Wales in 1893. He became the vice-president of the National Library of Wales in 1907, and its president 1926–1927. He was also appointed a Junior Lord of the Treasury, 1906; parliamentary secretary, Local Government Board, 1905; parliamentary secretary, Board of Education, 1915; Deputy Lieutenant of Flintshire; president of the Library Association of the United Kingdom, 1920–1921; governor of Aberystwyth, Bangor and Cardiff University Colleges and of the National Museum of Wales; and Constable of Flint Castle. He was awarded the gold medal from the Honourable Society of the Cymrodorion in 1927.

Correspondence belonging to Enoch Lewis, 1841–85, Catherine Lewis, 1863–8, John Herbert Lewis, 1868–1936, Ruth Lewis, 1887–1935, Herbert Mostyn Lewis, 1905–24, Kitty Lewis/Mrs Idwal Jones, c.1900–85, Idwal Jones, 1936–61, and miscellaneous correspondence, 1869–1917; property deeds, 1711–1939; sale particulars, plans, notices,

1812–1958; accounts, 1862–1927; correspondence and miscellanea, 1812–1959; family papers, c.1845–1982; political and official documents, 1841–1978; Welsh education and culture, 1819–1979, including Eisteddfodau, 1886–1971, the National Library of Wales, 1909–63 and Welsh folk songs, 1819–1979; religious materials on Welsh Calvinistic Methodism, 1716–1975, and Rev. Thomas Jones of Denbigh, 1803–1956; miscellaneous articles on North Wales, 1770–1978, including local history notes on Caerwys, 1891–1954, and papers of Flintshire Historical Society, 1909–22; and photographs, 1863–1967.

The Old Rectory, Hawarden
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### Sir Henry Morris-Jones Papers (D-MJ)

Sir John Henry Morris-Jones (1884–1972) was MP for Denbigh, 1929–50. Born in Waunfawr, Caernarfonshire, he was educated at Menai Bridge Grammar School, Anglesey, and St Mungo's College, Glasgow, qualifying as a doctor in 1906. He practised for over twenty years as a general practitioner in Colwyn Bay, Denbighshire, and became chairman of Colwyn Bay Urban District Council and a member of Denbighshire County Council. During the First World War, he was a medical officer with the 2nd Battalion of the Worcester Regiment, serving in France at a Red Cross Hospital at Wimeraux, and later served in the Royal Army Medical Corps. He was elected as the Liberal MP for Denbigh in 1929, becoming a Liberal National after 1931 and retiring in 1950. He was assistant government whip, 1932–1935, and a Lord Commissioner of the Treasury, 1935–1937 and Hon. Treasurer and Joint Hon. Secretary of the Reception Committee for the Royal Visit to North Wales, 1937. He chaired the Welsh Parliamentary Liberal Party, 1941–1942 and was a member of the parliamentary delegation to Australia for the sesqui-centenary celebrations, 1938, and the delegation to Buchenwald Concentration Camp, 1945. He wrote an autobiography, *Doctor in the Whips' Room* (1955).

Papers of Sir Henry Morris-Jones, 1896–2003, including diaries, 1911–18, 1925–44; pocket diaries, 1912–62; personal notebooks, 1950–62; letters, 1923–63, mainly from fellow MPs; parliamentary papers, 1941–9 and 1963; miscellaneous papers, 1906–65; papers relating to a parliamentary delegation to Buchenwald concentration camp, 1945; notes on his ancestors, 1896–1945; press cuttings and photographs relating to his career, 1927–60; and copies, typescripts and material relating to his publications, including *Doctor in the Whips' Room*, 1915–2003.

This collection includes the extensive series of diaries upon which he based his autobiography, *Doctor in the Whips' Room* (1955), and over 180 letters, selected by Sir Henry from his personal correspondence shortly before his death. Early entries (1925) concerned with practice, local government, and Liberal convention (Jan. 1925); later entries (1929–30) concerned with Denbigh election, etc. 'Private and intimate notes on the 1929–31 Parliament and the demise of the Liberal Party'; description of speeches, etc., in the House, notes on leading parliamentary figures, and Liberal Party meetings.

### Llywelyn Jones and Armon Ellis Collection

Papers relating to the Department of Education and Science grant to B.Y.P.C.A. Hawkesbury Institute, and related administration and audit. Includes statement re: investment of moneys. (D-DM/434/12/7/22)

**Photograph** of Lloyd George, F. Llewellyn Jones and A. J. Sylvester at Daniel Owen Centenary Celebrations, 1936. (PH/40/104).
**Photograph** of Lloyd George and Mr Llewellyn Jones, MP, with group at Rhyl. (PH/56/508).

### Waterhouse MSS, 1958–83 (D-WA)

Ronald Gough Waterhouse was born on 8 May 1926 at Holywell where his father, a prominent figure in local Liberal politics, owned a textile mill. After Holywell Grammar School, Ronald joined the RAF Volunteer Reserve in 1944 to train as a pilot, while also doing a short course at St John's, Cambridge. After demobilisation in 1948 he went back up to St John's to read Law as a MacMahon Scholar. Waterhouse was called to the Bar by Middle Temple as a Harmsworth Scholar in 1952. He joined chambers at Farrar's Building in the Temple. In due course, he established a busy mixed common law practice in London and on the Wales and Chester Circuit. In the 1959 general election he unsuccessfully contested West Flintshire for Labour; he had been a Liberal at university. In 1966 he was junior counsel to the Aberfan inquiry, and junior prosecuting counsel (led by the Attorney General, Sir Elwyn Jones) at the trial of the moors murderers, Ian Broady and Myra Hindley, at Chester Assizes. He served as deputy chairman of the Cheshire Quarter Sessions (1964–71) and of the Flintshire Quarter Sessions (1966–71). He took Silk in 1969.

Official Papers of Sir Ronald Waterhouse, 1958–83, including Political Papers, 1958–59, Quarter Sessions Records, 1964–71, Boundary Commission Records, 1971–83, Prevention of Terrorism Records 1974–78, Records relating to Free Wales Army 1969, Records relating to the Moors Murderers 1966, Aberfan Enquiry Records

1966–67, Rabies Enquiry Committee Papers 1970–71, and Connah's Quay 'B' Power Station Enquiry Papers 1970–71.

**Flintshire Liberal Association**
Minute book, 1924–37 (D/DM/512).

**Northop Liberal Association**
Minute book, 1919–39 (D/DM/350).

**Shotton Liberal Association**
Records, 1908–32 (D/DM/266).

**Sir Anthony Meyer MP Papers (D-AM)**
Sir Anthony John Charles Meyer, 3rd Baronet (1920–2004) was a British soldier, diplomat, and Conservative and later Liberal Democrat politician, best known for standing against Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher for the Conservative party leadership. In spite of his staunch right-wing views on economic policy, his passionate support of increased British integration into the European Union led to him becoming increasingly marginalised in Thatcher's Conservative Party.

After being deselected as a Conservative parliamentary candidate for the 1992 general election, Meyer became policy director of the European Movement, and in 1998 he joined the Pro-Euro Conservative Party. After that disbanded in 2001, he became a member of the Liberal Democrats.

Papers of Sir Anthony John Charles Meyer, comprising papers on constituency affairs, 1979–90; general political papers, 1980–90; and papers on general Welsh Affairs, 1985–2006.

**Parliamentary election leaflets (D/DM/458/1)**
Miscellaneous leaflets issued by Conservative, Labour, Liberal and Plaid Cymru candidates in the East and West Flint constituencies.

**Candidates' election addresses, papers, etc. for Alyn and Deeside District, May 1983 (D/DM/839/1)**
Including: photograph of SDP/Liberal Alliance candidate with members of Council of Social Democracy, David Owen, Shirley Williams, Roy Jenkins, and Bill Rodgers.

**Letters of condolence on the death of Dr F. Llewelyn-Jones, Liberal MP for Flintshire (D/DM/471/1)**
Letters addressed to Mr Humphrey Llewelyn-Jones, son of Dr F. Llewelyn Jones. 1929–1935 and January 1941.

**General election, Delyn SDP/Liberal Alliance records (D/DM/1770)**
Papers, correspondence, election leaflets, brochures, posters, etc. re: the Delyn SDP/Liberal Alliance election campaigns, 1985–87; 1987; and 1992 (by which time the party had changed its name to the Liberal Democrats).

**General election records, 2010 (D/DM/1672)**
Election leaflets, brochures, addresses and posters relating to the general election of 6 May 2010.

**General election records, 2015 (D/DM/1766)**
Election leaflets, newsletters, contact details relating to the general election of 7 May 2015.

**Contact details**
Flintshire Record Office
The Old Rectory, Rectory Lane.
Hawarden, Flintshire CH5 3NR

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*Dr J. Graham Jones was formerly senior archivist and head of the Welsh Political Archive at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.*

# Think history

***Can you spare some time to help the Liberal Democrat History Group?***

The History Group undertakes a wide range of activities – publishing this *Journal* and our Liberal history books and booklets, organising regular speaker meetings, maintaining the Liberal history website and providing assistance with research.

We'd like to do more, but our activities are limited by the number of people involved in running the Group. We would be enormously grateful for help with:

- Improving our website.
- Helping with our presence at Liberal Democrat conferences.
- Organising our meeting programme.
- Publicising our activities, through both social media and more traditional means.
- Running the organisation.

If you'd like to be involved in any of these activities, or anything else, contact the Editor, **Duncan Brack** (journal@liberalhistory.org.uk) – we would love to hear from you.

# Report

## Liberals in Local Government 1967–2017

Liberal Democrat History Group fringe meeting, Bournemouth, 17 September 2017, with Kath Pinnock, Tony Greaves, Richard Kemp, Sarah Bedford, Matt Cole and Ruth Dombey; chair: Andrew Stunell

Report by **Douglas Oliver**

As the Liberal Democrats reflected on a disappointing general election result at their autumn conference in Bournemouth last September, the History Group met to discuss the legacy of the party's local government network, how it helped establish the party's success in previous years, and how it might look to do so again.

The Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors today represents thousands of Lib Dem local representatives around the country, and seeks to help them get elected and apply Liberal principles in practice. Its predecessor organisation – the Association of Liberal Councillors – gradually emerged in the wake of disappointing election results in 1964 and 1965 at a national and local level, and was ultimately recognised by the federal Liberal Party in 1969; its 'golden anniversary' was marked as being in 2017 and celebrated at this meeting.

The discussion in the Bournemouth International Centre was chaired by former Liberal Democrat MP for Hazel Grove, (now Lord) Andrew Stunell. Whilst Stunell is now famous for his role in negotiating the coalition agreement of 2010, and acting as a minister in government until 2015, it was in local government that he cut his political teeth – far from the 'madding crowd' and 'ignoble strife' of Westminster. From 1979 and 1981 he served as a city and county councillor in Chester before acting as the ALC's policy officer. After so many years in active political service, the discussion was, he said, the first time he realised he was now part of history in his own right. However, he was happy to share it with such illustrious company.

The first panellist he introduced was his House of Lords colleague Baroness Kath Pinnock, who had served for many years in local government, and today acts as the party's spokesperson on local government. Pinnock served as a councillor in Kirklees from 1987 onwards, until she was appointed to the House of Lords in 2014.

Pinnock thanked the History Group for hosting the event and said that it was a great opportunity to reflect on the success and progress of ALC and ALDC over the years, 'not just in winning council seats, but also in pushing forward radical policy'. When the group was first conceived and met in Leamington in the middle 1960s, it had a membership of only a few hundred councillors. At that time, Pinnock said, the group was driven forward by a string of strong personalities, familiar to many in the room: Trevor Jones, who was its first chair; John Smithson, author of various manuals for winning elections; and Bernard Greaves and Gordon Lishman who were the authors of several radical works. Above all, she pointed to Tony Greaves, who was the group's first full-time organising secretary. Pinnock had gained the campaigning bug after local education cuts by the local Labour Party, and it was Greaves who gave her guidance on how to win. In particular, he suggested buying the group's book on campaigning, 'and delivering leaflets to every single door'.

From there, Pinnock said, ALC powered ahead in a virtuous cycle: 'more members meant more staff. More staff meant having more resources to help more people become council candidates and councillors.' The fundamental lesson, she said, was to build from the ground up.

Pinnock was followed by Tony Greaves himself, talking about both ALC's origins and his own role, which commenced in 1985. He criticised the Liberal Party head office, which he said was stifling – 'providing next to no useful services'. Key figures such as Gordon Lishman, David Hewitt, John Smithson and Phoebe Wynch were pivotal.

According to Greaves, the ALC's methods were basic by today's standards but just as effective. 'Long before the internet, they had cheap, table-top offset printing, golfball typewriters and letraset, cut-and-paste graphics using scissors and glue.' *Focus* artwork was generated by John Cookson. This enabled them to produce an ALC bulletin, full of anecdotes and proselytisation, six times a year in *Liberal News*. Meanwhile, a regular mailing, called *Grapevine*, was sent to councillors and candidates. Trevor Jones published a piece entitled 'Could you be a Liberal councillor?' Elizabeth Wilson gave guidance on casework. A guide to rural campaigning was written by a young Paddy Ashdown. *The Theory and Practice of Community Politics*, by Gordon Lishman and Bernard Greaves, was published in 1980 and remained key to the work of the ALC, not only in a logistical sense but also philosophically. As they said then:

> … the manner in which decisions, attitudes and priorities emerge from the full range of smaller communities to govern larger and larger communities. That process of confrontation conflict, negotiation, co-operation, change and law-making is the way in which societies should be run. The concept of pluralism is central to our view of politics, just as the concepts of free choice and diversity are central to our view of personal development. Pluralism is not a neat prescription or an easy concept: it is, however, essential to the alternative society which we are advocating.

The nature of community politics changed over the years. The caricature of an old man or woman discussing land value taxation became instead an image of someone looking at potholes. More than anything, said Greaves, it had worked. ALC started from a low base: in the May 1977 council elections, a total of 950 Liberal councillors contained only 350 members of ALC, with 'scattered beacons' of active councillors. By 1986, the party had almost 3,000 elected councillors, and ten years later, in 1996, reached a peak of 5,000 councillors with an ALC membership of 2,300.

Although the party's fortunes had declined in recent years, Greaves' mood was Kiplingesque: 'foundations remain – a new generation of Liberal campaigners will need to build on them all again.'

Community politics was nowhere more prominent than in the city of Liverpool, often neglected by the local Labour Party. Councillor Richard Kemp followed Greaves on the panel. He had

Speakers and chair: Matt Cole, Richard Kemp, Andrew Stunell, Tony Greaves, Sara Bedford, Kath Pinnock, Ruth Dombey

followed the famous Liverpool city councillor Trevor Jones both as councillor in Church Ward and also as leader of the council group. It was Jones who had invented the *Focus* leaflet and it was as a result of this legacy that the Liverpool Lib Dems sold mugs emblazoned with 'Welcome to Liverpool – home of Focus' at a recent Federal Conference on Merseyside.

Kemp echoed Greaves by stressing the simple method his local party had used to achieve success: deliver a letter or leaflet every six weeks and knock on each door at least once a year. Kemp said that Lib Dem councillors had to live and breathe their wards and his first test of any councillor was who they had on their speed dial: 'if they have police, vicar, imam, headteachers as close contacts, they are doing the right thing'. Finally, said Kemp, Liberals should celebrate their virtues or else there would be no point in being involved in politics in the first place. In Church Ward they spoke up for the achievements of the Lib Dems in coalition – and consequently had survived the period. Whatever one's interpretation of community politics, Kemp emphasised that it should not be merely a cynical marketing exercise: 'It's for your heart as well as your head.'

Councillor Sarah Bedford, Liberal Democrat leader of Three Rivers District Council, spoke about her experience of being a councillor for twenty-six years. Her authority had been Lib Dem run on and off since 1986, although it had a patchy period in the 1990s. Located in South West Hertfordshire, it was touched by the Grand Union Canal, M1 and M25. Highlights Bedford referred to included speaking up for the vulnerable, and she was proud of benefit support for the poorest members of her community. She was also proud of how Liberal values had been implemented through the extensive use of leisure services and environmental facilities. Furthermore, the Liberal Democrats in her area had not succumbed to NIMBY-ish tendencies, and instead had built houses and had seen a population growth in her ward from 5,100 to 8,400 in twenty-six years. Other areas of note included funding for the Citizen's Advice Bureau and opposition to a local casino.

In summary, said Bedford, it was crucial to have 'consensus and competence … Consensus does not mean weakness nor prevarication; success does not mean gimmickry. As a result of our competence and patience, we have never appeared in the local paper, *The Watford Observer*, as being criticised for mismanagement'. The history of her local party, and others benefiting from the advice of ALC and ALDC, demonstrated that the 'future can also be bright – and the Lib Dem role in it is vital'.

Dr Matt Cole, an academic from University of Birmingham, followed Bedford by putting the recent history of the ALC and ALDC in a more detailed historical context. It was the Whigs who had championed the Municipal Corporation Acts of the 1830s. The great radical Liberal Joseph Chamberlain, who gave regional recognition to Birmingham in the Victorian period, stands as perhaps the most famous example of local government leadership in British political history.

Echoing the previous speakers, Cole pointed out that in the 1950s it was actually Huddersfield that was the location of the biggest local party, as the Liberals sat in the doldrums of local and national politics. The revitalisation of the local Liberals in West Yorkshire, led by the likes of Richard Wainwright, encouraged residents to recognise, from 1966, that he could be trusted to represent them at Westminster too. In 1973 and 1979 Alan Beith and David Alton also experienced similar rises.

The significance of local government to the party's effectiveness was shown by the fact that in the early 2000s more Lib Dem MPs were former councillors than was the case for MPs in either the Tory or Labour parties. This made the party more cohesive at the national level, and also more in tune with its wider membership and to a certain extent with the electorate as a whole. However, said Cole, the challenges facing the party at both local and national level remained serious. Even before 2010, the party's growth had stalled, and whilst in government, 30 per cent of Liberal Democrat councillors' seats were lost. Nonetheless, the history of the ALC and ALDC should give the party plenty of inspiration.

The final speaker was Councillor Ruth Dombey, current leader of Sutton Council. The borough has been under Lib Dem control for thirty-one years. Three of the current Lib Dem councillors had actually been born in Sutton since the party first took it over in 1986.

However, Dombey took issue with the idea that local government should always be seen as a springboard to Westminster: because of the power of local government, there is much that local

politicians can do at a local level to put Liberal virtues into practice and to empower people. Indeed, Dombey pointed out that Sutton had done things the opposite way around to many boroughs, by first briefly holding one of its Westminster seats in the early 1970s, and then going on to win the council in the following decade, on both occasions with Graham Tope as the leading player.

Currently, forty-four out of fifty-seven councillors in Sutton are Lib Dems. Whilst the local party is working towards a ninth successive stint in power from May 2018, it had to think hard about why it wanted to win and then to express its aims clearly. For Dombey, the key task was to face the challenge of a loss of cohesion and a growth of mistrust in politicians, particularly in the context of the lies and deceit over Brexit. But this was why she felt the Liberal Democrats were in the strongest position to take on this challenge. She concluded that 'we do not believe in power as divine right – that is the Tory way. We do not believe people cannot be trusted – that is the Labour way. We believe in the freedom of people to empower themselves and build their own lives – that is the Lib Dem way … I have to pinch myself every day at the privilege I have for helping make this real'.

Twenty minutes of questions followed and many speakers from the floor echoed the panel. The first questioner, Sir David Williams – former leader of Richmond Council said that 'Tony is right – bottom-up not top-down politics'. In the discussion that followed, there was much fond reminiscence of worthy political battles past and the Liberal values they had involved. As the Liberal Democrats look to the future, they must also look to rebuild from the foundations of what once lay before. They may succeed again if – like Kipling – they can 'watch the things you gave your life to, broken, And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools'.

*Douglas Oliver is Secretary of the Liberal Democrat History Group.*

# Letters to the Editor

### Nelia Penman

Before Nelia Penman passed away on 16 August 2017, at the age of 101, she was the last (known) surviving Liberal Party candidate from the 1945 general election. In 1945 she contested Sevenoaks as Nelia Muspratt, two years before her marriage.

She had become the last surviving candidate following the passing of Arthur Walter James (Bury) and Philip John Willmett (Isle of Thanet), who both died in 2015. Jeremy Hutchinson, later Baron Hutchinson of Lullington, contested Westminster Abbey for Labour in 1945 and at the age of 102 is the last known surviving candidate of any party from that election.

Had Neville Chamberlain chosen to call a general election in 1939 as had been anticipated, Nelia Muspratt would have been Liberal candidate for Liverpool Wavertree, having been adopted as prospective candidate the year before at the age of just 22.

*Graem Peters*

### Lloyd George and Nonconformity.

Chris Wrigley's most interesting article ('The Nonconformist mind of Lloyd George', *Journal of Liberal History* 96, autumn 2017) rightly emphasises the importance of Lloyd George's Nonconformist background in his rise to the summit of power. His Campbellite Baptism reinforced the view of him as a Welsh outsider.

In fact, one could argue that it was Nonconformity which made him Prime Minister. In the intrigues and manoeuvres in late 1916 which led to his supplanting Asquith, his main champions were almost all Nonconformists who saw him personally as an egalitarian populist democrat, the complete opposite of elitist figures like Grey and the turncoat Congregationalist Asquith (not to mention Margot).

Those behind the moves for Lloyd George to lead party and nation during the conscription crisis – Addison, Kellaway and David Davies – were all committed Nonconformists, like many of Frederick Cawley's pro-conscription Liberal War Committee, the chapels in khaki. Many of those who swung from Asquith to Lloyd George in the first week of December 1916 were self-made Nonconformists, often businessmen, who resented the 'noblest Roman' patrician style of the Asquithians. They were joined by important Nonconformist journalists like Robertson Nicoll of the *British Weekly* along with the *Baptist Times* and *Christian World*, while the new premier took particular trouble in finding office for influential dissenting figures like Compton-Rickett and Illingworth.

The Methodists strongly backed Lloyd George on conscription and strategy, as they had once backed the South African War (which saw Ll.G. in fierce opposition). Despite failure to get their way over such issues as state purchase of the drink trade, and later over the bloody 'retaliation' policy in Ireland, they mostly stuck with the Baptist premier. Disendowing the Welsh Church's tithe in 1919 gave them some comfort.

The split between Lloyd Georgians and Asquithians was therefore as much about religious equality as about wartime leadership. The Liberal Party suffered grievously from it – and so did the moral shibboleths of the 'Nonconformist conscience'. Lloyd George could not even find comfort in his own tabernacle at Castle Street Baptist chapel. Like his pre-war guru, Dr. Clifford, its two post-war ministers, James Nicholas and Herbert Morgan, joined the Labour Party, yet more lapsed sheep gone astray.

*Kenneth O. Morgan*

### French elections

Michael Steed's comprehensive run through the alphabet soup of French politics over the decades in 'En Marche! A New Dawn for European Liberalism?' *(Journal of Liberal History* 96, autumn 2017), with its changing

allegiances, and personality-based politics, was the best argument in favour of a first-past-the-post electoral system I have read in years.

*Ian Stuart*

### The 2017 election (1)

Professor John Curtice strives at some length ('The 2017 Election – A Missed Opportunity?', *Journal of Liberal History* 96, autumn 2017) to explain why the Liberal Democrats did well in a few seats and badly in all others. He draws extensively on opinion polls to find some rhyme or reason in it all but I don't think finds any clear pattern.

Overall, we did badly but why in a few seats the trend was bucked, in some cases spectacularly so, is a bit of a mystery, and will probably remain so. No doubt efforts will be made to discover their secrets so they can be replicated elsewhere next time but I suspect the effort will be in vain. Certainly we might just as well consult Mystic Meg as study opinion polls; their reputation is surely in tatters as they get so much wrong with increasing frequency.

What we do know is that the base of the party is becoming stronger as we gain seats in council elections all over the country, using tried and tested techniques. Unfortunately they involve us in a lot of hard and persistent work, but there is simply no substitute.

*Trevor Jones*

### The 2017 election (2)

I take issue with the theme of Professor Curtice's article ('The 2017 Election – A Missed Opportunity?', *Journal of Liberal History* 96, autumn 2017). The implication of the title is that the Liberal Democrats could have done more and performed better in the election, an idea which I reject.

Given what happened in 2015, with all the analysts I read forecasting that the party would cease to exist as a significant force, and probably be reduced to three seats at a subsequent election, the comeback was the best that could have been hoped for. In addition, a clear marker has been put down for the future. Elections do not stand in isolation – one example from history being that a key factor in Labour´s defeat in 1959 was the memory of post-war austerity. Corbyn's success has been largely based on the advantage he has in being able to distance himself from the shambles of the Blair–Brown governments.

Many voters are still clinging to the idea that the Brexit scenario will play out successfully while we still hear confident predictions that Brexit has not affected the economy as forecast. This ignored the fact that Brexit has not happened and nobody, least of all the British government, has any idea of what final terms, if any, will be agreed and by definition what the effects of this will be.

Reality will soon dawn, however, and the party's position is clear. Many voters and former party workers did not forgive the leadership for what they considered to be a great betrayal in 2010. When MPs voted for the deal were they told that the intention was to ditch the main policy on which the election had been fought, i.e. tuition fees? When the party went into coalition in Scotland it was made quite clear that the abolition of tuition fees was a red line.

On a broader perspective Lord Heseltine has stated that the Conservatives have been the usual party of government in the UK. What he failed to mention is that since 1922 we have witnessed a catastrophic decline in Britain's world position. While loss of Empire was inevitable and, indeed, a natural development, it was not inevitable that Britain would find itself in the position of overwhelming weakness it was in in 1940, after nine years of Conservative government, or the position the UK will be in after Brexit, on the sidelines in Europe without influence and with an economy largely dependent on such deals as can be negotiated. With the US seeking to put a 180 per cent penal tariff on Canadian British aircraft the value of any free trade deal there must be highly suspect.

In 1960 Jo Grimond wrote that if the Liberal Party failed to make the breakthrough it would be because the British people were not prepared to face up to the reality of their new position in the world. That is an appropriate epitaph for the recent general election.

Looking to the future the one hope is that as future events unfold people should look back on the Coalition government as a period of comparative success for the British economy – a period that will come to an abrupt end in 2019. As mentioned earlier the success of the Liberal Democrats in 2017 was to lay down a clear policy path for the future.

*Richard Pealling*

# Reviews

## Radical Joe and Chocolate George

Andrew Reekes, *Two Titans, One City: Joseph Chamberlain and George Cadbury* (History West Midlands, 2017)

Review by **Philip Davis**

Andrew Reekes' biography of two giant figures in the genesis of modern Birmingham marks another welcome venture from local publisher West Midlands History. Local loyalties or no, this comparative biography recommends itself as a fascinating study of two very different personalities who left an enduring mark on 'the City of a Thousand Trades' and were nationally significant figures.

Reekes' book on Joseph Chamberlain and George Cadbury demonstrates not only their distinctiveness – chiefly of character – but also their interactions. He maps their common beginnings from municipal Liberalism and success in West Midlands manufacturing, to their later sharp political divergence, particularly over Chamberlain's imperialism and the Boer War. These distinctive journeys are illuminated by the common thread of Birmingham localism. Long after they had parted company politically and with no great personal warmth between them, Cadbury was willing to give financial and moral support to Chamberlain's last great city project, the founding of Birmingham University. Despite strong political differences the growing city remained at the heart of both men's affection and interests.

In twenty-first-century Birmingham, George Cadbury's name is more visible than Chamberlain's. Despite the controversial loss of the Cadbury brand to a US food giant, the name endures in the production of the eponymous chocolate that funded his family fortune. His vision is also apparent in Bournville, which, if no longer the edge-of-city location that first drew him, remains the attractive suburb in which Cadbury turned his belief in the garden city ideal into bricks and mortar.

While Chamberlain's 1879 home, Highbury, remains and anticipates refurbishment under the new, independent Chamberlain Highbury Trust, the Birmingham MP and cabinet minister left a different legacy. Equally driven by strong self-belief, this epitome of Victorian bourgeois confidence was widely influential on the development of modern politics and democracy. Joe was politician as warrior *par excellence*. His energy and implacable will – assisted by the comfortable independence granted by a highly successful business career – made the political weather. As is often the case, this inspirational leadership style was a mixed blessing for other political leaders. Joe Chamberlain is one of the few politicians to have split both the major political parties of his era. In comparison Michael Gove and Boris Johnson are models of constancy and loyalty.

In the early 1870s, building on the work of local MP George Dixon, Councillor William Harris and other organisers in the Birmingham Liberal Association, Chamberlain energised a template of local political organisation. The *caucus* was born. The efforts of another Chamberlain associate, the indefatigable Birmingham draper Francis Schnadhorst, turned the caucus into a national model. As Asa Briggs notes, 'it provided a pattern for other constituency Liberal parties and the National Liberal Federation came to be identified with it'. These mid-nineteenth-century organisational models laid a local foundation for modern British politics. Chamberlain was central to the creation of a pattern of political activism that, arguably, only began to slowly change in response to communications and digital revolutions a hundred years later.

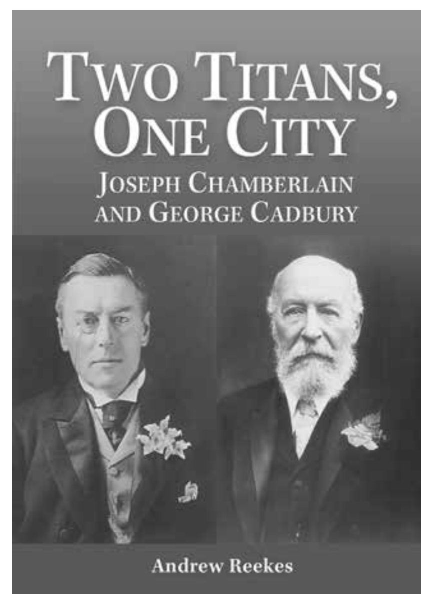
Of the two 'titans', Joe Chamberlain's path led furthest from the politics of his youth. Cadbury, driven by strong Quaker convictions throughout his life, promoted liberal and progressive causes to the end, though not without charges of hypocrisy when this avowedly Christian company failed to quickly dump a connection with slave-produced cocoa. In contrast Chamberlain moved from the 'Radical Joe' of the 1870s' *Unauthorised Programme (*the Bennite alternative left manifesto of its time?), to Colonial Secretary and premier imperialist rabble-rouser. Suspected of having a murky hand in the 1895 Jameson Raid and the later Boer War, Liberal papers called this colonial conflict 'Joe's War'. As Andrew Reekes' observes, this was not entirely fair but in many respects the charge hit the mark.

In stark contrast to Cadbury, conflict appeared meat and drink to Chamberlain. Some twenty-five years before, Radical Joe's programme for the working classes was highly controversial. It was 'unauthorised' not least by Gladstone, with whom Chamberlain had a poor relationship. That the aspirant Chamberlain and the Grand Old Man of Liberalism did not get on was to have substantial consequences for both. It dramatically impacted upon British and in particular Anglo-Irish politics, with tragic long-term consequences for both countries.

Andrew Reekes paints a balanced picture of both these Victorian men of power. For all his philanthropic works in his home city and support for progressive national causes, (including, unlike Chamberlain, votes for women), we learn that George Cadbury was no plaster saint. Cadbury's failure to deal expeditiously with the issue of Portuguese cocoa sourced from brutalised labour led to accusations of hypocrisy. The purchase of slave cocoa continued for eight years, sustained by Cadbury's equivocation as fact-finding missions and official reports kicked the cocoa tin down the road. It is a cautionary tale, still valid today, with a moral Cadbury should have foreseen: even sincere principles held by undoubtedly 'moral' folk may fall victim to profitable business dealings on a global scale.

Via his two protagonists, Reekes gives the reader an excellent feel for the politics of late Victorian Britain. My only criticism is the absence of an epilogue, drawing together the themes of legacy and place; though chapters on the family dynasties created by Cadbury and Chamberlain go some way to redressing this.

This is not a book about Birmingham politics per se, though Birmingham




is central to it. The importance of his two titans to the politics of their time, Reekes reminds the reader, speaks to Birmingham's past influence on a wider British canvas both before and after his chosen period. Before Chamberlain was born, mass pro-democracy agitation in the city of my birth – led by Thomas Atwood – helped force the first tentative steps in the hundred-year march to universal suffrage and the end of aristocratic political dominance. This shift to mass suffrage was never inevitable and Birmingham played its part in maintaining the pressure.

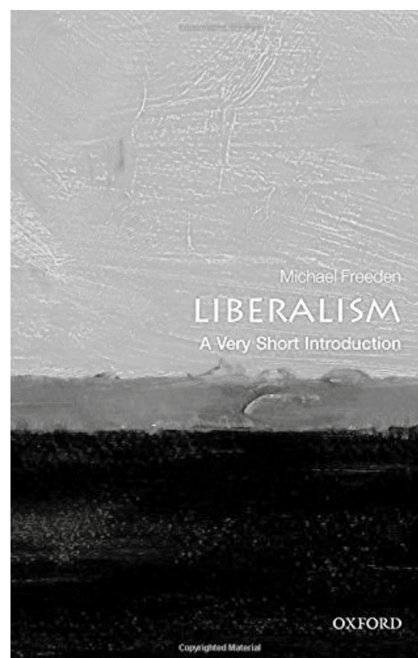
In the twenty-first century, Brum, like all cities outside London (which, uniquely, has full local and regional government) has lost political influence. Thatcherite rate capping, the inexorable centralisation of financial and other local powers (compounded by reckless austerity since 2010), has reduced local government to a pale shadow and a convenient whipping boy for the failings of Whitehall and Westminster. And yet, given the will, this retreat from local democracy can be reversed.

Andrew Reekes' book maps the political lives of Joseph Chamberlain and George Cadbury and indirectly, provides insight into how political vision, rooted in local experience and community, can achieve change. In 2017 the economic, social and political context differs radically, yet, it is a truism that challenges around power – who has it and for what purpose – remain as relevant as during Hobsbawm's 'long nineteenth century'. Can we ensure that current offers of devolved powers to city-regions, however weak, prompt a new political journey to a healthier

balance of central–local powers? It's what Radical Joe and Chocolate George would have wanted.

*Philip Davis is a Birmingham Labour Councillor, ex-Leader of Telford Council, and former chair of the West Midlands Regional Assembly. He is City Heritage Champion.*

1 Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities: Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, Middlesbrough, Melbourne, London* (Penguin, 1990).




## Liberalism: An outstanding introduction

Michael Freeden, *Liberalism. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2015)
Review by **Alastair J. Reid**

What an appropriate name for a writer on liberalism! My keyboard kept anticipating it as 'freedom'… And Michael Freeden has indeed written a generous and open book, which manages to combine a helpful account of its immediate subject with an overview of a distinctive approach to ideologies more generally. Moreover, there is enough repetition of its main ideas in different forms and contexts to make them easier to digest and remember.

Primarily about British liberalism, though with many interesting sideways comparisons with other counties, the book steers us quickly and skilfully from John Locke's proto-liberalism; through the Manchester School's economic utilitarianism; John Stuart Mill's exploration of individual development; the 'new liberalism' and state welfare (in T. H. Green, L. T. Hobhouse and J. A. Hobson); to pluralism and the dilemmas of contemporary identity politics. This sequence deliberately leaves out so-called 'neoliberalism', which he sees as such a thinned-out version as to cross over the boundary into conservatism.

However, in the course of this survey Freeden emphasises varieties of legitimate members of the family. First, varieties within political liberalism: especially the well-known distinction between classical liberalism restraining the state and social liberalism using the state to promote human well-being. But then, second, less well-known varieties outside the sphere of strictly political thought and action: especially the university liberalism of early nineteenth-century Germans, emphasising the spontaneous cultivation of intellectual and moral powers; and the philosophical liberalism of late twentieth-century North Americans, emphasising the rational clarification of norms of justice, democracy and individual rights.

Throughout, the book has a productive dual eye on history, without which the nature of liberalism could not begin to be understood, and the present day, which is what we can assume most of its readers will be interested in. Freeden develops a very useful image of 'layers' rather than successive stages: '… liberal ideas originated at different times, from diverse sources, and with varying aims in mind … they are a composite of accumulated, discarded and retrieved strata in continuously fluctuating combinations'. But he accompanies this with the concept of 'morphology', that is, a basic shape or set of core ideas which all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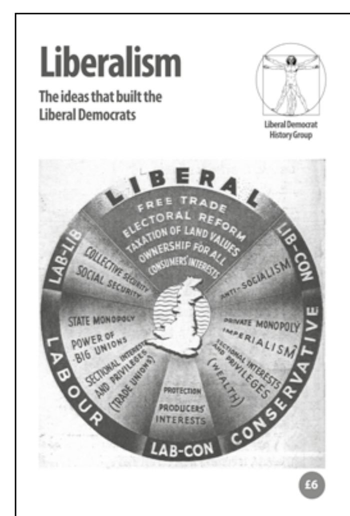


members of an ideological family will share. In this case it is hard to imagine a liberalism without some combination of: checks on power, liberty, rationality, progress, individuality, mutual interdependence and the public interest – though these will not always have the same weight and meaning in every case.

This shift away from the ambitions of political theory to create an optimal ideology and towards the descriptive approach of history suggests that it would be a waste of time and energy to search for a clear definition of 'real' or 'essential' liberalism. And, similarly, that it would be a mistake to expect it to offer ready-packaged and conclusive solutions to the dilemmas of policy-making: which can only be dealt with appropriately and humanely through public discussion of a menu of possibilities, producing compromises subject to constant adaptation. But that is the attraction of liberalism properly understood: that it is closer to the uncertainty and ambiguity of life as most people experience it than are many other political ideologies, particularly those of a totalitarian or utopian type which aim for some sort of final closure.

While it would therefore be not only premature but inappropriate to talk of the 'triumph of liberalism', we can say that the liberal tradition has been and still is a central pillar of the modern world: placing human beings at the centre of the social universe, unleashing a critical approach to knowledge, legitimising constant change in public policy, and advocating an appreciation of the diversity of people's ways of life. Thinkers and politicians who do not take these themes for granted are now generally regarded as somewhat cranky, though of course in liberal polities they are usually still allowed a voice.

It is hard to imagine a better introduction to liberalism than Freeden's short book and, like all outstanding introductions, it has a lot to offer to those who don't think they really need one.

*Alastair J. Reid is a Life Fellow of Girton College, Cambridge and author of a number of books on the history of British trade unions written from a broadly liberal perspective, including, most recently,* Alternatives to State-Socialism in Britain. Other Worlds of Labour in the Twentieth Century, *jointly edited with Peter Ackers.*

## Slippery Liberalism

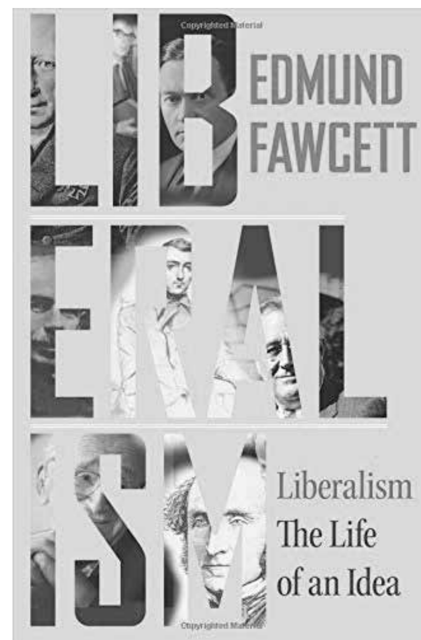
Edmund Fawcett, *Liberalism: The Life of an Idea* (Princeton University Press, 2015)

Review by **Tudor Jones**

At the heart of this book there seems to lie a persistent ambiguity, arguably even a definitional error, in respect of its subject matter. It purports at the outset to be, in the words of its author, who was a journalist for *The Economist* for more than three decades, 'a biographically led, non-specialist chronicle of liberalism as a practice of politics', one that has stretched over two centuries in the West since the early nineteenth century. Yet in the author's preface to this 2015 paperback edition of his book, originally published the previous year, Edmund Fawcett maintains that its underlying message was 'that liberal democracy was under challenge and urgently needed repair', a message that struck him 'as more pressing than ever.' At the same time, he states that *Liberalism: The Life of an Idea* 'offered a comprehensive guide to liberalism's foundations in conceptual and historical depth', thereby providing 'vital intellectual background for hard thinking about liberal democracy's future.' The author points out, too, that Part Two of his book, entitled 'Liberalism in Maturity and the Struggle with Democracy' (1880–1945), 'described liberalism's long and ever negotiable compromise with democracy from which liberal democracy emerged.'

In such a manner Fawcett appears to blur the distinction, which is both an empirical and a conceptual one, between, on the one hand, liberalism as a broad tradition of political thinking in the West, a particular political ideology, that has developed a distinctive vision of society based on certain core values and beliefs, and, on the other hand, liberal democracy as a type of political regime involving limited, constitutional government, popular consent, and the political and civil liberties of the individual citizen. At best it could be said that later, throughout his study, Fawcett treats liberalism as a meta-ideology, that is, broadly speaking, the higher, second-order ideology of the industrialised West, which has provided a framework embracing the rival values and beliefs of particular political doctrines. Since at least 1945 there have, after all, been other distinctive ideological approaches to liberal democracy besides those of classical liberalism and social liberalism, specifically, those of conservatism, in its various forms, particularly evident in the United States, as well as those of democratic socialism and social democracy.

From that blurred conceptual distinction, however, between liberalism and liberal democracy, seem to me to stem the two main shortcomings of *Liberalism: The Life of an Idea*: its very broad narrative approach and the extremely wide scope of Fawcett's historical account of Western liberalism as he conceives and defines it. With regard to Fawcett's historical narrative, it is developed chronologically in three parts: first, the period of liberalism's 'youthful definition' from 1830 to 1880; second, that of its maturation and its 'historic compromise with democracy' from 1880 to 1945, from which liberalism emerged in more inclusive form as democratic liberalism, better known as liberal democracy; and, third, the period from 1945 to 1989, when, 'after near-fatal failures' in the twentieth century, involving 'two world wars, political failures, and economic slump', liberal democracy 'won itself another



chance', in 1945 after the military defeat of fascism, 'its twentieth-century rival to the right.' In the aftermath of that victory, the manner in which liberal democracy revived and prospered is examined, in Part Three of Fawcett's book, culminating in the eventual demise of liberal democracy's 'twentieth-century rival to the left, Soviet Communism.'

In the book's coda, Fawcett nevertheless avoids striking a prematurely triumphalist note, acknowledging that, since 1989, and in the opening decades of the 21st century, 'the mood has darkened', with new threats posed to liberal democracy by various malevolent, illiberal forces. Towards the end of the book, in an interesting and reflective discussion, Fawcett addresses, too, the question of liberal democracy's future sustainability, socially, economically, and internationally. Avoiding, however, a purely Anglo-American focus, the three main parts of *Liberalism: The Life of an Idea* all concentrate on four different Western countries which, since 1945, have comprised liberal democracy's 'exemplary core' – namely, France, Britain, Germany, and the United States of America.

All of this narrative structure would appear historically coherent if the book were expressly a history of the gradual emergence and development of liberal democracy in those four countries. But, while recognising that liberalism, thus broadly equated by the author with liberal democracy, 'is bound to be capacious', Fawcett then seeks to bind that structure together with his own definition of Western liberalism. In his view, 'four broad ideas have guided liberal practice', namely, 'acknowledgment of inescapable ethical and material conflict within society, distrust of power, faith in human progress, and respect for people whatever they think and whoever they are.'

In developing within that very broad conceptual framework his even broader historical narrative, Fawcett draws on an impressively wide range of primary and secondary sources. But, since *Liberalism: The Life of an Idea* provides, in his words, 'a historical essay for the common reader', those sources are not referenced in regular footnotes, but are instead listed in detail at the end of the book. Fawcett's narrative, he also points out, 'strays into history, biography, political philosophy, and the history of ideas.' He candidly admits, however, that: 'I am an expert in none of those fields, though as a journalist I have seen a lot of liberal politics over the past forty-five years' in the four Western countries on which his narrative focuses.

But, as noted above, problems arise from the sheer breadth and density of Fawcett's narrative approach. This is particularly evident in Part One of the book, covering the period from 1830 to 1880, much of which is hard going for the reader. Here Fawcett frequently flits from the ideas of one political or social thinker to another without any developed historical narrative or, in some cases, without any coherent theoretical analysis. A section on John Stuart Mill, for example, while biographically interesting and perceptive, pays barely any attention to the most celebrated part of Mill's *On Liberty*, arguably the most eloquent exposition of the case for freedom of speech and expression in the English language, which comprises one-third of that essay, and which is as clearly relevant today as it was in mid-Victorian England, not least on many American, and some British, university campuses.

In Part Two of the book, too, on 'Liberalism in Maturity' (1880–1945), in a section on Liberal Imperialism, there are too many generalities in place of analysis, and too many sharp transitions made from the ideas of Joseph Chamberlain to those of Ernest Basserman in Germany. All of this is also apparent in a later section covering the ideas and conduct of 'liberal hawks' David Lloyd George, Georges Clemenceau, and Woodrow Wilson.

Fawcett's overall approach of blending biographical detail with historical narrative is, however, more effective when he offers more focused and coherent accounts of the economic ideas and theories of Hayek, Keynes, et al., in a section on 'Liberal Economics in the Slump', as well as in Part Three, on the period after 1945, in a section on what are very broadly categorised 'left-liberal' democrats in the 1950s and 1960s, namely, Pierre Mendès-France in France, Willy Brandt in West Germany, and Lyndon Johnson in the United States. The sheer breadth, however, of Fawcett's historical narrative does lead on occasion, perhaps for that very reason unsurprisingly, to some factual errors or flaws in theoretical analysis. To take two examples from a British perspective, the British Liberal Party was not reduced in the Labour landslide of the 1945 general election to, as he states, only six seats in parliament, but rather twelve. It did not suffer the fate of only six seats until the 1951 election. In addition, when Fawcett eventually mentions later and briefly John Stuart Mill's defence of free speech, he refers to Mill's 'sunny confidence in a vigorous, open contest of opinion.' Mill was in fact anything but confident about the inevitable advancement of truth as an effect of freedom of discussion. In *On Liberty* he wrote that: 'The dictum that truth always triumphs over persecution, is one of those pleasant falsehoods which men repeat after one another till they pass into commonplaces, but which all experience refutes.'

The very title of the final section of Part Three of Fawcett's study, namely, 'The Breadth of Liberal Politics in the 1950s–1980s', underlines what appears to be the book's second main shortcoming, that is, the extremely wide scope of his conception of Western liberalism in the four countries under scrutiny. To illustrate that point vividly, Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan, Francois Mitterand, and Helmut Kohl are thus all considered within the broad category of 'right liberalism in the 1970s–1980s'. Of Thatcher in particular, Fawcett writes that she 'was right-wing and for all her talk of freedom was over-fond of power, but she was still liberal.' Such a judgement is simplistic and manifestly too broad, as Thatcher herself would probably have pointed out, unless, that is, 'liberal' is intended here as a supporter of the ideals and institutions of liberal democracy, or unless, too, 'liberal' is narrowly equated with economic liberalism. It also seems to be a serious omission that in the entire content of Part Three of Fawcett's book, covering the post-1945 period as a whole, the only British Liberal thinker, in the sense of an exponent of the ideas and policies of organised party Liberalism in Britain, who comes under consideration is William Beveridge.

*Liberalism: The Life of an Idea* is a well-researched study that contains in some parts valuable historical observations and much insightful biographical detail. Its intellectual and literary aims are also admirable. But it simply tries to cover too much ground, and its perspective on Western liberalism as developed in its concentration on four exemplary nation-states is only broadly valid if, as noted previously, liberalism itself is considered as synonymous with liberal democracy, or else regarded as a meta-ideology. An examination of the differences, as well as the shared common ground, between classical liberalism and social liberalism, in itself by no means a hard-and-fast ideological distinction, as they developed

in Britain, France, Germany, and the United States, would, in my view, have provided the material for a more historically focused, less cluttered, and more intellectually coherent study.

In his preface to this 2015 paperback edition, Fawcett did concede, it should be added, that his book 'acknowledged the slipperiness of the label "liberal", the complexity of liberalism's key ideas and the absence of any decisive fact of the matter that would put marginal thinkers or politicians clearly in or clearly out of my large liberal tent.' He also mentioned that among the original reviews of his book, when it was first published in 2014, Samuel Brittan objected in *The Financial Times* 'that after 1945 my liberalism included everybody but "authoritarians and totalitarians".' To that Fawcett responded that had Brittan 'added "populists and theocrats" to those I excluded, I would have taken his complaint as praise.' This reviewer, however, while recognising the value of parts of Fawcett's study, and of its underlying purpose, tends to broadly concur with Samuel Brittan's judgement.

*Dr Tudor Jones is Hon. Research Fellow in History of Political Thought at Coventry University. His publications include* The Revival Of British Liberalism: From Grimond to Clegg *(Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). A revised and fully updated edition of that book, entitled* The Uneven Path of British Liberalism: from Jo Grimond to Brexit, *will be published by Manchester University Press in 2018.*

# 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.

### Letters of Richard Cobden (1804–65)

Knowledge of the whereabouts of any letters written by Cobden in private hands, autograph collections, and obscure locations in the UK and abroad for a complete digital edition of his letters. (For further details of the Cobden Letters Project, please see www.uea.ac.uk/his/research/cobdenproject). *Dr Anthony Howe School of History, University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ; a.c.howe@uea.ac.uk*.

### 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.*

### 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.*

### 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.*

### 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.*

### Russell Johnston, 1932–2008

Scottish Liberal politics was dominated for over thirty years (1965–95 and beyond) by two figures: David Steel and Russell Johnston. Of the former, much has been written; of the latter, surprisingly little. I am therefore researching with a view to writing a biography of Russell. If any readers can help – with records, other written material or reminiscences – please let me know, either by email or post. Sir Graham Watson, *sirgrahamwatson@gmail.com; 9/3 Merchiston Park, Edinburgh EH10 4PW.*

### Liberal song and the Glee Club

Aiming to set out the history of Liberal song from its origins to the days of the Liberal Revue and Liberator Songbook. Looking to complete a song archive, the history of the early, informal conference Glee Clubs in the 1960s and 1970s, and all things related. *Gareth Epps; garethepps@gmail.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.*

A Liberal Democrat History Group evening meeting

# ELECTION 2017 – A MISSED OPPORTUNITY?

The Liberal Democrats entered the 2017 general election campaign with high hopes: they were the only major UK-wide party unequivocally to oppose Brexit, and the campaign followed months of encouraging local government by-election results. But the outcome was a disappointment: a further fall in the vote from the catastrophic result in 2015, and four losses out of the eight seats that had been salvaged then – though this was offset by the recapture of eight seats which had been lost in 2015 or 2010.

What went wrong? Was it a failure of leadership, of positioning or of campaigning? Or was the party simply swept aside by the rising Labour tide?

Discuss the result and the implications for the Liberal Democrats with **Professor Phil Cowley** (co-author of *The British General Election of 2017*) and **James Gurling** (Chair, Liberal Democrats Federal Campaigns and Elections Committee). Chair: **Baroness Grender** (Paddy Ashdown's second-in-command on the 2015 Liberal Democrat election campaign).

The meeting follows the AGM of the Liberal Democrat History Group, which will take place at 6.30pm.

**7.00pm, Monday 5 February 2018**
Lady Violet Room, National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2HE

A Liberal Democrat History Group fringe meeting

# THE LIBERAL PARTY AND WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

2018 marks 100 years since women were enfranchised for the first time. Although many Liberals supported the cause of women's suffrage, others did not, and the Liberal governments after 1906 failed to legislate on the issue. It took lengthy campaigns by suffragists and suffragettes, and women's contrubution to the war effort in 1914–18, to break down the last resistance.

Why was the Liberal Party so divided over giving women the vote? Discuss the issue with **Professor Krista Cowman** (Lincoln University) and **Geraint Thomas** (University of York).

**8.15pm, Friday 9 March 2018**
Executive Boardroom, Ramada Hotel, Southport (no Liberal Democrat conference pass necessary)