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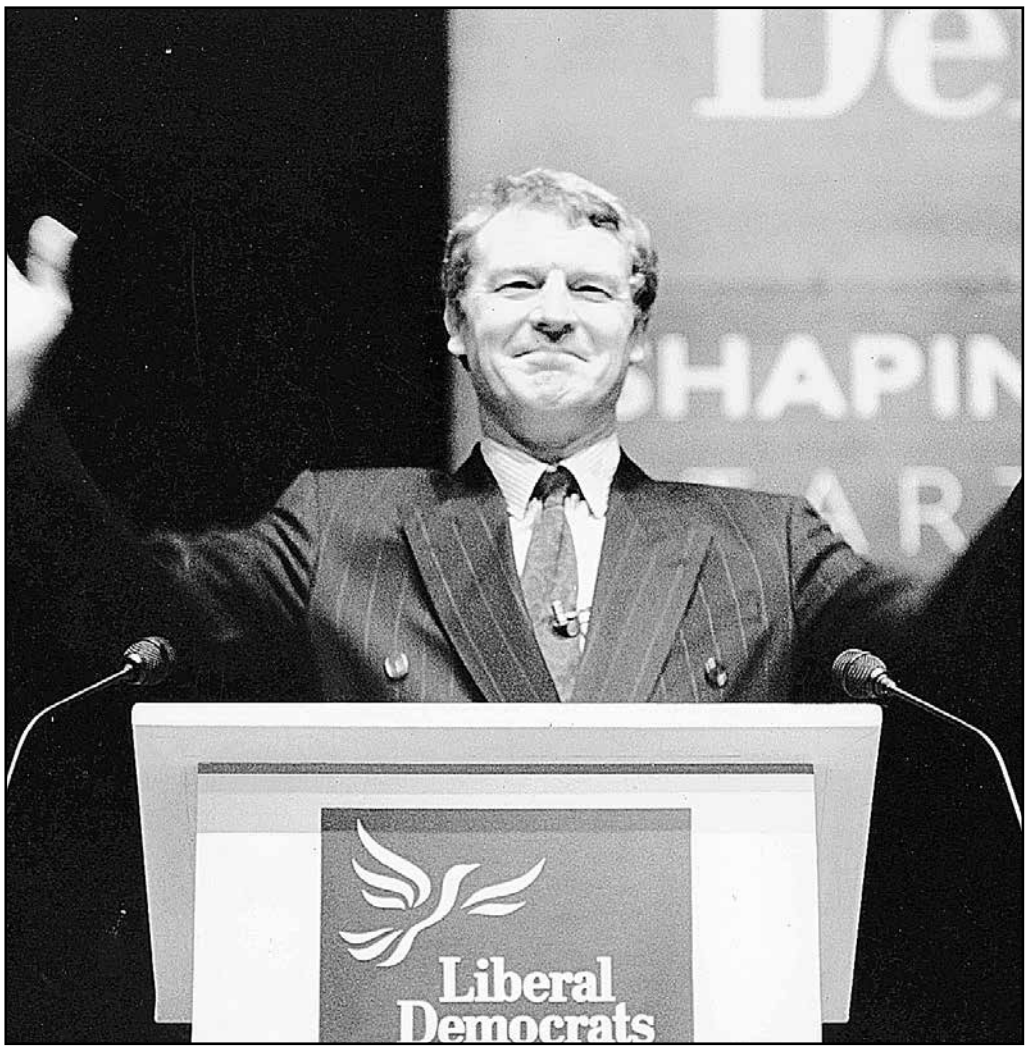
Issue 102 / Spring 2019 / £7.50

# Journal of Liberal HISTORY




## Paddy Ashdown, 1941–2018

Michael Meadowcroft
**Paddy Ashdown** An Appreciation

Neil Stockley
**Writing about Paddy** How Paddy Ashdown was remembered in the media

Tom Axworthy and Lorna Marsden
**The long-lived Liberal Party of Canada**

David Hanson MP
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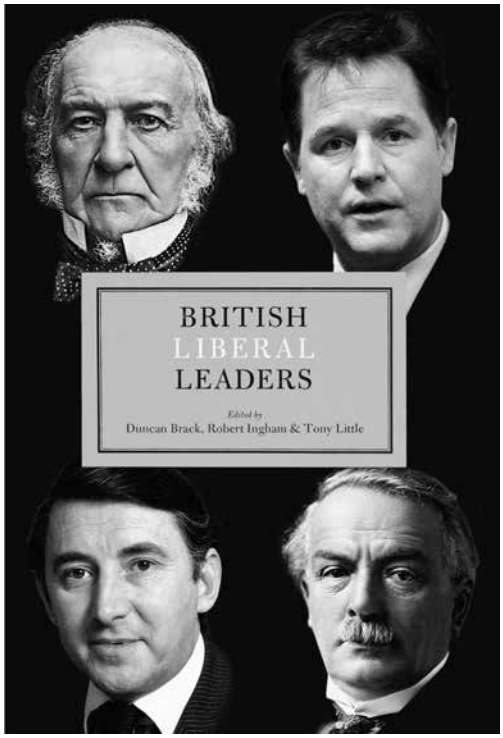


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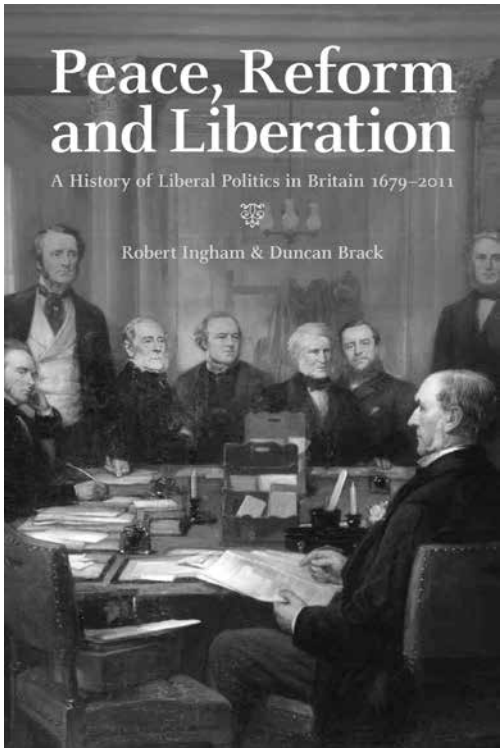


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**May 2019**

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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
# Spring 2019

**Saving Dunford House**
Help us save Dunford House, the birthplace and home of Richard Cobden, from developers!

***Who is he ?***
Richard Cobden – the most highly referenced politician in the current climate, successful career in Manchester, MP for Stockport and Rochdale, repealer of the Corn Laws, apostle of Free Trade, advocate of peace and goodwill to all, promoter of international peace, ardent reformer dedicated to raising the poor and vulnerable out of poverty.

***The background***
Dunford House and Estate, located in Midhurst, West Sussex, was altruistically gifted to the YMCA in 1952 as a perpetual, permanent endowment to enable them to use it for general educational purposes. What remains of the Estate is the Grade 2 Listed House and surrounding land, the essence of Richard Cobden's home.

Fast forward to 2019 and the YMCA have closed Dunford with a view to wanting to dispose of it. The YMCA have been custodians of Dunford, honouring the original Trust deed, and now the Cobden family, together with a number of friends, have put an offer to the YMCA to buy it back, enabling the YMCA to be released from their stewardship.

***Why is it important to save Dunford ?***
It is the last remaining example of a Victorian middle class Liberal politician home which still contains a number of Cobden family artefacts, including the Seal of the Corn Laws and a gift from Napoleon III as gratitude for negotiating a peace treaty with France.

The House is of architectural significance, with part of it built in the Italianate style fashionable in the 1850s. Many distinguished guests have visited Dunford over the years, including Ghandi, playwright George Bernard Shaw and Beveridge, pioneer and co-creator of the welfare state. In later years Dunford played a significant role in hosting international conferences. Through Cobden's suffragette and suffragist daughters the House became known as a beacon for feminism, in particular for women's right to vote.

***Our plan***
A compelling business plan has been created which would ensure that the original intention of the Cobden family continues to be respected. This will involve preserving and modernising Dunford and recreating a conference centre and also a Museum so the public can see, enjoy and learn about the history of Dunford – Liberalism, internationalism and women's rights, amongst other things.

Just as importantly, the plan is also to service less fortunate groups of society and embed a community spirit of wellbeing and togetherness which isn't always prevalent in today's society. We would reach out to young people, the elderly and low-income groups and help alleviate social concerns such as wellbeing, mental health and loneliness.

***Our ask***
For the past few months we have cast our net wide to grant-providers, organisations, lenders and individuals, but we have a shortfall and time is pressing. Our Ask is therefore to reach out to the people and ask for help so you can help 'buy a brick' to preserve part of our English heritage and enable us to foster a community spirit and help people in need today.

People helping people – which is the core of Richard Cobden's legacy.

All donations are welcome, no matter how large or small. We are, however, hoping we can collect individual support donations of £250 to allow us to make a difference and reach our target.

Please pledge your support via email to nickcobdenwright@icloud.com or contact us via our website, www.cobdenfoundation.org.

All names of donors and donation values will be confidential unless you express otherwise. We will track the level of interest and ask for the donations to be transferred only at the point when our offer is accepted by the YMCA.

The fundraising target will not be shared for now but we will publicise through the national and local press how we are doing and at the end of the campaign the totals will be shared so you will have full transparency. Thank you for your understanding.

### *What will you gain by donating ?*

Pride that you are helping to save a piece of English heritage and to avoid it from being lost and redeveloped by third parties not connected to Dunford.

Expressing gratitude to the YMCA for their custodianship and allowing them to be released from it so they can continue good works for their beneficiaries.

The sense that you will be directly contributing to our society's sense of wellbeing and connection.

An 'open ticket' to visit Dunford when it is restored so you too can enjoy it and be part of the community you are contributing towards.

For large donations and sponsorship we will publicise our connection and your support (if you wish this to happen).

### *More information*

Join Philippa Gregory and Helen Pankhurst CBE in supporting our campaign. You can find out more about their support and our campaign updates on The Cobden Foundation website at www.cobdenfoundation.org.

Thank you for your support. It is very much appreciated.

*Nick Cobden Wright*
*(Richard Cobden's great, great, great grandson and campaign co-lead),*
*on behalf of the Cobden family*

## Restoring Liberal Democrat party political broadcasts

Liberal Democrat party HQ has in storage an archive of tapes (audio and video) of party election broadcasts. However, the storage facility is not ideal and the tapes are deteriorating.

The LSE Library, where the party archives are mostly held, have experimented with restoring and digitising three tapes to test them out and see what can be achieved. You can see three examples online:

- Party political broadcast with John Cleese, 27 February 1997; VHS Archive: https://youtu.be/V47dtVqSoJo
- Party political broadcast with John Cleese, onPR, 6 October 1998; VHS Archive: https://youtu.be/IZ3jsXCHlFk
- Paddy Ashdown montage VHS from the Liberal Democrat archive: https://youtu.be/OFssovWlxsk

In total there are 477 individual items in the archives. At completion of the digitisation project, a standalone server with all media would be supplied which would also provide the opportunity to provide a website searchable directory of master content.

HQ has been quoted an estimated total of around £30,000 to complete the digitisation project – which the party cannot afford.

If any reader of the *Journal* knows anyone who might be willing to fund such a project, or undertake some of the digitisation work themselves (which would require appropriate equipment), please let the Editor know (at journal@liberalhistory.org.uk), and your details will be passed on to Sian Waddington, Director of Operations at party HQ.

## Corrigenda

A small error crept into the article 'Gladstone and the 1870 Elementary Education Act' by Geoffrey Chorley in *Journal of Liberal History* 101 (winter 2018–19).

The sentence on page 46, left-hand column, 21 lines down, should read:

> Here we must distinguish the original interpretation of the Cowper-Temple clause itself from Cowper-Templeism, the clause in the Act enhanced with Jacob Bright's unsuccessful amendment in parliament.

(The issue as printed has 'Cowper-Temple' instead of 'Cowper-Templeism'.) Our apologies to the author and our readers.

# On This Day . . .

Every day the History Group's website, Facebook page and Twitter feed carry an item of Liberal history news from the past. Below we reprint three. To see them regularly, look at **www.liberalhistory.org.uk** or **www.facebook.com/LibDemHistoryGroup** or follow us at: **LibHistoryToday**.

### March

*1 March 1929*: Lloyd George pledges to reduce unemployment to 'normal' proportions within a year through a series of work programmes. The launch of *We Will Conquer Unemployment*, the policy document containing this pledge, formed the backbone of the Liberals' election campaign for the 1929 election. The proposal to use national development projects to create work for the unemployed was rooted in *Britain's Industrial Future* (the 'Yellow Book'), which had been published in 1928.

### April

*2 April 1865*: Death of Richard Cobden, manufacturer and Radical and Liberal statesman. Cobden's work in founding the Anti-Corn Law League in 1839 is seen as integral to overturning these laws. Elected as MP for Stockport in 1841, Cobden was able to argue the case for reform inside Parliament, and the work of the League, coupled with the Irish potato famine, led in 1846 to Sir Robert Peel's Tory government repealing the laws. Cobden declined positions in both Lord John Russell's and Lord Palmerston's governments. An opponent of the Crimean War, he was openly criticised for his opposition to the government's foreign policy. He devoted much of the rest of his career to promoting free trade and peace, seeing the former as a way to deliver the latter.

### May

*9 May 1943*: Happy birthday to Sir Vince Cable, Liberal Democrat MP for Twickenham 1997–2015 and 2017 onwards. A Liberal at university, Cable later joined the Labour Party, serving as a Glasgow councillor in the 1970s. In 1982 he joined the SDP. Following the resignation of Menzies Campbell in 2007, Cable served as acting party leader until Nick Clegg was elected. During the coalition government, Cable served in the cabinet as Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills. He lost his seat to the Conservatives in 2015 but was re-elected in 2017, becomning party leader, unopposed, after Tim Farron's resignation.

**Paddy Ashdown, 1941–2018**

Michael Meadowcroft recalls the career of Paddy Ashdown, leader of the Liberal Democrats 1988–99

# Paddy Ashdown –

Paddy Ashdown brought one massive attribute to his ten-year role at the head of the Liberal Democrats: he was by personality and character a natural leader, and, whatever faults he had and whatever mistakes he made, that quality of leadership was always recognised. In addition he had an unusual characteristic rare in a politician and particularly in a party leader: he never harboured grudges. However much one disagreed with Paddy he never regarded criticism as disloyalty, indeed he was puzzled when a colleague with whom he had disagreed vehemently was worried about approaching him afterwards. I battled with him in and out of parliament but we remained warm friends to the end. Moreover he enjoyed debate; as such, he had an instinctive Liberal belief in pluralism. Finally, although his image was of a tough military leader with the craggy jaw and the narrowing eyes, he was actually a deeply emotional and sensitive man.

On the face of it Paddy, from his background as a marine and then a diplomat, was a most unlikely Liberal recruit but he loved to tell – often – how in early 1974, when toiling in his Somerset garden, he was approached by the archetypal orange-anorak-wearing Liberal canvasser. After first giving him the brush off, he then invited the persistent canvasser inside. Two hours later Paddy realised that he had always been a Liberal. As with so many of us, that realisation was a fatal error, condemning us to a lifetime of sacrificial commitment to the Liberal cause. So it was with Paddy.

# - An Appreciation

Towards the end of 1975, at the age of 35 and with no job to go to in England, he resigned from the Foreign Office to, as he put it, 'go into politics'.[1] A year later he was adopted as the prospective Liberal candidate for what had become his home constituency of Yeovil, and this became his key priority, despite the considerable difficulties of securing employment compatible with his new political role.

Paddy was later prone to state that Yeovil was a hopeless seat for the Liberals when he took it on. This was somewhat of an exaggeration. Certainly it had been Conservative since it had been gained from the Liberals at a late-1911 by-election, but the long-serving local Liberal candidate, Dr Geoffrey Taylor, had squeezed ahead of Labour into a very respectable second place at the February 1974 election and was a bare thirty-two votes behind Labour in the October election that year. When Paddy became the candidate he believed it would take three elections to win the seat but such was the drive he brought to the task, and his ability to recruit capable workers, plus adopting the strategy of concentrating on local elections, that, unlike almost all other Liberal candidates, he increased the Liberal vote at the 1979 election and climbed into second place. Then four years later, adding the tactical vote squeeze on Labour, he took the seat with an overall majority.

Paddy did not find parliamentary procedure particularly congenial, not least having to speak in the chamber with opponents in front and behind. He was very driven and, as Alan Beith's deputy whip, my one problem was that Paddy accepted too many outside speaking engagements that regularly took him away from parliament and ensured that he would typically come rushing into the chamber or to party meetings at the last minute or disappear early after or even during meetings. Paddy was an excellent member of the parliamentary party. He was always convivial though from a very different background to the rest of us. Possessing remarkable language skills, on one occasion after a late parliamentary session, some of us went for a Chinese takeaway at a nearby café and Paddy showed off by ordering in Mandarin. I teased him suggesting that he had actually 'phoned up earlier giving the numbers of the dishes on the menu.' He was not best pleased!

Like all the five new Liberal MPs who arrived bright eyed and bushy tailed, he was appalled that, at the first parliamentary party meeting, Cyril Smith and David Alton proceeded to attack David Steel 'viciously' for what seemed to be relatively trivial aspects of the election campaign.[2] Then, despite the huge logistical problems of the need to cover the entire parliamentary agenda with only seventeen MPs, both of them opted out of any participation in the team, refusing to take on spokesmanships.

When adopted as the Yeovil candidate Paddy had decided not to play any role in the party nationally. But he was unable to resist taking a key role in the defence debate at the 1981 Liberal Party Assembly in Llandudno, leading the opposition to the deployment of cruise missiles and thus incurring the wrath of the leadership and endearing himself to the party's radicals. This differential reception was to be reversed at the 1986 assembly at which he did a U-turn on the issue in the seminal defence debate that was damagingly mishandled by David Steel.[3] Paddy had never been a unilateralist on defence, but this policy reversal was unexpected and, inevitably, greatly disappointing to his mainly younger supporters. It did not help that, in his own words, 'my Assembly speech … was one of the worst I have ever made.'[4]

Throughout Paddy's parliamentary career the health of the Westland helicopter company ran like a silver thread. As the biggest employee in his constituency it could do no other. In 1980, soon after his adoption as the local candidate and when Westland was going through a bad patch, it was learned that the company was about sell helicopters to the tyrannical regime in Chile. Paddy opposed the sale and was the immediate target for attack and criticism from Westland workers and their trade unions. Three years later, at the general election, the Westland workers voted solidly for him and this episode taught him a crucial lesson that should be learned by every MP today in relation to Brexit. He wrote:

> The dangers of putting your conscience and judgement before your popularity are often far less than we politicians realise. The loss of votes in the short term is often compensated for in

**Although his image was of a tough military leader with the craggy jaw and the narrowing eyes, he was actually a deeply emotional and sensitive man.**

> the long term by the gain in respect. Many voters want their MPs to do what is right and often respect those who do, even while disagreeing with them. The scope for a bit of courage is far greater than we think it is, even in this age of spin and the dark arts of 'triangulation'.[5]

Westland raised its head again in 1986 when the passionately pro-Europe Paddy Ashdown nevertheless backed Mrs Thatcher's expensive plan to maintain helicopter production in Yeovil rather than Michael Heseltine's solution of a European consortium under which Westland would become an adjunct producing one part of the aircraft. He preferred to see the Westland workers producing the whole aircraft rather than being 'panel beaters' for pan-European production.

Paddy's decision to avoid involvement in the party nationally brought its problems when he became leader but it also contributed to him being curiously naive about aspects of political 'fixing'. He tended not to realise that party leaders, including David Steel, may well use 'extra curricular' means to get their way and he found it difficult to accept that sometimes persuasion had to give way to rougher tactics. Paddy's frustration with trying to make a Liberal impact with only seventeen MPs whilst conforming to the parliamentary processes was regularly apparent and, presumably believing that it would give him more freedom to act, he admits to deciding in late 1986 that he would aim to become the next leader of the party[6] –but those close to him believe that he had made his mind up much earlier.

Paddy retained his Yeovil seat at the 1987 election with a slightly increased majority and there followed all the party machinations that finally led to the merger of the Liberal Party and the SDP in January 1988 and the announcement by David Steel the following May that he would not be a candidate for the leadership of the new party. The subsequent leadership election was, in effect, a foregone conclusion. Given a choice between the image of Paddy's personal charisma and the new dispensation he represented and the solid, competent, loyal party servant that was Alan Beith, party members opted for the roller coaster. The final result of 72 per cent to 28 per cent was somewhat unkind to Alan, but he acknowledged later that Paddy 'went on to become an absolutely outstanding leader, doing enormous good for the party, earning wide respect, and demonstrating a much firmer commitment to the principles of Liberalism than seemed possible at the beginning.'[7]

Paddy had the huge task of forging the new party. David Owen opted out – arguably both a blessing and a blow – but Roy Jenkins had supported him from day one of his candidature. Given Paddy's temperament, being able to start from scratch suited him but his lack of knowledge of the Liberal Party, which formed the bulk of the active membership of the new party, led him into early errors. First, he initially believed that

Opposite: Ashdown as leader, 1988–99

On the campaign trail

At the Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors conference, November 1998

With wife Jane at Liberal Democrat conference

economic liberalism had been downplayed in the Liberal Party and wished to rectify this. His first pamphlet, *After the Alliance*, published soon after the 1987 election[8] when it became apparent that a merged party would be formed, certainly trailed some of those views, albeit softened for the members whose support he knew he would soon have to win. The history of the party and its debates demonstrate that this strand, whilst vociferous, had always been a minority and that, particularly since Jo Grimond's leadership, social liberalism had been the dominant force. Fortunately the practical tasks he had to face largely sidelined such longer-term issues and his first book as leader concentrated on community and on the individual as citizen and barely touched on economics.[9]

The second consequence of his lack of involvement with the wider party was the narrowly utilitarian view he took initially of the issue of the new party's name. The issue had riven apart the Merger Negotiating Team in 1987–88[10] and each party tried to insist on its name coming first in the title. Paddy was unaware of the significance of the name for Liberals who had been committed to the party for many decades, and thought that the way to resolve the matter was to call the party The Democrats. The produced an immediate furore and, to his credit, he then appreciated the visceral attachment to the name and resolved the matter by announcing a referendum of all the party members and this poll opted for 'Liberal Democrats'.[11] At the time he wrote:

> Being a relative outsider compared to the older MPs, I had, in my rush to create the new party, failed to understand that a political party is about more than plans and priorities and policies and a chromium-plated organisation. It also has a heart and a history and a soul – especially a very old party like the Liberals …. I had nearly wrecked the party by becoming too attached to my own vision and ignoring the fact that political parties are, at root, human organisations and not machines.[12]

Although it was not particularly apparent, Paddy initially struggled with the responsibility of performing in the Commons chamber, particularly with the gladiatorial contest of Prime Minister's Questions. In any case the early days of his leadership were basically a rescue operation. The joint Liberal/SDP vote at the 1987 general election was 23 per cent but the poll ratings of the new party steadily declined over the next two years to a low of 5 per cent in October 1989.[13] The European Parliament elections of 12 June 1989 were Paddy's first national electoral test as leader. They were a disaster, with the Green Party leapfrogging the party to take third place, polling more than twice the new party's tally: 14.5 per cent to 5.9 per cent. The scale of the Green Party's surge was a considerable surprise and Paddy described it as the lowest point of his leadership and he commented that

he went to bed on election night 'tormented by the thought that the party that had started with Gladstone would end with Ashdown.'[14] It says a great deal for his doggedness that outwardly he showed little sign of his worries and he carried on as if it was a minor hiccup. It would be another eight months before the polls began to move in the party's favour.

He had immediately found a Liberal cause to espouse and expound. On 4 and 5 June 1989, just before the European election, the massacres in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, had taken place. Paddy quickly got involved and, together with Bob Maclennan, flew out to Hong Kong whose citizens were understandably now worried about their future when the colony was handed back to China in 1997. On his return he persuaded the party to adopt the thoroughly Liberal policy of guaranteeing the Hong Kong Chinese the right of abode in the United Kingdom if things turned nasty for them after 1997 – a right that had been taken away by the Conservative government, supported opportunistically by a Labour opposition fearful of losing votes. The prospect of 3.5 million Chinese arriving from Hong Kong was certainly unpopular amongst the electorate but it was morally right and a distinctive stance by the party.

As ever, politics in 1989 and 1990 followed Harold Macmillan's adage that it is events that determine politics[15] and just as Hong Kong had provided a distinctive issue, the IRA's murder at the end of 1990 of Ian Gow, the Conservative MP for Eastbourne, and Mrs Thatcher's key aide, caused a problematic by-election. Paddy's initial response, together with other national leaders, was not to fight a by-election in such circumstances, but Chris Rennard, the party's Director of Campaigns, persuaded Paddy that the seat could be won. Rennard was right and the Liberal Democrats' victory in the by-election in his Eastbourne constituency, followed five months later by a victory in Ribble Valley, pushed the Liberal Democrats' poll figure up to 16 per cent. A further by-election gain in Kincardine and Deeside in one of the last three by-elections before the 1992 general election provided a further boost to the party in the lead up to Paddy's first big national Westminster test. His determination and campaigning across the country over the past three years had borne fruit and the party emerged from the campaign with reasonable success, and plaudits for Paddy's leadership. If the result had been somewhat disappointing to Paddy, he was certainly assuaged by successes in the first two by-elections of the new parliament, in Newbury and Christchurch, following a year later by victory in Eastleigh and then Littleborough and Saddleworth, all of which gave a considerable impetus to the party as it headed towards the next general election.

Throughout this early period of his leadership, Paddy pushed the party's local government campaigns, being extremely conscious of the role


council victories had played in his own progress in Yeovil. The vote nationally rose from 18 per cent to 26 per cent between 1988 and 2000; and the number of seats won almost doubled and the number of councils controlled increased threefold. By 1996 the party had overtaken the Conservatives in the number of elected councillors.

As with the Liberal Party since 1955, the Liberal Democrat manifesto in 1992 for Paddy's first election expressed the party's firm support for a united Europe. As Prime Minister John Major's problems with his Eurosceptic rebels grew, as the 1992 parliament continued to grapple with the Maastricht Treaty, it was the Liberal Democrats' twenty MPs who rescued the government's pro-treaty policy on numerous occasions. Paddy was prepared to bear the brunt of the highly vocal opprobrium from those in and out of parliament for his and his party's principled votes in line with the party's longstanding European stance, even if it meant voting with an increasingly unpopular Conservative government.

On 9 May, one month after the 1992 general election, at a speech in Chard in his constituency, Paddy carefully calibrated a move away from the previous basic strategy of 'equidistance', i.e. regarding Labour and Conservative parties as equal opponents and, in effect, by extension, equally potential partners in a coalition or a similar governmental arrangement. Instead he proposed placing the Liberal Democrats firmly on the Left of politics with a predilection to oppose the Conservative government. Though he was deliberately steering the party in a specific direction, he was simply reaffirming Jo Grimond's aim of a 'realignment of the Left' and articulating clearly what most Liberals actually felt. Even so, it was not universally regarded as tactically wise and it was criticised by a swathe of party members, including particularly some in the parliamentary party. Nevertheless the party formally backed its leader's positioning.

No one in the party could have realised what Paddy had in mind as the practical outworking of his strategy, and indeed it only emerged much later. Following a first social meeting with Tony Blair on 14 July 1993, Paddy began to develop a clandestine political relationship with the future Labour Party leader which continued until Blair's Labour government rejected the Jenkins Commission Report on electoral reform in late 1998. Paddy's aim was to establish some form of alliance or arrangement with Labour which would provide sufficient electoral traction to keep the Conservatives out of office virtually permanently. The latter aim was certainly extremely worthy but his means of achieving it betrayed a considerable naïveté about the nature of the Labour Party and, indeed, of Blair himself. A rose-tinted view of Labour might well be seductive in Yeovil, with the party polling around 10 per cent, but its control freakery and hegemonic tactics in its northern industrial fiefs showed a very different party. It was the urban Liberal Democrats who were most vocal when the implications of Paddy's efforts to liaise with Blair were seen as threatening the independence of the party finally become known.

**He proposed placing the Liberal Democrats firmly on the Left of politics with a predilection to oppose the Conservative government. Though he was deliberately steering the party in a specific direction, he was simply reaffirming Jo Grimond's aim of a 'realignment of the Left' and articulating clearly what most Liberals actually felt.**

It is ironic that Paddy, in his assessment of Tony Blair,[16] says that he overestimated 'the power of his most formidable weapon: his charm', when the comment could well be applied to Paddy himself in that he had to believe in his charisma as the means of getting any arrangement with Labour accepted by the Liberal Democrats, unless his remarkably optimistic judgement of his party might prove to be accurate. In any case the only possible circumstance in which any such arrangement was remotely conceivable without proportional representation being guaranteed, would have been a hung parliament with Labour the largest party – a situation impossible actively to work towards. Whether or not Tony Blair was personally genuine in his expressed support for Paddy's 'project' over almost six years is arguable but he certainly could not deliver it. The 'project' was, however, not without its gains. The Robin Cook–Robert Maclennan report on constitutional changes set out a blueprint for devolution, a human rights act, freedom of information legislation, House of Lords reform and modernisation of the House of Commons. A number of these proposals were implemented under subsequent Labour governments. Arguably it also beneficially led to an increased amount of tactical voting at the 1997 general election.

In August 1992, soon after the general election, Paddy flew into Sarajevo and thus took the first step of the engagement with Bosnia which would develop into the most significant and respected aspect of his political life. No other politician had the experience and skills to do what he did for that troubled country. His military background, his people skills, his Liberal principles and his political judgement enabled him eventually to play a highly significant role in establishing a stable future for Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the early days, with war still going on, and flying into the highly vulnerable ancient city of Sarajevo, also no other party leader was as equipped as Paddy was to sleep in tents, to understand how best to avoid snipers and to talk on equal terms with military commanders and diplomats in Sarajevo.

After that first visit he wrote and spoke on the serious situation in Bosnia, the imminence of war and of the vulnerability of the Bosnian Muslims to the Serb army and to resurgent Croatian nationalism. No one took much notice. Thereafter, time after time, he used his one allotted opportunity at Prime Minister's Questions to press the case for intervention in Bosnia, so much so that there were shouts of 'the Honourable Member for Sarajevo' when he rose to speak. Even his Liberal Democrat colleagues were concerned that he was becoming obsessed with Bosnia to the exclusion of domestic issues but in retrospect he

was proved right on the lethal situation in Bosnia and the need for intervention, and his perception of the situation and his persistence in drawing attention to it were in the best traditions of Liberal action.

The visits to Bosnia continued, often in extremely dangerous situations, but in early 1993 he took time off to undertake a number of trips around Britain in order to discover at first hand the living and working conditions of the British people. This initiative resulted in his second book, *Beyond Westminster*,[17] and good publicity around the country. The 1997 election produced forty-six Liberal Democrat MPs – the highest number since 1929 – giving Paddy an enhanced role in the Commons; but the slow demise of 'The Project' with Tony Blair, which Paddy took a long time to accept, took the edge of his passion for the need to innovate, and he became weary of being in perpetual motion as party leader and began to plan to retire, announcing it finally in January 1999. He followed this by retiring from his Yeovil seat in time for David Laws to be successfully in place before the 2005 election. He became a life peer a month after the 2001 election.

In mid-2001 he was approached by the international community on Tony Blair's initiative to take over as the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina the following May and immediately set about putting together a team to enable him to do the job effectively. Typically, he also set about learning the Serbo-Croat language – now known as Bosnian, Serbian or Croatian depending on which country one is in – describing it as the most difficult of the many languages he had learnt. In effect the job entailed him being a substitute president of the country until sufficient stability was assured to enable a national government to take over. It was acknowledged by just about everyone, apart from the intransigent Serbs, that he did the job superbly for the three years and eight months of his extended mandate. He and Jane fell in love with the country and its people and this was completely reciprocated.

It was an exceptionally difficult job in a broken country ravaged by civil war and with its people having suffered untold hardships and war crimes. It required tough decisions at times and cajoling at others. He did the job in a remarkably Liberal fashion, involving the local people at every level. The tributes from Bosnian leaders following his death were symptomatic of the warmth and respect in which he was held. In a very real way the record of his time in Bosnia and Herzegovina demonstrate what a good prime minister of the UK he would have made.

In January 2007, exactly year after Paddy's return from Bosnia, Gordon Brown took over from Tony Blair as prime minister. There followed a rather curious postscript to The Project. Brown, possibly its most intransigent opponent within the Labour government apart from John Prescott, asked Paddy to join his government as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Paddy was adamant that for Liberals to join a majority Labour government would be disastrous for the party. He would be isolated and bound by collective responsibility involving support for a raft of Labour policies, such as those involving civil liberties, to which he and the Liberal Democrats were totally opposed. He turned down the invitation.

**His military background, his people skills, his Liberal principles and his political judgement enabled him eventually to play a highly significant role in establishing a stable future for Bosnia and Herzegovina.**

Even then political responsibility had not finished with Paddy. Whilst on a long holiday, ending with visiting Jane's relations in Australia, he was 'phoned by David Miliband, the Foreign Secretary, to ask Paddy to become the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan.' He said 'no' but was put under considerable international pressure. He replied that he did not wish to do the job but that if there was such a broad international consensus, and he was given the tools to do the job, as an old soldier he could not refuse. He also stipulated that his appointment would have to be approved by Hamid Karzai, the president of Afghanistan. He was told that everyone was agreed that he was the person for the job. Karzai agreed and reluctantly Paddy took on the massive task that would necessitate him being away for two years with no possibility to take Jane with him given the insecurity and Islamic constraints of Afghanistan. Paddy threw himself into the preparations for the job but suddenly Karzai withdrew his agreement and preparations were precipitately ended, much to Paddy's and the family's annoyance but intense relief.

Paddy was instinctively and emotionally opposed to entering a coalition with the Conservatives in 2010 but reluctantly accepted that it was probably inexorable and was the decision of the parliamentary party, endorsed by a special conference of the party. His final task for the party was to be in charge of the 2015 post-coalition general election campaign. The Liberal Democrats were caught in a pincer movement: no gratitude nor even acknowledgement by the Conservatives of the benefits of Liberal Democrat participation in coalition, and excoriated by Labour for abandoning all the party's traditions and history. It was impossible to persuade the electorate that its oft-repeated refrain on the doorstep that it 'wanted politicians who put country before party' was precisely what the Liberal Democrats had done. The party, despite all the efforts by Paddy and his team, was hammered, losing two-thirds of its vote and its MPs dropping from fifty-seven to eight. The biggest blow for Paddy was the loss of his old Yeovil seat.

His end came rapidly. Paddy announced on 2 November last year that he had been diagnosed with bladder cancer. These days there is much more of an acceptance that cancer is not necessarily the early death sentence that once it was, but Paddy died less than two months later, on 22 December. It is ironic that having survived all

Portrait of Paddy Ashdown at the National Liberal Club, by Andrew Festing (reproduced by kind permission of the National Liberal Club)

the dangers of the Borneo jungle and the Bosnian war, it was a 'mere' fatal disease that caused his death. The trite comment often used as an attempt to ease the pain of family is that the person would not have wished to survive in a debilitated state but that would definitely have been the case with Paddy. It is impossible to imagine him putting up with the frustrations of a long decline.

Assessing Paddy is a very broad task. He was a brilliant man who was a success at everything he tackled. He was intensely loyal and once he realised that he was a Liberal, thanks to the efforts of the famous though anonymous Liberal canvasser in the anorak way back in January 1974, he never deviated from his commitment to the Liberal cause over the next forty-four years. He was instinctively a Liberal, treating everyone alike with no awareness of 'status', which made him one of the most convivial and generous colleagues one could have. He was a great man for The Plan, bullet points and all, with tasks and targets for each member of the team – and his own work rate inhibited everyone else from complaining. He had a permanent search for the new idea or initiative, however impolitic or unattainable, and, once he had convinced himself, it was virtually impossible to disabuse him of its value. His last campaign, for instance, was his 'More United' project of July 2016 aiming to put together a cross-party tactical cooperation group of Liberals and fellow-travellers to facilitate tactical voting. Some of us who had been round this course all too often, criticised him all to no avail. Typically he responded to every email. This trait did not prevent him from changing tack if he decided that it was required. The most serious criticism he faced was linked to this, in that he seemed to be prone to be too influenced at times by those who spoke to him last, such as with his U-turn on cruise missiles.

Paddy was a remarkable and improbable mixture of toughness and emotion. His ability to empathise with the victims of violence or of prejudice was manifest but it was coupled with a steely determination to act in accordance with duty and judgement. He developed into a compelling public speaker and his Liberal audiences were very indulgent of his tendency to repeat the

same joke or anecdote. He was himself a source of many aphorisms and pithy comments quoted by others. He was a passionate family man who revelled in and relaxed with Jane, with his two children, Kate and Simon, and with his grandchildren. He had an ability, unusual in a politician, to be able to take a short break, often at short notice, and to go off skiing or to the Ashdown cottage in Burgundy. Jane was a great partner and supporter and particularly played an important role with Paddy in Bosnia.

It is a great commendation that everyone who worked for him, whether voluntarily or professionally, loved the man and enjoyed their time with him, even though he drove them extremely hard. One reason why it was so enjoyable was that he was a genuine pluralist who enjoyed debate and discussion and encouraged all his associates to argue with him.

He was a voracious reader and writer who, from 1987, produced a stream of books on Liberalism and on military and associated topics. Paddy recognised the importance of writing and of setting out analysis and ideas and he confessed that he enjoyed doing it. He was the first party leader since Jo Grimond to have produced books and so many pamphlets. His last book, containing riveting biographical essays on individuals who stood up to Hitler, included a very significant comment on our times:

> In reading this book you may be struck, as I was in writing it, by the similarities between what happened in the build up to World War II and the age in which we now live. Then as now, nationalism and protectionism were on the rise, and democracies were seen to have failed, people hungered for the government of strong men; those who suffered most from the pain of economic collapse felt alienated and turned towards simplistic solutions and strident voices; public institutions, conventional politics and the old establishments were everywhere mistrusted and disbelieved; compromise was out of fashion; the centre collapsed in favour of the extremes; the normal order of things didn't function; change – even revolution – was more appealing than the status quo, and 'fake news' built around the convincing untruth carried more weight in the public discourse than rational arguments and provable facts.
>
> Painting a lie on the side of a bus and driving around the country would have seemed perfectly normal in those days.[18]

In the same book there was also a comment on the flaws of one of his brave subjects that could never be applied to Paddy himself:

> … they were the flaws which can often weaken the soldier who has more intellect than is needed for the job. He was a man of thought rather than of action, who weighed every step so carefully that he could sometimes miss the fleeting opportunity whose lightening exploitation is the true test of the great commander.[19]

Finally, Paddy summed himself up:

> I was a soldier at the end of the golden age of imperial soldiering; a spy at the end of the golden age of spying; a politician while politics was still a calling; and an international peacebuilder backed by Western power, before Iraq and Afghanistan drained the West of both influence and morality.[20]

There is a fine portrait of Paddy in the National Liberal Club. Unlike every other portrait in the club, the subject is not in formal dress. Paddy insisted in being painted in an open-neck shirt and rolled up sleeves. Visible around him are three references to the peoples of Bosnia, including a picture of the iconic Mostar bridge. Typical of the man!

*Michael Meadowcroft was a Leeds city councillor for fifteen years and a West Yorkshire metropolitan county councillor for six. He was the Liberal MP for West Leeds from 1983 to 1987. He is a regular lecturer on political and local history.*

1 Paddy Ashdown, *A Fortunate Life* (Aurum Press, 2009), p. 162.
2 Ibid., pp. 211–2.
3 Michael Meadowcroft, *Eastbourne Revisited*, Radical Quarterly 5, Autumn 1987.
4 Ashdown, *Fortunate Life*, pp. 224–5.
5 Ibid., p. 199.
6 Ibid., p. 228.
7 Alan Beith, *A View from the North* (Northumbria University Press, 2008).
8 Paddy Ashdown, *After the Alliance*, Liberal Challenge Booklet 10 (Hebden Royd Publications, September 1987).
9 Paddy Ashdown, *Citizens' Britain: A Radical Agenda for the 1990s* (Fourth Estate, 1989).
10 It was the main issue on which I resigned from the Liberal team on 12 January 1988.
11 Paddy Ashdown, *A Fortunate Life,* pp. 246–47.
12 Ibid., p. 246.
13 Poll of polls in Roger Mortimore and Andrew Blick, *Butler's Political Facts* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 435. Paddy's oft-quoted story that on one occasion the polls could not detect enough Liberal Democrats to provide a figure and therefore registered an asterisk was never true.
14 Paddy Ashdown, *A Fortunate Life,* p. 248.
15 Cited in Iain Dale (ed.), *Dictionary of Conservative Quotations*, (Biteback, 2013).
16 Paddy Ashdown, *A Fortunate Life,* p. 324.
17 Paddy Ashdown, *Beyond Westminster* (Simon Schuster, 1994).
18 Paddy Ashdown, *Nein! Standing up to Hitler 1935–1944* (William Collins, 2018).
19 Ibid., p. 9.
20 Paddy Ashdown, *A Fortunate Life*, p. 5.

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**Paddy Ashdown, 1941–2018**

Neil Stockley looks at how Paddy Ashdown's life and career were remembered and celebrated in the media

# Writing about Paddy

Lord Ashdown of Norton-sub-Hamdon, Paddy Ashdown, the first leader of the Liberal Democrats, died of bladder cancer on 22 December 2018.

Paying tribute, the current party leader, Sir Vince Cable, said that he 'inspired the Liberal Democrats from a polling position he famously described as 'represented by an asterisk', to become a formidable campaigning force, doubling the party's representation to 46 MPs and laying the ground for the strength which later took the party into government.' Sir Vince recalled how 'Paddy was a personal example to me and to many other candidates. The time he made for his indefatigable campaigning involved considerable personal sacrifice, building the [Yeovil] constituency result up from a low base to famous victory in 1983.'[1]

Sir Nick Clegg, the former Liberal Democrat leader and deputy prime minister, said:

> Paddy was the reason I entered politics. He was the reason I became a liberal. He became a lifelong mentor, friend and guide. The thing I admired most in him is that rarest of gifts – a politician without an ounce of cynicism. He was the most heartfelt person I have known – loyal and generous to a fault.[2]

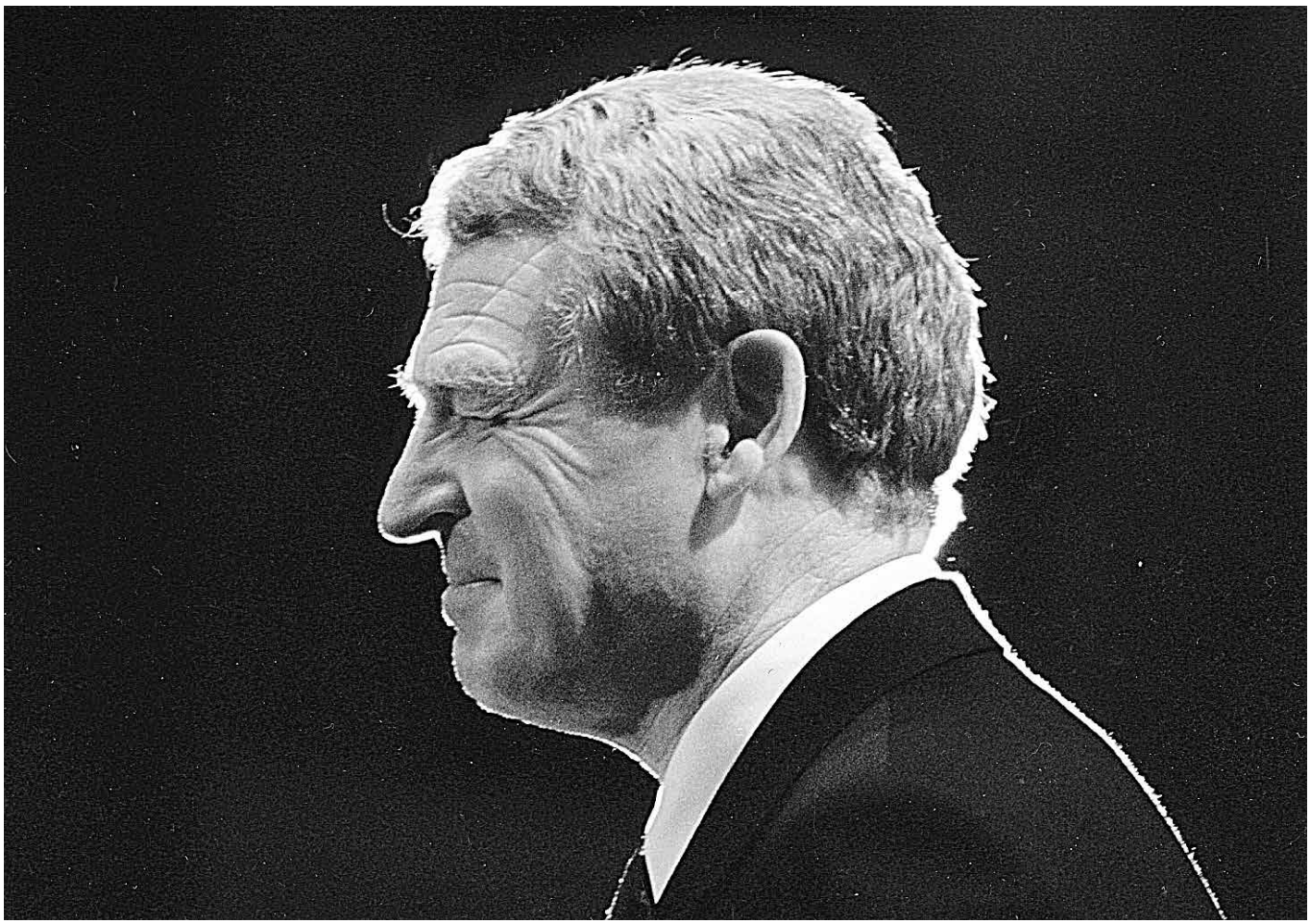
Generous tributes also came from his erstwhile political opponents. Lord Kinnock, who led the Labour Party for part of Paddy's time as Liberal Democrat leader, said he was 'brave in his military service and in his political thinking and action' and had 'imagination, tenacity, great enlightened instincts and a fine self-deprecating sense of humour.'[3]

The former Labour prime minister, Tony Blair, described him as 'excellent company, always fun to be around' and 'one of the most talented politicians never to hold high office but as leader of the Liberal Democrats he nonetheless had a major impact on British political life.'[4]

The former Conservative prime minister, John Major, remembered Paddy as a 'man of duty, passion, and devotion to the country he loved right up to the very end.' He added that 'in government, Paddy Ashdown was my opponent. In life, he was a much-valued friend.'[5]

Lady Helic, a Bosnian foreign policy expert and Conservative peer, said that Paddy was 'the best friend Bosnia-Herzegovina could have wished for. His contribution to Bosnia's post-war recovery was invaluable.'[6]

The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev Justin Welby, described him as 'an advocate for those others forgot, full of courage, integrity and immensely gifted' and said 'he served the people of the Balkans with passion and inspiration, an agent of reconciliation. He will be greatly missed.'[7]



**Liberal Democrat survival and resurgence**

The dominant theme of the obituaries and commentaries was Paddy 's central role in the survival and eventual resurgence of the Liberal Democrats. Another of his successors as party leader, Tim Farron, said that Paddy had 'saved and revived the Liberal Democrats at our lowest ebb and then led us to our best result for 70 years,' and insisted: 'We owe him our very existence.'[8]

Andrew Gilligan and Tony Grew, writing for the *Sunday Times*, summarised his achievements as leader and put them into context:

> When in 1988 Ashdown took over the leadership of the newly formed Social and Liberal Democrats, they lay in pieces on the political battlefield. A bruising merger with David Owen's Social Democratic Party (SDP) – rejected by Owen himself, and some of the SDP's other MPs – and a radically disastrous policy platform called the 'dead parrot' had inflicted enormous damage. At the European elections the next year, the Liberal Democrats (they had dropped the 'social' by then) took just 6% of the vote, coming fourth behind the Greens. Ashdown said he lay awake at night worrying that the party of Lloyd George and Asquith would die under him.
>
> Over the course of his 11-year leadership, Ashdown pulled them back from the brink. He won some crucial by-elections in the early 1990s, avoided wipeout in 1992 and more than doubled the party's representation at the 1997 election, to a then post-war record of 46 seats, by acutely targeting anti-Tory tactical voting.'[9]

The *Independent* obituary, co-written by Sean O'Grady, a former press secretary to Paddy Ashdown, added that under his leadership, the Liberal Democrats had become the second party in local government; elected its first MEPs; doubled their MPs in Westminster; helped to deliver devolution to Scotland and Wales; participated in the government of Scotland and ensured proportional representation was used in European elections.[10]

The *Guardian* obituary was, however, more reserved about Paddy's accomplishments:

> He became the first leader of the Liberal Democrats in 1988 and led them over the next 11 years to their best electoral results at that time for three-quarters of a century. Although he never quite achieved the parliamentary breakthrough he hoped for, still less a realignment of the parties of the left in coalition with Labour, the Lib Dems became a significant and influential third force in British politics.[11]

It went on to describe his main achievement in somewhat patronising terms:

> What he was able to do was … to turn the party from a bunch of egotistical oddballs and

> individualists at Westminster – in his words 'a funny little herbivorous thinktank on the edges of British politics' – into a national movement that earnestly believed it could win a measure of power and convinced a swathe of the soft-left electorate that it was capable of doing so.[12]

*Guardian* readers might have been forgiven for thinking that the party survived and prospered almost in spite of Paddy who, it charged, 'was regarded as uncollegiate by many of his colleagues and was a moderate speaker and poor Commons performer.[13] *The Times* agreed that he was 'not a great orator or public performer.'[14]

Most people, including Paddy, would surely concur with *The Times* that he was 'never a creature of Westminster'; but, overall, these criticisms were too harsh. His skills as a public speaker and media communicator were rated extremely highly, even by his political opponents. As for Paddy's Commons performances, *The Telegraph* explained how he eventually turned the tables on his tormentors:

> With his serious, passionate personality, Ashdown was an easy target for the hard left Labour MPs in front of him. He never felt comfortable in the Commons and struggled to establish himself, amid taunts from Dennis Skinner of 'Captain Mainwaring', whenever he rose to speak. These were silenced two years into his leadership when, as one of the few MPs with a regular military background, he spoke with authority about the Gulf War, and the needs of British soldiers in it.[15]

There were suggestions that Paddy had other limitations. *The Guardian* charged that he could be 'smug, humourless and patronising' and suggested that he was not well liked by his colleagues.

> Disaffected colleagues joked that the message on his answerphone said: 'Please leave a message after the high moral tone.' … Colleagues complained that he did not think deeply about issues or listen to their views, but took off on high-profile 'listening to the people' nationwide tours instead.[16]

*The Times* also took up this theme, contending that:

> He was not particularly clubbable and although he often showed warmth and empathy in private he could also, by his own admission, come across as priggish and self-righteous in public.[17]

But Paddy led an effective campaign with an attractive policy platform for the 1992 general election. He was able to weather newspaper revelations of an extra-marital affair five years earlier. 'To his surprise his approval ratings rose, though the unfortunate sobriquet 'Paddy Pantsdown' stuck,' noted *The Times*.[18] The Liberal Democrats won 17.8 per cent of the vote and twenty seats.

**'In a rapidly greying political world, Paddy Ashdown was an exotic. His father was a part-time smuggler. He was the only British party leader who knew how to kill somebody with his bare hands; the only one who went on to give evidence at the war crimes tribunal in The Hague. He was known as such a devotee of the Commons gym that he broke some of the equipment with his aggressive training. And yet he was a Liberal Democrat.'**

*The Guardian*[19] attributed Paddy's achievements to 'hard-driving and ruthless ambition'. He had other personal qualities that were a significant factor in the new party's success. Andrew Gilligan and Tony Grew highlighted some of the paradoxes in his persona:

> In a rapidly greying political world, Paddy Ashdown was an exotic. His father was a part-time smuggler. He was the only British party leader who knew how to kill somebody with his bare hands; the only one who went on to give evidence at the war crimes tribunal in The Hague. He was known as such a devotee of the Commons gym that he broke some of the equipment with his aggressive training. And yet he was a Liberal Democrat.
>
> In truth, despite his own strong liberal, nonconformist and internationalist streaks, this former Royal Marine and special forces soldier never quite gelled with many of the party's beard-and-sandal regiment. But the public liked his commanding style, and he won his colleagues' respect for fighting the political equivalent of, say, the Battle of Aden: achieving dignity, if not quite victory, against overwhelming odds.[20]

*The Telegraph* argued that:

> He was popular with the party grassroots, and his icy gaze not only indicated a man of action, but appealed to women voters. Nor did the mystique about his time in the SBS do him any harm. He was introduced to an Edinburgh business dinner as 'the first trained killer to lead a political party … Margaret Thatcher being self-taught'.[21]

Then there was Paddy's immense energy and drive. Gordon Brown recalled his 'boundless energy' and another former prime minister, David Cameron, said he had 'seldom known a public servant with so much energy and dynamism'.[22] Baroness Olly Grender, who worked closely with Paddy on and off over nearly thirty years, wrote of her belief that 'if we had a power crisis at any point we could plug him into the National Grid and he would light up Britain.'[23]

Another factor in the party's recovery was the distinctive, liberal positions that he took on difficult issues. While not always popular, at least immediately, they helped to define the Liberal Democrats to the public. The *Financial Times* obituary recounted how he called for Hong Kong citizens to be given British passports ahead of the handover of the territory to China in 1997. In the early 1990s, he also consistently raised the issue of the Bosnian war in the House of Commons, urging western intervention, 'a position that drew groans of affected boredom from the Labour and Conservative benches,' the paper said.[24]

*The Times* reminded readers that Paddy made several dangerous visits to Bosnia's besieged capital, Sarajevo, and he helped to expose the Serbian army's atrocities against Bosnian Muslims, including its use of concentration camps. He also remonstrated in person with Slobodan Milosevic, the Serbian president, and demanded western intervention to end a campaign of genocide that he described as 'the greatest crime on European soil since the Second World War'.[25]

Paddy ensured that the Liberal Democrats remained true to their principles, especially when it mattered most. *The Telegraph* recalled how, as a strong European, he backed the Major government in trying to get the Maastricht Treaty passed (after it lost its Commons majority following internal rebellions), against taunts from Labour and from Tory rebels that he could have brought the government down.[26]

The obituaries cast the 1992 result as something of a personal disappointment for him: 'the hoped-for breakthrough at the election, leading to a realignment on the left, once more failed to materialise,' said *The Guardian*.[27] Still, the campaign established him as a significant voice in British politics and Paddy was consistently described in opinion polls as the most popular party leader. Above all, the Liberal Democrats were an undisputed part of the political landscape, which had been in doubt when he became leader three years earlier.

## Attempted realignment of the left

Sweeping by-election victories in safe Tory constituencies at Newbury, Christchurch and Eastleigh followed, *The Guardian* said.[28] In 1993, *The Times* recalled,[29] Ashdown toured the country to spend time working and living with ordinary people – coalminers in Scotland, trawlermen in the Irish Sea, Muslims in Peckham, a black family in a drug-infested district of Manchester. This led to what *The Telegraph* dubbed 'an entertaining if at times over-candid' book, *Beyond Westminster*.[30] Its core argument, that government was becoming dangerously out of touch with those it governed, seems especially prescient today, when the result of the 2016 referendum on EU membership has been attributed to widespread disillusionment with their political leaders.

As *The Telegraph* said, Ashdown returned to find Major's government without a majority and in the thrall of the Eurosceptic right, and Labour a government-in-waiting. He abandoned 'equidistance' between Labour and the Conservatives and joined Blair in scorning the increasingly impotent Tories.[31] *The Times* recounted how Paddy entered into secret talks with the Labour leader, Tony Blair, about a realignment of the left whereby their two parties would combine to defeat the Conservatives and keep them out of power. The two parties formed a joint commission on constitutional reform and observed a tacit non-aggression pact during the campaign.[32]

**None of the obituaries recognised that, under a less strategically adept leader, the party could easily have been buried by the Blair landslide.**

In 1997, Liberal Democrats more than doubled their tally of seats to forty-six – at that time the most any third party had won since 1929, assisted greatly by anti-Conservative tactical voting. *The Telegraph* argued that the strategy, in Ashdown's words, 'worked too well':[33] Labour's majority (179) was too large for it to share power. Blair cooled on the idea of bringing the Liberal Democrats into a coalition, though he continued to discuss the idea with Ashdown for the next two years. But Labour remained hostile to electoral reform for the Commons. None of the obituaries recognised that, under a less strategically adept leader, the party could easily have been buried by the Blair landslide.

As for the party's 'policy wins', the *Financial Times* claimed that:

> The only fruits of Ashdown's secret courting was a joint cabinet committee, giving the Lib Dems a limited say in the development of Labour government policy.[34]

*The Times* was more accurate:

> Blair did implement some of the joint commission's ideas for constitutional reform, including Scottish and Welsh parliaments, a Freedom of Information Act and a form of proportional representation in European elections, but Ashdown believed he missed an historic opportunity to 'break the mould by creating Britain's first peacetime partnership government.[35]

## High representative and EU special representative for Bosnia & Herzegovina

The third, less developed theme was Paddy's role as High representative and EU special representative for Bosnia & Herzegovina from 2002 to 2006.

*The Times* delivered the most complete assessment of Paddy's record:

> The 'viceroy of Bosnia' threw himself into the task with characteristic energy and determination, and achieved much more than he could ever have done as leader of Britain's perennial third party.
>
> The square-jawed, slash-eyed former commando was a man of action, not words, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina the talents he honed in the military – his resolution, drive, leadership, efficiency and can-do attitude – came into their own.
>
> He learnt rudimentary Serbo-Croat, moved to Sarajevo, and for the next four years laboured with some notable successes to build a functioning state in Bosnia. He created a unified army and intelligence service, reformed the taxation and judicial systems, eradicated Communist-era laws, liberalised the economy and dispatched several suspected war criminals to stand trial in The Hague. His greatest regret was his failure to

capture Radovan Karadzic, the former Bosnian Serb political leader, and Ratko Mladic, the former Bosnian Serb military leader.

Ashdown enjoyed what he called a 'love affair' with Bosnia. He walked to work, travelled widely to meet and stay with ordinary Bosnians, walked and skied in the mountains and even bought a lakeside holiday home but he resisted pressure to extend his posting. He left in 2006 having won the respect and affection of most Bosnians.[36]

The *Financial Times*, discussing Paddy's record in a separate piece from its obituary, added that he created a single customs service, giving the Bosnian government a source of income. He helped to get the mass slaughter of 8,000 men and boys by Bosnian Serb forces at Srebrenica, Europe's worst atrocity since the Second World War, recognised as genocide. And he required the government of Republika Srpska, a predominantly Serb entity of Bosnia, to establish a fact-finding commission on the atrocity.[37]

**Life with Paddy Ashdown was a daily adventure … On any given Tuesday, he was as liable to have two or ten bright ideas about British foreign policy as he was to decide to mount an assault on the government's welfare reforms. Or to demand that the party set off on some new fact-finding mission about the domestic policy agenda – poverty of opportunity – that most animated him.**

### Elder statesman

Ashdown returned to Britain an elder statesman, said *The Times*.

> [He] did not retire, though he spent more time gardening, reading and walking in his beloved Somerset and at his second home in the Burgundy region of France. As he wrote in his memoirs, 'being idle is the worst of all punishments for me'.[38]

*The Guardian* added that Paddy turned to writing books: two volumes of diaries, his memoirs, *A Fortunate Life* (2009), and well-received histories of incidents in the Second World War: the Royal Marines' disastrous attempt to destroy German shipping at Bordeaux in 1942 and the French resistance's battle on the Vercors plateau in 1944. He became president of Unicef UK in 2009. In 2015 he supervised the Lib Dems' disastrous general election campaign, following their period of coalition with the Tories under Nick Clegg's leadership, which saw them lose forty-nine of their fifty-seven seats.

Nobody could fairly blame Paddy for the catastrophe. As Olly Grender observed:

> It was a grim, thankless task, which he delivered with his usual humour, energy and inspiration.[39]

*The Telegraph* rounded out the story of Paddy's final years:

> He spoke in the Lords regularly after his return from Bosnia, and in the Alternative Vote referendum of 2011 – a disaster for his party – he was one of the few campaigners for a 'Yes' vote to show conviction. When in 2013 the Commons pre-emptively voted against any British involvement in Syria, he declared himself 'depressed and ashamed'.
>
> After the referendum vote for Brexit, against which he had campaigned, Ashdown formed MoreUnited UK 'to give a voice to the voiceless who want to hold this country in the centre', … at the 2017 election 34 candidates the organisation supported – from four parties – were elected.'[40]

### Paddy Ashdown, the man

Finally, some of the memories and reflections of those who worked closely with Paddy Ashdown deserve to be recounted at length. David Laws, who worked with Paddy and, in 2001, succeeded him as MP for Yeovil, remembered:

> … a voracious worker, a natural leader, a person of great courage and conviction, and of a generous, compassionate and progressive spirit.
>
> … He was not one of life's spectators. He was a player, a participant, a natural leader. If he was at a rugby match (unlikely) it would only be as a participant – on the pitch, in the middle of the pack, fighting hard to grab the ball and win the game. As a soldier, his men – it was said – used to follow him anywhere – 'out of curiosity!'
>
> In politics, too, he was a leader – never one to duck decisions, or follow the crowd, or wait until he had an opportunity to see which way the winds of public opinion were blowing. He carefully thought through the issues, before reaching his decisions. But once he was decided, he could not be budged – and he raised banners which others could rally to.[41]

Miranda Green, his last press secretary as leader, recalled Paddy's intellectual restlessness and dynamism:

> Life with Paddy Ashdown was a daily adventure … On any given Tuesday, he was as liable to have two or ten bright ideas about British foreign policy as he was to decide to mount an assault on the government's welfare reforms. Or to demand that the party set off on some new fact-finding mission about the domestic policy agenda – poverty of opportunity – that most animated him.[42]

David Laws wrote affectionately of Paddy's capacity for hard, consistent work – and his expectations of others:

> Party conference speeches had reached draft number 20, a month before they were needed. No holiday of his was ever truly a rest. No hour in the morning was too early for an urgent call, no time at night too late. Indeed, Paddy once asked me to keep my pager to hand after 2am, in case he needed to be in touch 'around 3am'!

And he never, ever, stopped. I remember telling him, after we had completed one lengthy five-hour Advice Centre in Yeovil on a Saturday, that I was going home to see a rugby match on TV.

'What!' he said, 'Spend over two hours doing nothing but watching sport?'

He was genuinely mystified that anyone could want to stop productive work for so long.'[43]

There were other sides to working with Paddy. According to Miranda Green:

He gave the impression of constant motion – he was an early adopter of the 'walk and talk' years before *The West Wing* – and his mind constantly jumped several steps ahead of everyone else in the room. He could switch instantly from serious politics to indulging his highly developed sense of the ridiculous. He loved to laugh and to gossip. He and his wife Jane took generations of political hopefuls under their wing, making loyal allies of us all.[44]

Olly Grender offered further insights:

He loved having people around him who would give him an argument – he rarely employed people who agreed with him. He grew and fostered countless careers. He always found time to give encouragement, mentoring and support to so many, from deputy prime minister Nick Clegg to the newest press officer in the party. The only payment he expected in return was fun company, a good argument and great gossip.[45]

All three were clear about what Paddy stood for and the sort of politician he was. Olly Grender contended that:

He leaves behind a legacy of showing the right way to be a politician in the turbulent times we live in – with tolerance, liberalism and social justice at the heart of his values.[46]

Miranda Green reflected:

The Brexit vote broke his heart – or so he told me. Like his successor as Liberal Democrat leader, Charles Kennedy, he was a passionate believer in the EU's ideal of prosperity through a compact of nations. With first-hand experience of war, of cold war diplomacy and of bringing the rule of law to the former Yugoslavia, he saw Europe as a guarantor of peace and human rights.[47]

David Laws described Paddy as:

… a great internationalist, but he was definitely not what Theresa May recently described as a 'citizen of nowhere.' He knew where his own roots and home were – and more important to

him than Westminster, Brussels or even Bosnia, were Somerset and his beloved village of Norton-sub-Hamdon, where he will now rest, close to family and friends.

… Before anything else, Paddy was a deeply loyal friend, and a loving family man. Whatever the pressures, family and friends – in that order, were the most important elements of his life.[48]

Olly Grender agreed:

Family was everything to him and his pride in his children, grandchildren and love for Jane were a defining part of who he was.[49]

The final word, however, should go to the former Liberal Democrat leader, Sir Menzies Campbell (Lord Campbell of Pittenweem):

Paddy was both a colleague and a close friend. He had more energy than anyone else I have ever known. His sense of responsibility and duty was unparalleled. We worked closely together and while we did not always agree with each other we never once fell out. He was unwaveringly loyal and generous. Courageous, committed and charismatic. What more could you hope for from a friend and party leader?'[50]

*Neil Stockley is a former Policy Director for the Liberal Democrats and a long-standing member of the Liberal Democrat History Group.*

*For endnotes, see page 40*

**Liberalism in Canada**

Tom Axworthy and Lorna Marsden recount the history of the Canadian Liberal Party

# The Long-lived Libe


Justin Trudeau and his wife, Sophie Grégoire, as the Liberal Party wins the election on 19 October 2015

'I PROPOSE THE ADOPTION of the rainbow as our emblem. By the endless variety of its tints the rainbow will give an excellent idea of the diversity of races, religions, sentiments and interests of the different parts of the Confederation.'– Sir Henri-Gustave Joly de Lotbinière, in the debate in the Legislative Assembly of Canada on the proposed scheme of British North American Confederation, Quebec, 20 February 1865

Even as Canada was being born, diversity was recognised as a pre-eminent distinguishing characteristic. Joly de Lotbinière, a member of Parti Rouge, and subsequently the first Liberal to become premier of Quebec, recognised, too, in his celebrated metaphor that rainbows were fragile – 'an image without substance' – and that confederation would be far from solid without constant attention to how our diverse varieties could congeal. Understanding this diversity, reflecting it, and working to help Canadians appreciate what they have in common rather than what divides them, has been both the vocation and the main achievement of the Liberal Party of Canada (LPC) since its formation in 1867.

Diversity has taken many forms, but for party organisation it stems from the four British colonies that came together after the American Civil War to discuss and finally achieve a confederation of all the colonies and, eventually, the regions and territories of the country. The strong loyalties to

# eral Party of Canada

**In the 152 years since confederation, the Liberal Party has been in office for 91. In twenty-five of the forty-two general elections since 1867, the Liberal Party has captured more votes than any other.**

the culture of those former colonies that became provinces and territories are still felt within the party organisation and the voting public. Parties named Liberal and electing legislators in the provinces and territories may hold quite different politics from the federal Liberals, reflecting their local conditions. So in this article 'Liberal Party' refers to the federal party in Canada.[1] Diversity also includes accommodating our enduring issues: two official languages, vast geography, six time zones, regional economic and cultural disparities and the influence of the powerful nation to our south.

The mathematical exactness of election results and the numerical expression of surveys give party politics a seeming concreteness that its actual practice belies. Party politics is all churn: new voters enter the electorate, issues emerge, opinions alter and societies change. Successful party management requires alertness to this vast kaleidoscope of change, a willingness to innovate to meet new demands or conditions, and creativity to achieve compromise, or at least acceptance, among the thousands of active supporters and the millions of potential party voters. Party politics is a constant juggling of a great many balls to keep as many as possible in the air. And no party has been as good a juggler for as long a time as the Liberal Party of Canada.

There are many elements to that juggling, including respecting provincial and territorial rights and governments, but also identifying national concerns felt across the country; ensuring linguistic rights for the French and English while including new voters from every possible immigrant and linguistic community; and building and rebuilding the party organisation, sometimes toward, and sometimes away from centralisation. Add to that the tensions between the elected caucus and the cabinet, the national, provincial and local party executives, and from time to time rivalries between candidates and the constituency or party leaders, and differences over policy positions and one is amazed at how long there has been a single federal Liberal Party in or out of government. The other founding political grouping, the conservatives, has split into factions, coalitions, and ideologies and engaged in civil war against their leaders so that the current Conservative Party was founded only in 2003.[2] The LPC has managed far more subtle moves, leaving the party intact. The subtle changes are tracked inside the Liberal Party itself through changes in organisation, leadership, and policies but without formal coalitions even in the wartime governments. Individual Liberals participated in such governments but not the party as such. In addition, the LPC has policy conferences, the outcomes of which are considered by the parliamentary leadership, but does not have party manifestoes the way British and European parties do. One attempt to have such a document in the 1980s was soundly rejected at a party conference. This lack of published policy positions provides considerable flexibility to the parliamentary leadership.

In the 152 years since confederation, the Liberal Party has been in office for 91. In twenty-five of the forty-two general elections since 1867, the Liberal Party has captured more votes than any other. In all those years no other party has formed a government in Canada more often. In the nineteenth century, the Conservatives, led by the vision and wizardry of Sir John A. Macdonald, were the dominant party. In the twenty-first century, the Conservatives and Liberals have been essentially even: holding office the same amount of time, with the Liberals averaging only 32 per cent of the popular vote in the past decade and a half. In between, however, in the twentieth century, the Liberals were so successful that they became known as 'the natural governing party'. As the late political scientist Steven Clarkson quipped, 'If the last century did not belong to Canada, Canada turns out to have belonged to the Liberal Party.'[3]

After the First World War and the extension of the vote to women, Liberal governments were in office three-quarters of the time. Other parties, like Japan's Liberal Democrats or Sweden's Social

Democrats, have had streaks of similar accomplishment, but none have come close to doing this decade after decade for over a hundred years. R. Kenneth Carty in his excellent study, *Big Tent Politics: The Liberal Party's Long Mastery of Canada's Public Life* concludes 'the Canadian Liberal party's particular claim to fame lies in its extraordinary longevity.'[4]

## How have they done it?

John Meisel, the dean of Canadian political scientists, uses a compelling nautical analogy to explain elections. 'The courses of electoral outcomes', he writes, 'can be likened to forces affecting the surfaces of oceans.' Fluctuations in sea levels are determined in the long term by the shrinking of glaciers, in the medium term by the force of the tides, and in the short term by waves. Elections are similarly influenced: long-term historical and societal conditions set the context; leaders respond to and shape these basic conditions to influence the tides of public opinion; and skillful party managers and active volunteer organisations ride the waves of the tidal swell.

English political ideas came to Canada with settlement but rather quickly adapted to the realities of the new world. The Conservatives maintained closer links with the UK Conservatives and for longer than the Liberals maintained close ties with their UK counterpart.[5] So while the British government controlled Canadian defence and foreign policy until the Statute of Westminster of 1931 and while there was extensive visiting and consultation, it was Canadian politicians themselves who created the content of the original British North America Act that passed the parliament in Westminster in March, 1867.[6] The governors general appointed from the UK were generally sensitive to Canadian concerns and, since 1952, all governors general have been Canadian men and women. Except in matters of tariffs, foreign affairs and defense, Britain seldom showed much interest in Canada, always keeping a fonder eye on the lost colonies of the USA. However, they did retain the power to amend the BNA Act (our constitution) until it was patriated by Prime Minister Trudeau's government in 1982 at which point it incorporated the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Canada in 1867 had a population of 3.4 million, 5 million in 1900, and just over 37 million today. In 1867, 268,217 men of property voted; in 1900, a million men, about a quarter of the population, were entitled to vote; in 2015, 26.4 million Canadians were eligible to cast ballots.

Only British citizens and only men voted in 1867. In some of the colonies women had the vote but lost this right before confederation. In 1916 the Liberal government in Manitoba granted women the vote and a year later the government of Canada granted suffrage to women whose close male relatives were fighting overseas. In 1920 women also gained the right to hold federal public office and in the years since minorities and indigenous men and women have gained the franchise and slowly gained traction in parliament.[7]

**The dimensions, characteristics and turbulence of our electoral sea have been continually changing and thus, every generation or so, the Liberal Party has had to reinvent itself to continue to be relevant to the society of its time. But in those reinventions, the party has always applied the same formula: stick to the centre and invite all to join.**

In recent times, fuelled by immigration, the electorate grows by an average of three quarters of a million votes from election to election. Not only does size increase but the distribution changes: Quebec, the bedrock of Liberal support, has seen its proportion of Canada's population fall from 30 per cent to 24 per cent, while the west, where Liberal support is weakest, has grown so that now one in three Canadians live in western Canada, the highest share ever recorded. If current Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau spends a lot of time in British Columbia and the cities of the Prairies, he does so with good reason.

In 1867, Canada was an overwhelmingly rural, church-going society: today, Canada has become a secular urban nation with the most multicultural cities on earth.[8] The dimensions, characteristics and turbulence of our electoral sea have been continually changing and thus, every generation or so, the Liberal Party has had to reinvent itself to continue to be relevant to the society of its time. But in those reinventions, the party has always applied the same formula: stick to the centre and invite all to join.

And although much has changed since confederation, one constant has remained: the first-past-the-post electoral system. In multi-party elections, a centre party like the Liberals often wins the majority of seats with only 40 per cent of the vote. The Big Tent rests on a sturdy first-past-the-post pillar. Needless to say, the parties who consistently win few seats advocate proportional representation, but that idea has lost in two provincial referenda and was recently abandoned by the government of Justin Trudeau.[9]

## LPC: the origins

The pedigree of the Liberal Party dates back to the early nineteenth century, when reformers like Robert Baldwin and Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine fought for responsible government against the Tory-led Family Compact and Château Clique. But once responsible government was achieved in 1848, and with Baldwin and LaFontaine retiring in 1851, Canadian politics had to be recast. The man with the most skilled hands at the forge was John A. Macdonald and he fashioned a Conservative Party coalition that dominated Canada for the next forty years. Macdonald brought together the old Tories (his faction), the Bleus of Quebec led by Sir George-Étienne Cartier, who was close to the Church, some moderate followers of Baldwin, and Montreal business interests centred around the Grand Trunk railway.

This did not leave much else, but what there was came together eventually to create the Liberal Party. The 'Clear Grit' farmers of Canada West (modern day Ontario) demanded electoral reform; economy in government, meaning fewer

subsidies for the Grand Trunk; and reciprocity or free trade with the United States. The post-Baldwin Canada West Reformers or Grits were led by George Brown, editor of the *Globe,* then the newspaper of western alienation and now the *Globe and Mail* of the centre-right.[10]

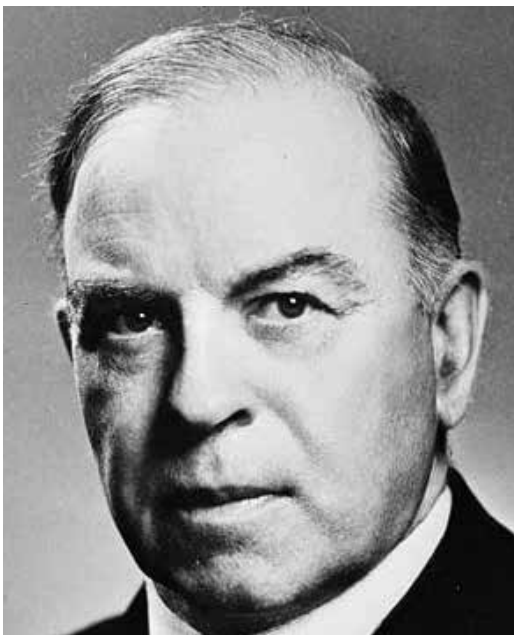
The other remnant of pre-confederation politics immune to Macdonald's wiles was the Parti Rouge led by Sir Antoine-Aimé Dorion. Les Rouges were heirs of the 1848 European revolution and were opposed to excessive clerical influence in politics. Initially, there was little in common between the Grits and Les Rouges, except their opposition to Macdonald. However, in 1856, Dorion begin to advocate federalism as a solution to the issue of preserving French Canada's distinctiveness within a wider union while allowing representation by population, the main Grit demand. Brown gradually warmed to the idea and in 1858, the two parties joined forces to defeat Macdonald in the pre-confederation legislature and formed a short-lived administration which promised a constitution 'coming directly from the people, or by a Canadian Bill of Rights guaranteed by Imperial statute or by the adoption of a federal union with provincial rights guaranteed.'[11]

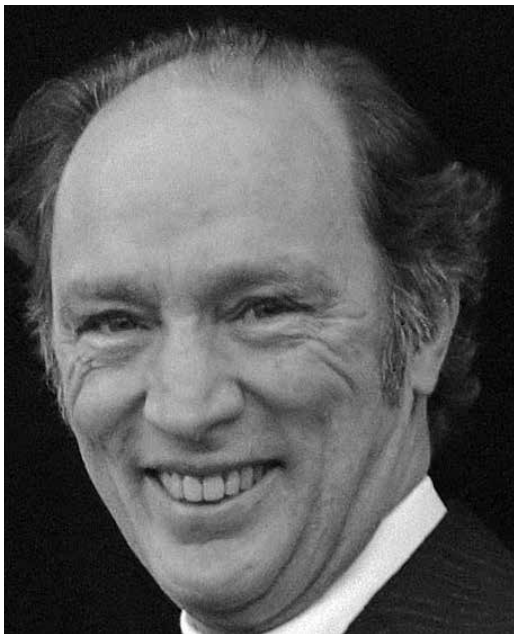
That promise is the genesis of the Liberal Party. Against the bitter background of sectarian conflict, the differing interests of Catholic and Protestant, and the regions of Canada East and West, Brown and Dorion fashioned a compromise that allowed them to form a ministry. Conciliation and compromise, especially to protect minority distinctiveness within a system of majority rule, is a template that Liberals have used ever since.[12]

## Frustrating failure – and then success

However successful Brown and Dorion were in creating a compromise within the reform movement, they could not match the superior political skills of Macdonald. In 1867, with confederation achieved, Brown wrote to Dorion and reform allies in the Maritimes about joining forces to oppose Macdonald in the Dominion's first election. In June 1867, a convention of Ontario Reformers supported Brown rather than continue in the 'Great Coalition' that had created the new country. The Liberal Party formally begins at that moment. But the 1867 election confirmed Macdonald's mastery. Macdonald won a clear majority of Ontario's eighty-two seats, Brown was personally defeated, and Cartier swept Quebec. There was now a Liberal Party but it was in tatters. When the federal parliament met in November 1867, the Liberal opposition consisted of only thirty-six Ontario Grits and twenty Rouges and Maritime members who had opposed confederation itself. It is good for Liberal hubris to recall that the party began in defeat.

The Liberal breakthrough did not occur until 1887, when Wilfrid Laurier became leader.





Liberal Prime Ministers:

Wilfrid Laurier (1841–1919), leader of the Liberal Party 1887–1919, Prime Minister 1896–1911

William Lyon Mackenzie King (1874–1950), leader of the Liberal Party 1919–48, Prime Minister 1921–26, 1926–30, 1935–48

Pierre Trudeau (1919–2000), leader of the Liberal Party 1968–84, Prime Minister 1968–79, 1980–84

Brown and Dorion had negotiated an agreement that sought to guarantee Canada's diversity: Laurier embodied it. With one inspired leadership choice, the Liberal Party transformed its fortunes. In 1891, Laurier lost to Macdonald but increased Liberal seats in Quebec from twelve to thirty-seven. In 1896, Laurier swept Quebec with 53 per cent of the vote and forty-nine seats. From Laurier onwards, Quebec has been the anvil of Liberal success. Laurier inherited the Grit–Rouge alliance but he added to it key parts of the Macdonald coalition: he promoted railways and the opening of the West thereby bringing business support. The 'Laurier boom' rested on huge increases in immigration to open the west and immigrants in each successive generation have continued to vote heavily for the Liberal Party. Laurier also became as skilled at using patronage as the old Master himself. MacDonald had invented the Canadian recipe for electoral success – a French/English partnership to use government to drive development – but Laurier appropriated the recipe and added a few ingredients of his own.

With the most balanced parliamentary caucus in Liberal history with all regions represented by strong ministers, by his eloquent defence of tolerance in a sectarian age, and with political skills second to none, Laurier created the Big Tent that has sheltered Liberals from his day to ours. For these reasons, in Canada he is the greatest Liberal of them all.

## After Laurier

Laurier excelled at the formula of finding common ground and his successors have followed in his footsteps. Since 1867, with the exception of unity governments during the two world wars, Liberals have formed twenty-five governments and Conservatives eighteen (under different names). Until 1993, when the Bloc – a Quebec separatist party, formed the opposition (1993–97), the opposition had always been the reciprocal of either the Liberals or Conservatives.

As Canada became an urban nation, Liberal Party leaders modified the founding policies. Mackenzie King (PM 1921–30; 1935–48) moved cautiously to promote social policy and Keynesian economics. Louis St. Laurent (PM 1948–57) promoted a dynamic foreign and defence policy and, despite the legacy of the conscription debate, carried public opinion in every part of the country. Lester B. Pearson (1963–68) – urged on by advisors like Walter Gordon, Allan MacEachen, and Tom Kent[13] – moved much more boldly than King to introduce Medicare and the Canada Pension Plan. Monique Bégin,[14] as minister of health (1977–79; 1980–84), continued the social policy thrust in the 1970s and 80s. Jean Chrétien (PM 1993–2003), with the help of Finance Minister Paul Martin, balanced the budget at a time when there were fears that debt was out of control, kept Canada out of the Iraq war, and brought in the Clarity Act to dampen separatist enthusiasm for never-ending referendums. Chrétien gave a classic example of the Liberal formula of common ground when he said in distributing any budget surplus that one-third would go to reducing taxes, one-third to retire debt, and one-third for social spending.

Pierre Trudeau[15] venerated Laurier and kept a bust of him in his parliamentary office. Just as preoccupied with national unity as his great predecessor, Trudeau changed the unity dialogue from a debate about the division of powers between the federal and provincial jurisdictions to one about values and individual rights. By highlighting in the Charter the values of liberty, equal treatment, and multiculturalism, Trudeau made the Charter into the Ark of the Covenant of modern liberalism. Through the Charter, Trudeau enshrined in the constitution Laurier's formula of unity through diversity.

## Party organisation and loyalty is the key

On a miserable winter day in 1980, with snow falling and the wind biting, the Liberal campaign rolled into the old Grit bastion of the Bruce Peninsula in Ontario. As they had for over 150 years, an enthusiastic crowd of 200 Grit partisans had turned out to welcome the Liberal leader and cheer up the campaign team. Later, adopting his best philosopher king mode as he and Tom Axworthy worked on the next speech, Trudeau asked, 'Why do they come?' Trudeau was not a party man. Unlike Jean Chrétien, he had not joined at an early age or worked his way up the party ladder. At that moment at least, he was genuinely puzzled about what it was that attracted volunteers to spend their time working so hard to elect the party of their choice.

It is a crucial question. Without an organisation to attract candidates, raise money and promote public education, even the best strategy will fail. Riding the waves is as important as mastering the electoral tides. The Liberal and Conservative parties, both vestiges of pre-confederation politics, are two of Canada's longest established volunteer organisations. Belonging to a party once meant jobs for your family but those days are long gone. The patronage system of Macdonald and Laurier is now a thing of the past. Parties must now attract volunteers by giving them a role in the process such as choosing candidates, electing leaders (since 1919) and influencing policies. The Liberal Party has been blessed with skilled managers and professionals who adroitly avoided official splits in the party, but these managers knew that it is the grassroots volunteer activists who bring vitality and credibility to the process. A big tent requires a large crew to raise it, repair it and keep it sturdy against the wind. It is the organisers and strategists who have kept the LPC in power so long.

**By highlighting in the Charter the values of liberty, equal treatment, and multiculturalism, Pierre Trudeau made the Charter into the Ark of the Covenant of modern liberalism. Through the Charter, Trudeau enshrined in the constitution Laurier's formula of unity through diversity.**


Liberal Party convention, April 2018

## Looking ahead

After the 150th anniversary of Confederation, the Liberal Party faces challenges on all three of the metaphorical electoral dimensions of stormy seas, tides and waves. On voter volatility, the twenty-first century has been the most competitive for the Liberals since the days of Macdonald. In 2011, the party lost 850,000 votes from its previous total, falling to third place for the first time in its history, with only 20 per cent of Canadians identifying with the party – and many turning to the New Democratic party of the left instead.[16] The turnaround achieved by Justin Trudeau and his team in 2015 was remarkable: from third to first with 39 per cent of the vote and with a majority government. The Liberal Party won 6.9 million votes in 2015 compared to 2.7 million votes in the election before. But the 2011 collapse shows what can happen to a centrist party when it is squeezed from both the right and the left. Trudeau started well with the most gender balanced and diverse cabinet in Canadian history. His government added to its political capital by maintaining more support in the polls than any other party until 2019. But this was achieved with the Conservatives and the NDP in leadership campaigns. Since the Conservatives elected their new leader in May 2017 and the NDP elected theirs in the fall of the year, the game has changed. Justin Trudeau has continued to draw strong support although the next federal election will be fought after powerful international pressures from the USA on trade and the rise of populism in western democracies.

Justin Trudeau has been practising the tried and true Liberal formula of seeking common ground. He has partnered with the current government of Alberta to fight climate change but also promoted pipelines to move Alberta's oil, though only with the strictest environmental safeguards. But in the twenty-first century, the success of a Big Tent strategy is not a given. The Harper Conservatives showed that it was possible to win narrow-band campaigns appealing only to the base identified by deep data techniques. The Trudeau team will be especially challenged by the need to achieve reconciliation with Canada's indigenous peoples on resource development and much else – the Big Tent must be widened to allow indigenous people lots of standing room demonstrating inclusiveness once again. This will only happen if they are given real power and influence in the LPC.[17] In general the focus on human rights issues in Canada and abroad was central to the Liberal focus.[18] The election of Donald Trump in the USA and the need to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement knocked Liberal government's strategy off course from their declared priorities and the rise of right wing populism and Conservative provincial governments represent a significant challenge in the upcoming federal election in 2019.

In the meantime, the standing of Liberal parties in the provincial governments has a spillover effect on the federal Liberal Party's fortunes. Liberal parties have weakened, losing power in BC, Ontario and Quebec.[19] Communicating this issue of separate parties under the same name is complicated. While the parties are separate and have their own policy positions, the electorate is less clear about which issues are legislated at each level – federal, provincial and municipal.[20] Party communications are vital to informing the electors and advancing the party positions. Social media are both helpful in reaching across the vast geography and time zones in both languages but also sometimes highly distorting, while newspapers with their opinion writers and editorials are struggling to maintain their subscribers and advertisers against the technological tide.

Maintaining a dynamic volunteer base and fund raising under tight new rules is another imperative, yet harder in our age of social media.[21] Every organisation, from Canada's mainline churches to the Boy Scouts, is grappling with

this problem. But for the Liberal Party's continued success this, too, must be addressed. At some time in the future, another beleaguered Liberal leader will be visiting the Bruce Peninsula and he or she, too, will need to be comforted and energised by volunteers who have been cheering the Grits on since 1867.

This article has been adapted for a non-Canadian readership from 'The Liberal Party at 150: the Centre Still Holds', *Policy*, Canada 150 edition, July–August 2017, www.policymagazine.ca.

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1 For a convenient list of which parties formed governments at the federal level since 1867 consult Wikipedia, List of Canadian federal general elections.

2 The conservatives gained power as the Liberal-Conservative Party led by John A Macdonald in 1867; became Conservative Party; from 1943–2003 after incorporating much of the Progressive Party became Progressive Conservatives. In 1993 they went from government with 169 seats to two seats followed by the rise of the Reform Party and the Canadian Alliance on the right of the spectrum. Stephen Harper, leader of the Alliance merges with the Progressive Conservatives and Reform to become the new Conservative Party in 2003.

3 Stephen Clarkson has written extensively about Canadian party politics. See, for example, *The Big Red Machine: How the Liberal Party Dominates Canadian Politics,* Vancouver, UBC Press, 2005.

4 R. Kenneth Carty, *Big Tent Politics: The Liberal Party's Long Mastery of Canada's Public Life*, Vancouver, UBC Press, 2015

5 At present there are few Canadian Liberals who could even name the Liberal – or Liberal Democrat – leadership in the UK and apart from a mutual commitment to human rights and liberal democratic ideas there is little in common between the parties. That mutual indifference has only increased since 1867 and as the influx of British citizens to Canada has decreased.

6 Two major conferences in 1864 in, first, Charlottetown and later in Quebec City led to 72 resolutions on confederation of the existing colonies. These were debated in the colonial legislatures and through both compromise and deliberate ambiguity on some matters formed the basis of the British North America Act passed by the British parliament in March 1867. In effect, since the British parliament was distracted by more pressing issues, the Fathers of Confederation as we call them in Canada got the legislation they wanted.

7 See, for example, Lorna R. Marsden, *Canadian Women and the Struggle for Equality, Toronto* (Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 66–72.

8 Statistics Canada reported from the 2016 census in *The Daily* of Wednesday 25 October 2017 that new immigrants overwhelmingly live in the large cities. Immigrants form nearly half of the population in Toronto, for example, over 40 per cent of the Vancouver population and nearly a quarter of the population of Montreal. Even the smaller Prairie cities have a significant immigrant population, far more than those cities have of the population of Canada.

9 The proposal put forward by the LPC in the 2015 election was to review the electoral system. When the parliamentary committee would consider only proportional representation the idea of legislation was abandoned although new electoral reform proposals are again on the order paper as of May 2018.

10 The *Globe* was distributed throughout central and western Canada very early on and merged in 1936 with the Conservative newspaper founded by Sir John A. Macdonald in 1892. Their editorial policy follows both Conservative and Liberal views depending upon current events. Like all Canadian newspapers it is struggling with the rise of digital media.

11 Quote from *Le Pays*, 14 August 1858, cited by Jean-Claude Soulard, 'Dorion, Sir Antione-Aimé', in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography,* vol. 12 (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003), accessed May 15, 2018, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/dorion_Antoine_Aime_12E.html. There is also a discussion in J. M. S. Careless, *Brown of the Globe,* vol. 1 (Macmilan of Canada, 1959), p. 206, which makes the same points.

12 The protection of minority interests includes minority parties in parliament as well as minorities (religious, cultural and ethnic) in the population as a whole. See Janet Ajzenstat, *The Once and Future Canadian Democracy* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).

13 Gordon, MacEachen and Kent were all highly influential progressive policy leaders. Walter Gordon (1906–1987) was chair of the Royal Commission on Canada's Economic Prospects (created under Prime Minister St Laurent 1956–57), Liberal minister under Prime Minister Lester Pearson and honorary chair of the Committee for an Independent Canada. This committee was concerned with the high level of US investment and control in Canadian industry. Allen MacEachen (1921–2017) was an economist (doctoral studies at MIT), and Liberal minister under prime ministers Pearson, Trudeau and Turner where he successfully supported many progressive initiatives in health care, income support and labour reform. He was then leader of the Liberals in the Senate. Tom Kent (1922–2013) was an English-born economist (Oxford) and journalist (the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Economist)* who moved to Canada as editor of the *Winnipeg Free Press (*1954–59). He became principal policy advisor to Prime Minister Lester Pearson, then a deputy minister and finally professor, always maintaining a leading role in Liberal Party policy development. All three men dominated social and economic policy thinking among Liberals in Canada for many years.

14 Monique Bégin is a sociologist (Ph.D. Sorbonne), and began her political career as executive secretary to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, 1967–70. She was elected to the House of Commons from Quebec in 1972 and served until 1984 in various portfolios but her most famous contribution was as minister of health when in 1984 she brought in the Canada Health Act insuring that the provinces would provide universal health care access in order to receive federal transfer payments. She began an academic career after leaving politics and continues to lecture at the University of Ottawa.

15 Pierre Trudeau, lawyer, became an MP from Quebec in 1965 and then rose to prominence as minister of justice in the Pearson government bringing in significant progressive reforms to the Criminal Code. He was elected leader of the LPC in 1968 and swept into power on a tide of popularity – Trudeaumania – serving as leader and prime minister until 1984, except for a brief period between 1979 and 1980, when the Joe Clark Conservatives formed government. His contributions were many (official bilingualism, many reforms in social policy, defiance of terrorism in the radical separatist movement in Quebec among them); but his greatest triumph was patriation of the constitution from Westminster and the addition of the Canadian Charters of Rights and Freedoms.

16 This shift led to the third-place showing of the Liberals although 80 per cent of those identifying as Liberals remained party voters. It illustrates the dangers of relatively small shifts to the survival of the party.

17 For many years, the LPC has had 'commissions' for women, seniors and youth. Indigenous Liberals have caucused in the party parliamentary wing and the LPC has an Indigenous Peoples' Commission.

18 Most recently the criticism by the Canadian foreign minister of the Saudi imprisonment of

women critics led to an extraordinary reaction by the Saudis in the summer of 2018 and, despite the Canadian isolation on this issue, the government has stuck to its guns; cf. 'A Canadian tweet in a Saudi king's court crosses a red line', *Reuters World News*, 10 August 2018.

19 Ontario held an election on 7 June 2018 in which they lost power to the rise of a populist Conservative Party in the province, coming third after the NDP and retaining only seven seats. The same fate befell the Liberal government in Quebec and in New Brunswick although both continue as the official opposition party in their provinces. Since the Canadian media are seriously influenced by events in the USA. concerns with climate policies and refugee issues are rising in significance much as they are in the rest of the Western world.

20 Municipal elections are not party-based in the same way that provincial and federal elections are but there are some municipal parties in cities such as Vancouver and Montreal. Nonetheless, candidates for municipal elections are often identified by their affiliations at the federal and provincial levels.

21 The base of the Liberal vote varies from province to province, although a concern with social justice and human rights balanced with economic balance is central. Those ideas are understood differently in various provincial and territorial contexts depending upon the economic base, the mix of cultural and immigrant groups and the history of the area.

# Research in Progress

If you can help any of the researchers listed below with sources, contacts, or any other information, 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*.

### Emlyn Hooson and the Welsh Liberal Party, 1962–79

The thesis will assess Hooson's influence on the Welsh Liberal Party during this period by paying particular attention to the organisation, policy process and electoral record under his leadership. PhD research at Cardiff University. *Nick Alderton; aldertonnk@cardiff.ac.uk*.

### 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*.

**Research via Twitter**

David Hanson MP tracks down the origin of two 1874 election leaflets

# 'Vote for Mr Crum and one other Liberal'

The first leaflet from the 1874 election proclaims boldly: 'Vote for Mr J. C. Bolton and Mr Alexander Crum'. The second, more mysteriously, says: 'Vote for Mr Crum and one other Liberal.' They have been on the wall in my house ever since I found them in a Wrexham jumble sale for £1, maybe fifteen years ago.

I'd never thought much of it except thinking that Mr Bolton had got cold feet, withdrawn and at that stage no Liberal had been picked to succeed him – but I wasn't sure. How they got from Glasgow, where I now know they were first pushed through a door in 1874, to a Wrexham yard sale is a mystery for another day, but there they were: grey, a bit tattered, but fascinating nonetheless – at least for election nerds like me!

I'd known they were from Glasgow and I knew also that both candidates had made it to Parliament eventually (though not for seats in that great city), but who they were in 1874, what had caused Mr Bolton to withdraw, and what happened to cause this mess in the first place remained lost in time.

Until now – and until Twitter helped.

On 4 February 2018, 144 years to the day after the election took place, I posted the leaflets on Twitter and asked just that: who are these guys and why the mess? Answers came back in floods from all corners, including constituents of mine doing detective work on a wet Sunday afternoon, through to Liberal Democrat activists, Commons historians and Twitter feeds, including the @thevictoriancommons whose purpose is to chart life in the Victorian House of Commons.

Thanks to them, but especially thanks to the said @thevictoriancommons, the picture emerged of an era of Liberal history – some might say a confused one – as a result. So here it is: Liberal Glasgow, 1874.

Glasgow's Liberals, through a mixture of confusion and political differences, have nominated too many candidates for the election. It appears that it was a case of too many Liberal cooks – or factions – spoiling the broth.

Glasgow then had three seats in Parliament and a multi-member election. The issue is simply that there are too many Liberals in the field – four for Glasgow's three seats (plus, confusingly, Mr Kerr, who proclaims himself a Liberal though not officially being one).

Messrs Bolton, Crum, Cameron and Anderson have all been listed as the Liberals, Kerr, who is also listed as Liberal, is campaigning on the issue of Home Rule. Crum and Bolton, who run together, are from the moderate/Whig section of the Liberal Party, while Cameron and Anderson are more advanced Liberals from the Radical wing.

After several days of negotiations, Bolton, on the advice of his election committee, withdraws. With Bolton no longer in the running, Crum's supporters are encouraged to give their second votes to either Anderson or Cameron. However, Bolton was too late to withdraw, and his name appeared on the ballot paper anyway. All along, I'd been thinking that the Liberals had just not chosen a replacement following Bolton's standing down.

The result: two Liberals and one Tory elected. Bolton's attempt to encourage Liberal unity did not prevent the return of a Conservative for the third seat. And Mr Bolton still got 169 votes despite not wanting any.

The full result was:

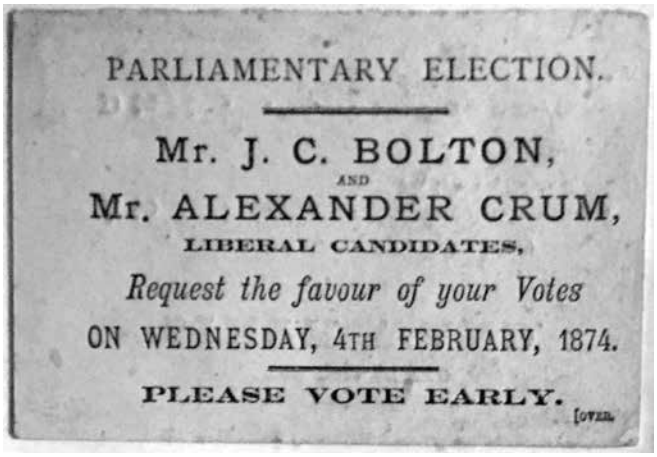
| | |
|---|---|
| Cameron, Dr. Charles (L) | 18,455 |
| Anderson, Geo. (L) | 17,902 |
| Whitelaw, Alex. (C) | 14,134 |
| Hunter, James (C) | 12,552 |
| Crum, Alex. (L) | 7,453 |
| Kerr, F (L) | 4,444 |
| Bolton, J.C. (L) | 169 |

Mr Bolton eventually ended up as MP for Stirlingshire for twelve years. Mr Crum was elected unopposed as the Member of Parliament for Renfrewshire at a by-election in November 1880. He held the seat until the constituency was divided at the 1885 general election, when he did not stand again.

If they had managed to sort it out earlier perhaps it would have been different. If there is a moral, it's that divided parties lose elections.

Oh, and always keep election leaflets – they are the story of their era.

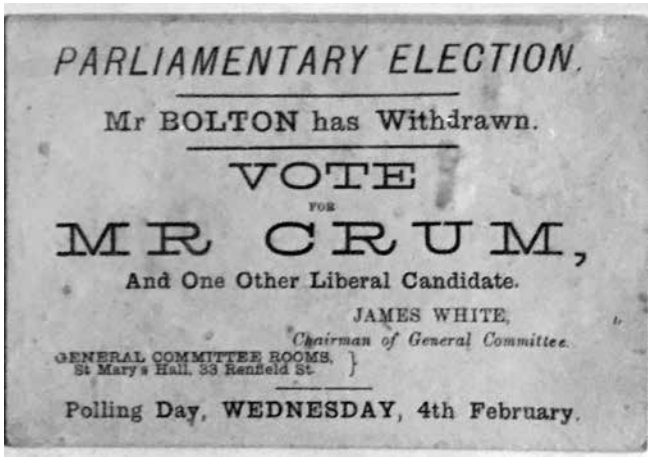
*Rt Hon David Hanson has been the Labour MP for Delyn since 1992. He was a minister in three government departments between 2005 and 2010.*


PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION.

Mr. J. C. BOLTON,
AND
Mr. ALEXANDER CRUM,
LIBERAL CANDIDATES,
*Request the favour of your Votes*
ON WEDNESDAY, 4TH FEBRUARY, 1874.

PLEASE VOTE EARLY.

[OVER.


PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION.

Mr BOLTON has Withdrawn.

VOTE
FOR
MR CRUM,
And One Other Liberal Candidate.

JAMES WHITE,
*Chairman of General Committee.*

GENERAL COMMITTEE ROOMS,
St Mary's Hall, 33 Renfield St.

Polling Day, WEDNESDAY, 4th February.

# Reports

## Europe: The Liberal Commitment

Autumn Conference fringe meeting, 16 September 2018, with Anthony Howe and Eugenio Biagini; chair: Julie Smith
Report by **Neil Stockley**

The Liberal Democrats, like their Liberal and SDP predecessors, have always supported the European project and membership of the European Union. The Liberal Party's conversion after the Second World War to the cause of European union has been well documented. Less well known, however, is the history of the ideas and political debates that made the European cause so attractive and important for Liberals. This meeting sought to redress the balance.

Anthony Howe, Professor of Modern History at the University of East Anglia, argued that Liberal support for European cooperation originated in the party's strong belief in free trade and its ability to bind nations together and promote world peace. In tracing the origins of the Liberal attachment to free trade back to the political economy of the Scottish Enlightenment, he emphasised three main ideas. The first, following Enlightenment thinkers such as Montesquieu, was a belief that trade, which later also came to encompass industry, would act as a civilising force in the world. Second, from Adam Smith the Liberals acquired an understanding of the economics of free trade: abandoning tariffs and market restrictions would 'lead to maximum wealth and welfare'. In other words, in an ideal world, free trade would work to the benefit of everyone. Third, free trade implied a dismantling of the mercantilist state and restrictions on individual liberty – 'rolling back the frontiers of the state' – a point of view that became especially attractive to libertarians.

Professor Howe explained how free trade united Liberals and Whigs in the mid-nineteenth century. Smithian political economy had early on entered Whig thinking, and was later widely diffused under the 'March of Mind', so that its language became 'an essential part of Liberal political discourse'.

The main catalyst, he argued, was the battle over repealing the Corn Laws, in 1846. The Anti-Corn Law League took the ideas developed by Cobden and Bright and built a popular case for free trade as vital to the interests of the nation and of ordinary people, in terms of employment, wages, food prices and the distribution of wealth. Free trade was soon connected to popular freedom – of education, of religion, of knowledge, of land ownership and from slavery. These ideas all formed part of the Liberal Party's distinctive identity in the Victorian era and remained as such until the 1950s.

Professor Howe went on to highlight three important linkages between free trade doctrines and the party's developing approach to Europe and international affairs in the second half of the nineteenth century. The first of these concerned the pursuit of peace. During the campaign against the Corn Laws, Cobden had argued that if nations became economically interdependent, their governments would be bound not to go to war. Free traders identified with the peace movement and were in the forefront of opposition to military spending and wars such as in the Crimea.

Second was the Liberals' belief in the primacy of non-intervention in the affairs of other nations. They criticised the use of military force as 'a remnant of the feudal past' that placed the new commercial civilisation at risk and argued that British military intervention was unlikely to serve Britain's long-term interests. The most enthusiastic Liberal free traders dismissed any notion that their cause could be advanced through force and opposed, for instance, the opium wars in China.

The third linkage was between free trade and Liberal anti-imperialism. Liberals believed that the colonies, having been captured by military conquest, were illegitimate and detrimental to Britain's welfare. Free traders, following the views of Smith and Bentham, saw the colonies as an artificial distortion of markets.

The three linkages were most enthusiastically adopted by the Manchester School in the Liberal Party and became 'a touchstone of Liberal thought and decision making', Professor Howe said. Free trade formed a core part of the Liberal creed of internationalism that was closely associated with Cobden, the 'international man'. Such were the origins of John Maynard Keynes' later contention that that free trade was more than an economic doctrine, and enabled 'ethical choices over peace, empire and war'.

Professor Howe then discussed the longer-term implications of these developments. In the early twentieth century, the Liberals remained the party of consumers, cheap food and 'the free breakfast table'. They argued that low tariffs meant low prices and trade maximisation, fewer resources available to the government to spend on military purposes and a shift towards the use of direct rather than indirect taxes. He argued that these issues contributed to the party's landslide victory at the 1906 general election. Anti-protectionist rhetoric remained a key feature of the party's general election campaigns during the inter-war years and in 1945.

The Liberals remained a strongly internationalist, anti-imperialist party (though Professor Howe allowed that the 1880s were something of an exception). A continuing belief that economic interdependence would make war impossible was critical to the thinking of post-First World War Liberal thinkers, such as Hobson (a biographer of Cobden), Norman Angell and Keynes himself. In the 1920s, the party strongly supported the League of Nations and other international institutions.

Professor Howe suggested that the Liberals' adoption of the European cause followed naturally from their attachment to free trade and support for internationalism. Free trade was, after all, designed to maximise trade with the continent and, in the 1860s, Liberals and free traders promoted new commercial treaties with European countries as 'peace bonds' between nations. Liberals advocated measures to enhance integration with Europe, such as the first channel tunnel proposals and the abolition of passports. Some also supported a United States of Europe in the 1880s and at the turn of the century, as a means of ensuring peace.

After the First World War, most Liberals supported forms of greater economic cooperation with Europe rather than a 'retreat into Empire'. In *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, Keynes made an impassioned plea for a free trade union in Europe, a quasi-Common


Market, as the only way to restore prosperity to a devastated continent. Then, in the inter-war period, support for free trade and for Europe were key features of the Liberals' commitment to internationalism.

Professor Howe acknowledged, however, that the connections between the Liberals' belief in free trade and their eventual commitment to European unity were not always straightforward. First, 'their commitment to the idea of Europe was always stronger than the liberal commitment to Europe as a political entity'. It was difficult to identify 'who were Europe's liberals'. There was, for example, no pro-free trade party in France, and in Italy the anti-democratic liberals were the most enthusiastic free traders. Some efforts were made at 'cultural entrepreneurship', he explained later, but these did not extend to politics.

Furthermore, free trade was a doctrine that was global rather than specifically European in nature. The implications of this distinction became clear in the 1950s when the party's most avid supporters of free trade and free markets opposed Britain's membership of the nascent Common Market, which they saw as an anti-consumer, capitalist cartel, that would push up prices. And, as Dr Howe pointed out, the distinction can be seen in the political arguments of today, as some advocates of leaving the European Union, drawing upon Cobden's and Bright's case for free trade, view the Common Agricultural Policy as akin to a return to the Corn Laws. In other words, he suggested, the Brexit cause has Liberal and well as nationalist origins.

Professor Eugenio Biagini of Cambridge University examined the differing ideas and visions of 'Europe' held by the two most influential Liberal leaders of the second half of the nineteenth century: William Ewart Gladstone and Joseph Chamberlain. His contribution added further depth to our understanding of what lay behind the internationalist approach of the Victorian Liberals.

Professor Biagini contended that Gladstone's legacy was to bring together the traditions of Christianity and free trade and pass them on to a new generation. He advanced the concept of the 'sisterhood of nations' with the argument that 'dealing in a noble way with your neighbours' could be in a nation's self-interest, by boosting stability, peace, prosperity, trade and commerce and inspired internationalists all over the globe. In articulating the link between the liberalism that was set to national traditions and the Enlightenment and a Christian tradition, but without traditional dogmatic and hierarchical restrictions, Gladstone marked a turning point in the history of world liberalism.

Professor Biagini began by providing some important context. The 'Europe' that Gladstone knew during his periods in office was a Europe of empires – the Romanov, Habsburg, Hohenzollern and the British – rather than of nation states, and all were conglomerates of ethnic groups and nationalities. The key concern of nineteenth century international relations was to avoid a new clash of empires.

Professor Biagini was clear that Gladstone was comfortable with such a structure of European politics. After all, 'it had always been like this' and, importantly for Gladstone, the continent had achieved political, legal and cultural unity under the Roman Empire, whose legacy to European civilisation had included concepts of liberty and the rule of law. Christianity had added a new layer of imperial and cultural significance, later supplemented by literature and political theory. Gladstone was very familiar was all these concepts and theories: Christianity was central to his political outlook and one of his main sources of political and literary inspiration was the Italian poet Dante Alighieri, a firm supporter of the Holy Roman Empire. Gladstone regarded his vision of a 'universal monarchy', a community of free peoples living under empires, as altogether sensible.

Empires controlled most of the continent and, due to technological advances in the nineteenth century, dominated most of the rest of the globe, with the British Empire the pre-eminent power. Gladstone saw the seemingly permanent process of imperial dominance as a positive development, because he believed that empires were a means of expanding a Christian civilisation.

Still, according to Professor Biagini, he was also aware of the power of nationalism, which, after 1848, was the main driver of change in Europe. Gladstone recognised that nationalism could be a positive as well as a disruptive force, which he sought to 'harness to the chariot of the imperial state', especially the British Empire. He perceived no necessary contradiction between 'empire' and 'liberty', so long as empires acted according to their mandate, which, for Gladstone, was essentially a Christian one. The question then arose, what would happen when empires failed in this responsibility.

Professor Biagani recounted Gladstone's anger when imperial powers fell well short of his required standards of ethical behaviour. The Austrians repressed Italian demands for constitutional and parliamentary reform in 1848–49 and in 1876; the Ottoman Empire put down Bulgarian demands for autonomy with brutal force. Then there was the British Empire, of which Gladstone was an effective defender but also a fierce critic, particularly when Disraeli tried to incorporate into it parts of Central Asia, making conflict with Russia inevitable.

The ultimate challenge to the British Empire was, of course, Ireland, following the famine and various acts of repression which were founded on religion and, in the nineteenth century, assumed a political dimension. Gladstone recognised the connection between the Irish question

and free trade. Support for nationalism in Ireland took off in 1842 when Sir Robert Peel abolished the Corn Laws which, as Professor Biagini said, 'was very good for the working class in Britain and very bad for peasants in Ireland'.

By the 1880s, arguments over Ireland shifted to demands for self-government, if not independence. Gladstone believed that these demands could be reconciled easily with his understanding of empire and his understanding of liberty. He sought to apply to Ireland the strategy, already used for Canada in 1867, of devolving most of the powers and decision-making that were not essential for the defence of British interests to elected local assemblies.

Professor Biagini then contrasted Gladstone's approach with that of Joseph Chamberlain. Chamberlain, he said, perceived the social unrest in Ireland as a consequence of unaddressed social problems. His preferred solution lay in a combination of repression and social reform, much as the French government had dealt with its rebellious provinces.

Chamberlain may have lacked Gladstone's education and depth of learning, but he was well informed on contemporary developments and had an innovative approaching to policy-making. He was influenced considerably by the French colonial reformer and Protestant, Charles de Freyinchet, who was adamant that the state could be a power for good. Gladstone agreed to some extent, but he and Chamberlain differed over the extent and the methods for deploying the power of the state.

Gladstone was clear that the state should avoiding sides with any class; to do so, he believed, risked provoking a political backlash, which he perceived as a major threat to liberalism. He saw free trade as way of countering social and political unrest, with the state providing a neutral set of institutions and setting frameworks and rules, under which groups in society could bargain the best conditions they could secure.

Chamberlain, on the hand, believed that the state's role was to improve peoples' living standards and that in order to do so, the Empire should become more assimilationist, bringing under the direct control of the English state its colonies and provinces, starting with Ireland. He sought to follow the model that the French Empire had used with Algeria and other provinces.

The financial costs of this imperial project were considerable, as British manufacturers came under pressure from increasingly efficient German and American exports. There were also diplomatic costs, as the use of trade barriers aroused the enmity of foreign countries. For Gladstone, these costs outweighed any advantages that Britain gained from protectionist policies. For Chamberlain, the future of Europe was 'a competition for survival, a sort of Darwinian scenario', in which the Anglo-Saxon countries had to pull together in order to increase their chances of controlling their fates.

Professor Biagini then discussed the lessons that we today can draw from these two statesmen and their understandings of Europe, free trade and liberalism. Here, he was somewhat cautious. First, in the Brexit debate, we often hear Britain referred to as an 'island nation', but for both men, he was clear, Britain was the British Empire and especially for Chamberlain, however far the empire stretched, it was Britain's backyard and Britain's purpose in history was to develop this global estate.

Second, Professor Biagini argued, most of the issues around Brexit boil down to a choice over whether unilateralism or multilateralism is the best way to address European and global challenges. For Gladstone, there was no question: multilateralism was consistent with his understanding of the religious condition and Roman imperial condition of Europe and its role in the world. For Chamberlain, 'a Darwinian understanding of the world' led him to think that it was better for each nation, if not each race, to fight its own corner as best it could. Professor Biagini concluded that the ultimate result of this approach was clear for all to see in 1914 and 1939, and that was precisely what the founders of the European Union wanted to avoid ever happening again.

The risks inherent in projecting the views of historical figures, however iconic, on to contemporary events were underlined by a debate at the Liberal Democrat Conference just hours before the meeting. The conference adopted a new policy paper on international affairs and rejected, by 124 votes to 122, an amendment in favour of 'continuing to promote free trade across the world, in particular between developed and developing nations, recognising the benefits this brings to all nations involved'. Duncan Brack, a vice-chair of the Federal Policy Committee, explained that the paper embraced free trade and globalisation, but without supporting the removal of regulations in such areas as environmental protection and food safety. The defeated amendment failed to make such a distinction, however, and could easily have been misinterpreted, especially in debates around Brexit.

As Professor Biagini had pointed out, Britain dominated any economic activity in the world until the 1870s and 1880s; without competition, it could only benefit most from trade without tariffs, quotas and non-tariff barriers. Gladstone would not recognise the UK's trading situation in the early twenty-first century, or the arguments over different forms and purposes of regulation. But he would surely acknowledge that his successors were, like him, striving to balance realism and moralism when applying Liberal and internationalist principles to contemporary challenges.

*Neil Stockley is a former Policy Director for the Liberal Democrats and a long-standing member of the History Group.*

# Reviews

## Enemies of corruption

Ronald Kroeze, André Vitória, and G. Geltner (eds.), *Anti-corruption in History: From Antiquity to the Modern Era* (Oxford University Press, 2018)

Review by **Tom Crook**

The cover of Kroeze et al.'s edited volume, *Anti-corruption in History*, features a satiric print from 1784 depicting Charles Fox, then one of the leaders of the Whig party, wielding a sword and a 'shield of truth,' and doing battle with a multi-headed hydra spewing the words 'Despotism', 'Secret Influence' and 'Duplicity'. The head that had been hissing 'Corruption' has been cut off and lies on the ground; but the message, of course, is that new heads will emerge, for such are the supernatural powers of this mythic beast from antiquity. As the editors no doubt intended, the image captures the protean capacities of 'corruption' to reinvent itself and find new means of expression, even in the face of the most ardent reformist efforts. But it might also be taken to represent the struggles endured by scholars to define 'corruption' in a way that can usefully mediate between different disciplines, and across cultures and long expanses of time. Recent decades have seen a resurgence of scholarship on the subject, yet it remains unclear whether any kind of common analytical coordinates have emerged as a result. The more corruption has been scrutinised, the more complex, multifaceted and subtly variegated it has become, in both its past and present manifestations.

*Anti-corruption in History* is part of this struggle and certainly, if quite self-consciously, it does not attempt to confront these matters directly. Instead, it joins other works in adopting what the editors describe as a 'contextual approach … one that is sensitive to existing theories and explanatory models but is firmly grounded in rigorous historical research, [and] … a careful consideration of changing political, economic and cultural circumstances' (p. 6). Much like Buchan and Hill's recent study, *An Intellectual History of Political Corruption* (2014), it is attentive throughout to the mutability of 'corruption' and the overlapping idioms and currents of thought (e.g. classical, Christian, enlightenment) through which it has been posed as a moral, administrative and even all-encompassing societal problem.

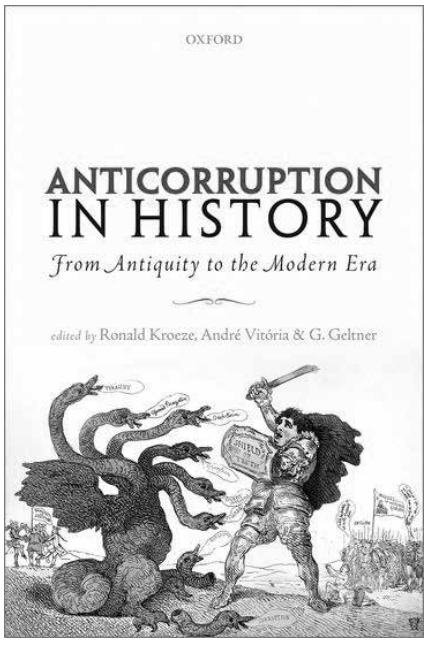
But though this broadly historicist conception of corruption may not be new, there are few, if any, works that range quite so far over time and space. The only volume of comparable scope is perhaps Kreike and Jordan's edited collection *Corrupt Histories* (2004); but this is no match for Kroeze et al.'s work. Organised chronologically into five parts, it contains no fewer than twenty essays, ranging from antiquity and the medieval period (Parts I–II), through the early modern period and up to the present (Parts III–V). Save for two essays – one on medieval Eurasia, the other on the late Ottoman Empire – the volume serves up a feast of examples from across Europe, featuring democratic Athens and the Roman Republic; the kingly courts of late medieval England and Portugal; the Italian city state of Perugia; two early modern *anciens régimes* (England and Spain); the pre-1856 Romanian principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia; plus a handful of modern states, most of them broadly liberal (Britain, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands), but including the communist German Democratic Republic.

The volume thus brings into sharp relief the peculiarities of our current and, historically speaking, quite narrow and procedural definitions of 'corruption,' which centre on the abuse of public office for personal financial gain. We learn, for instance, that profiteering from public office was widely tolerated in democratic Athens; only when it was thought to undermine the interests of the city was it considered corrupt (ch. 1). Alternatively, if again at some remove from the present, for seventeenth-century puritans corruption was less a civic pathology than a spiritual and ecclesiastical one: a matter of sin and of errors of church organisation (ch. 12).

The real historiographical contribution of the volume is the focus on anti-corruption measures. These might seem like the natural counterpart of the thing itself; but as the editors rightly insist, anti-corruption initiatives have been unduly neglected owing to the widespread assumption that they began in earnest only in the modern period, after 1800 or thereabouts, with the advent of democratic state-building and Weberian bureaucracies (pp. 5–6). Analytically, the book thus moves in two directions, on the one hand recovering the vitality of anti-corruption measures in the pre- and early modern periods, and on the other emphasising the fraught gestation and implementation of regulations that emerged as part of the modern state.

The insights are many and readers will no doubt find their own amid this rich array of case studies; but arguably the greatest service performed by this book is to bring some much needed analytical pressure to bear on the divide between the modern, post-1800 era and that which went before. This is also where the book will be of most interest to historians and scholars of liberalism, which, however we might define it, is distinguished by a commitment to open and accountable government and the enactment of public office in a disinterested fashion, above the fray of financial, personal and political interests – at least in theory.

For one thing, it is clear that modern anti-corruption campaigns owed



much of their success to earlier efforts. This is not simply in terms of inheriting established, more or less successful tropes and lines of attack; they also built on actual reforms. A case in point is Denmark, much lauded for securing a relatively pure polity as early as the mid-nineteenth century, when it adopted a liberal parliamentary constitution. And yet, ironically, the 'path to Denmark' might have proved decidedly more tortuous had it not been for the disciplined culture of public officialdom established in the previous century by Denmark's absolutist monarch (ch. 13). A relatively 'clean,' liberal culture of governance was built on decidedly non-liberal foundations.

Liberalism, of course, is also distinguished by a commitment to free markets; and though the precise amount of freedom that should extend to markets has proved a constant source of debate, liberalism has always retained a belief that economic self-interest has its place and function within a progressive society. But as some of the chapters suggest, this is also one reason why modern anti-corruption reforms have proved so ineffective, or at least failed to institute anything like regulatory clarity. Simply put, there has always been a tension between liberalism's commitment to open, public-spirited governance on the one hand, and its commitment to market-driven capitalism on the other.

Two chapters contained in the final part of the volume provide splendid examples of this. James Moore's chapter on Britain shows how public contracts with private enterprises became a significant source of anxiety – and occasionally scandal – at both local and national levels during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. (ch. 18) A similarly murky interface between the worlds of business and public service is presented in Ronald Kroeze's chapter on the post-war Lockheed and Flick affairs in the Netherlands and West Germany. Both scandals were a product of public officials and politicians interacting all too complacently and freely with business people, to the point where they accepted gifts (or bribes, as critics had it); but such encounters were born of a sense that there was nothing intrinsically wrong with public office holders mixing with business people and considering their interests – and indeed there isn't; but the risks are clearly great (ch. 19).

The point is sharpened in Jen Ivo Engels' contribution – one of the more provocative and theoretical contained in the collection – which seeks to explain what he calls the 'never-ending fight against corruption' (p. 177). As he argues, though modern definitions of corruption turn on a strict division between public and private interests, in practice this distinction has proved difficult to maintain, simply because economic interests, of various sorts, have to be managed and mediated by officials, ministers and politicians. Temptations for abuse abound; and if public office holders do not always succumb, mere contact with these interests invariably taints and smears. Certainly in the case of Britain, the shadow of corruption has always loomed large over successive governments, of whatever party-political stripe; and it could be that this is an inevitable feature of any liberal polity that seeks to combine free elections and free markets, public service with the play of private interests.

Ultimately, *Anti-corruption in History* raises more questions than it resolves. If anything, corruption emerges from this volume still more complex and multi-faceted than we had previously thought – still more tenacious and hydra-headed. But posing the right kind of questions is the first step towards finding better answers; and this is certainly the case when it comes to understanding the genesis and limitations of anti-corruption efforts in the modern period, the time when liberalism came of age.

*Dr Tom Crook is Senior Lecturer in Modern British History at Oxford Brookes University. His last book was* Governing Systems: Modernity and the Making of Public Health in England, 1830–1910*, published in 2016 by the University of California Press. He is currently working on a history of political corruption in modern Britain, from the 1832 Great Reform Act up to the present.*

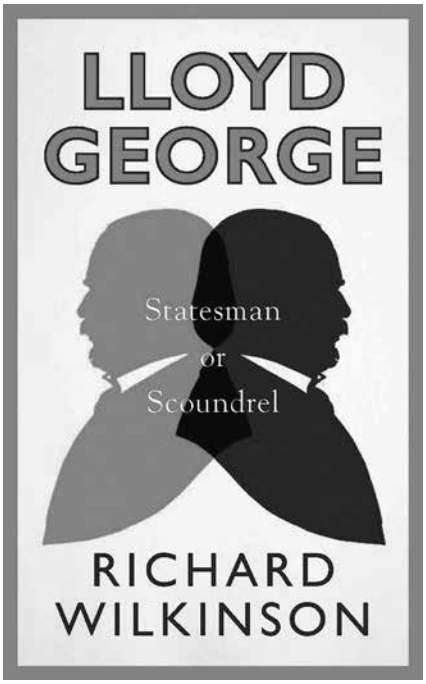
## Lloyd George condemned

Richard Wilkinson, *Lloyd George: Stateman or Scoundrel* (IB Tauris, 2018)

Review by **Alan Mumford**

The cliché has it that you should not judge a book by its cover. In this case we are presented with a stark question in the title. But we are also given a double image of LG in profile, where the images are the same in reverse. Any uncertainty about the focus of the book may then be removed by a declaration on the inside cover: this states that Lloyd George was 'vain, cruel, capricious and dishonest, at times his notoriously corrupt nature threatened to damage the British political system.'

This powerful accusation is preceded by a more judicious statement about his impressive contribution to the welfare state. In the text Wilkinson says that Lloyd George's record as a social reformer 'was flawed' but does not illustrate this. In fact, this is characteristic of the book: fierce attacks in immoderate language are followed by some much less colourful rehearsal of some of his achievements. The question of balance is obviously crucial in assessing anyone's life, the more so in the case of Lloyd George because he aroused in his life – and has continued to arouse in subsequent biographies – strongly different views about his achievements. However, any apparent balance achieved through these statements is also put in question by the volume of attention the author gives to particular subjects. The Marconi scandal is given two repetitive half pages. In contrast Wilkinson claims that 'historians tend to be reticent about Lloyd George's sex life.' Here we have around seven pages devoted to various infidelities, excluding in that calculation the pages he devotes to Frances Stevenson; Crosby gave eight,[1] Hattersley ten.[2] There is clearly no comparability between the impact of infidelities on Lloyd George's political life and the impact of the Marconi Affair, which placed a permanent question mark over his honesty and caused Asquith to offer an unqualified defence. While fair attention is given to Lloyd George's development of those policies now considered the origin of the welfare state, nevertheless these are still given much less




coverage than reviewing Lloyd George's failures as a war leader. Just as with the over-attention to sex, Wilkinson devotes a massively different amount of attention to Lloyd George's *War Memoirs* and his Peace Treaty volumes. Certainly, it is important to record what Lloyd George was saying about events and to show, where appropriate, the differences between his version of what went on and the accounts of others. Again, 24 pages – in a book of 225 pages – on these volumes is disproportionate and his attack would be more convincing if the author's references were accurate.

Of the issues arising during the war, the most arguable and argued has been Lloyd George's attitude to Haig and the other generals. Wilkinson is severe in saying that Lloyd George lacked the moral courage to sack generals. This would be a more reasonable point of view if he suggested any solution to the difficulties that would have occurred as a result, wholly unsupported as Lloyd George would have been by his Tory colleagues and the king. Of course, the most potent issue, as it turned out for the Liberal Party, was the Maurice debate. Wilkinson accuses Lloyd George of lying about the figures. In fact, it is not actually known whether Lloyd George saw revised figures before the debate – we merely have the interesting story of Frances and another secretary actually destroying the relevant papers some years later.

One of Lloyd's George's acknowledged skills was oratory, and we are provided with detailed illustrations of the content of some of his most significant speeches. But then we are also treated to Wilkinson's assessment of them. On a 1907 speech: 'what a performance. In its blubbery hyperbole and shameless exploitation of his audience's emotions'. While the author's disapproval of Lloyd George's infidelities and his frequent seduction of women at different levels of society may be shared by many, his disparagement of the speeches will not receive such wide support. He seems to draw a parallel here between the kind of seduction Lloyd George exercised over an audience and his seduction of women. His criticism of the famous speech in Queen's Hall at the beginning of the war is well founded (interestingly, a speech not referred to in Lloyd George's memoirs); his general disapprobation does not arouse support in this reviewer. On the Queen's Hall speech, the author's judgement is that it was 'brilliant, if you were impressed by challenging rhetoric verging on moral blackmail.' While accepting Wilkinson's judgement that the speech produces a queasiness in a reader nowadays, it would surely have been appropriate for him to record how successful the speech was, not only in the hall, but in the thousands of copies subsequently sold. Perhaps its effectiveness makes it even less praiseworthy – but an acceptance of its significance at the time is surely necessary. There is no understanding in his comments of the different context of those times – no radio, no television, so the power of direct communication was much more significant. It is indeed a relief to read these speeches again and to be excited by their content, in comparison with the flat TV sofa experiences we endure today.

There are, at several points, incomplete references: i.e. an author, but a simple statement 'page unknown'. Towards the end of the book, a number of references appear in the text but disappear entirely on the reference pages: extraordinary errors from a reputable publisher.

As with all books about Lloyd George, issues of balance, weight and significance are matters of opinion; there is quite a lot of material here which enables the reader to make his or her own decision.

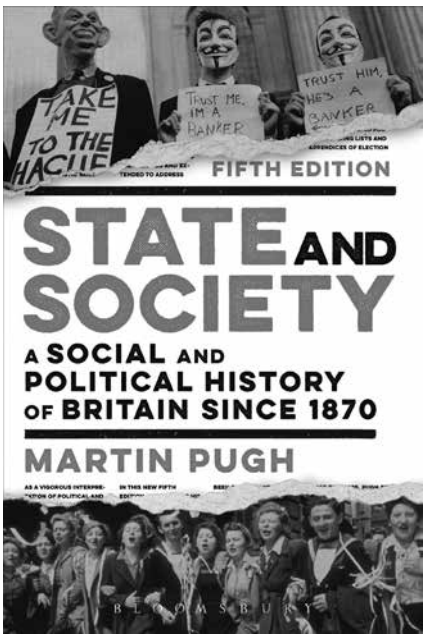
*Alan Mumford has written about Lloyd George and Churchill for this journal. His most recent book is* David Lloyd George: A Biography in Cartoons *(Troubador, 2014).*

1 T. Crosby, *The Unknown Lloyd George* (IB Taurus 2014)
2 R. Hattersley, *David Lloyd George: The Great Outsider* (Little Brown 2010)

## The long march of British history

Martin Pugh, *State and Society. A Social and Political History of Britain since 1870* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2017)
Review by **Eugenio Biagini**

Martin Pugh is one of the most widely read and influential historians of modern Britain. His books – including his study of Lloyd George, the Primrose League, the women's 'long march' to the vote, the British Union of Fascists, and *The Making of Modern British Politics* – have shaped the views of generations of students and academics on both sides of the Atlantic. The extraordinarily long shelf life of his work – through frequent reprints and new editions – is in itself a witness to their enduring significance. *State and Society* is now in its fifth edition – having first appeared in 1997. It is structured in five parts, each consisting of a variable number of chapters – with each chapter articulated in various sections devoted to a specific question in modern British history. This structure makes *State and Society* not only a pleasure to read, but also easy to use as a reference work. The titles of its five parts convey a sense of Pugh's overall interpretation: Part I is about 'The loss of confidence, 1870–1902'; Part II surveys what Pugh calls 'The Reorientation: the emergence of the interventionist State, 1902–1918'; Part III is about 'The period of confusion: collectivism versus capitalism, 1918–1940'; Part IV explores 'Consensus: the age of the benign state, 1940–1970'. Finally, Part V is about 'The era of reaction and




decline, 1970–2015', with the last section of the last chapter dealing with 'National disunity'.

Despite the 'declinist' picture suggested by these titles, *State and Society* offers an account that is far too complex and nuanced to be summarised in a formula or historiographical stereotype. For example, one important dimension of Pugh's analysis is the full integration of gender history in the course of British political and social history: and, as far as women are concerned, this was certainly not a history of 'decline'. Nor was there decline in terms of living standards, life expectancy, health care and many other aspects of everyday life. In Pugh's vision, there is tension between the ground irreversibly lost by the state in the sphere of power politics and international relations, and the practical experience of most ordinary citizens – a reminder of the extent to which imperial greatness was compatible with social misery at home, while the loss of great power status (and even the crisis of the Unions in 1916–22 and 2014) was far from a curse from most Britons.

In a short review, it is difficult to do justice to the richness of the canvass painted by Pugh, which is awe-inspiring both in its breadth and depth. Interestingly, the book starts and ends with the Liberals (or the Liberal Democrats) in office, either on their own or as part of a coalition. It also sheds light on the wider meaning and context of the tradition these parties stood and stand for. Thus, he offers a brilliant analysis of popular attitudes to the state – from laissez-faire and self-help to the Keynesian consensus. Equally relevant to Liberals is his discussion of ethnic and national tensions within the UK, and between 'native' British nationals and immigrants – with Jews and anti-Semitism at the beginning of the twentieth century receiving particular attention.

Immigration became a major political issue again a century later, when, however, Britain's Liberals were no longer in a position to contain the rise of xenophobia as they had done in 1906. And it is appropriate to conclude the present review with Pugh's assessment of the reasons behind the party's recent debacle:

> For the Liberal Democrats there was nothing inevitable about the effects of coalition; they had recently worked with Labour in three Scottish coalitions and successfully kept their vote together. However, in Scotland they had implemented progressive policies whereas the 2010 coalition meant abandoning their opposition to drastic expenditure cuts and accepting higher tuition fees and plans to expose the NHS to private companies, to which most of their supporters were opposed. This rightward shift was in fact consistent with Clegg's strategy since becoming leader: he had attempted to refashion the Liberal Democrats as a liberal Conservative party [Pugh's capitalisation] … However, the link with the Tories proved to be toxic … from April 2012 onwards he had completely lost credibility in the country … Clegg's mistaken strategy had virtually undone all the progress made since the Liberal revival of the late 1950s. (p. 493)

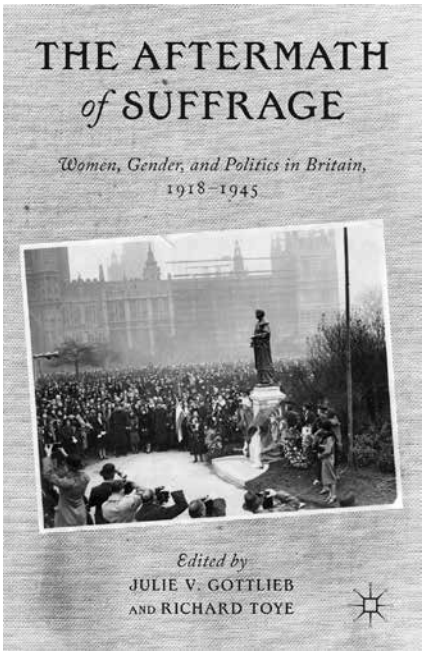
*Eugenio F. Biagini is Professor of Modern and Contemporary History at the University of Cambridge, and has written on the history of liberalism, nationalism, religion and democracy, focusing on Britain, Ireland and Italy. His most recent book is* The Cambridge Social History of Ireland *(edited with Mary Daly, 2017), and he is the general editor of the Bloomsbury Cultural History of Democracy (six volumes, 2020).*

## Women in politics

J. Gottlieb and R. Toye (eds.), *The Aftermath of Suffrage: Women, Gender, and Politics in Britain, 1918–1945* (Macmillan, 2013)
Review by **Ian Cawood**

The Representation of the People Act of 1918 had a greater impact on British politics than any other single piece of legislation since the Great Reform Act of 1832. The introduction of universal male suffrage and the extension of the franchise to most women aged 30 years and over significantly increased the parliamentary electorate, while a redistribution of constituencies increased the importance of large cities and industrial counties. Only one in four of the electorate in 1918 would have been on the electoral roll in 1910. In Birmingham, for example, the Act increased the electorate from 95,000 to 427,084 voters (165,000 of whom were women over 30). Across the whole of the west Midlands region the number of registered voters increased between 1910 and 1918 from 573, 231 to 1,581,439. Despite this transformation, the political system created by the Act of 1918 was remarkably stable, especially when compared to the rest of Europe.

While the causes of the decision to expand the franchise a hundred years ago have been long debated by historians of the First World War, historians of the suffrage movements and historians of the working class, the effects of the decision to quadruple the electorate and to remove all but the most basic residency qualifications have been largely overlooked. This excellent collection of essays, edited by Julie Gottlieb and Richard Toye aims to address this gap in the historiography of British political culture, covering issues such as the post-1918 career of Emmeline Pankhurst, the appeals to and depiction of female voters and some extremely innovative reflections on the impact of the enlarged electorate on inter-war foreign policy. The editors note, however, that the




collection is 'not exclusively concerned with women' and the crucial essays which transcend a purely gendered focus are those by Pat Thane on 'The Impact of Mass Democracy on British Political Culture' and by Richard Toye on 'The House of Commons in the Aftermath of Suffrage'.

Thane explores the development of a wider sense of citizenship, examining how the inter-war years saw a growth in non-party voluntary associations (most famously, Women's Institutes and Towns Women's Guilds). There was, Thane explains, a constant tension between these organisations and those who believed that 'good citizenship' could only be exercised through party membership. Neville Chamberlain's wife, Annie, founded Unionist Women's Institutes in Ladywood and Rotton Park in a clear attempt to hijack the growth of non-partisan women's social gatherings by giving talks on issues relevant to women over 30 and holding children's tea parties, limelight lectures and sewing parties. Neville Chamberlain was astonished when he spoke at the UWI meeting in his own constituency to find that the meeting 'seemed more like an infant welfare centre than a political gathering'. Thane seeks to remind readers of the significance of Nancy Astor in this regard, a figure whose star has fallen in feminist circles since the 1960s. Astor was hugely important in developing effective connections between the (very few) women MPs and non-partisan and party political women's organisations through a 'Consultative Committee of Women's Organisations' which ensured that the female MPs were able to voice female concerns in the Commons, despite their small numbers.

Toye's chapter refrains from drawing facile conclusions from descriptive surveys of the 'language' of inter-war politics and uses a penetrating selection of well-chosen evidence to analyse how the work of both male and female MPs was forced to adjust to the needs of an enlarged electorate. He observes that the culture of the House of Commons itself adapted to suit the new Labour and then female MPs in the years immediately after the war, but that MPs had to endure longer parliamentary sessions and to undertake more constituency work than they were used to. The Commons itself became the nation's chief political stage in the years of political transition after 1918 and, in Toye's words, 'in the aftermath of suffrage the House of Commons remained an important focus of national political life.'

A particularly groundbreaking chapter by Adrian Bingham examines how the national popular press such as the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express* enthusiastically welcomed the female voter and smoothly incorporated an appreciation of politics into their established coverage. From work on the media by Laura Beers, who also contributes a chapter to the collection, and from my own research, I am aware that this was not always replicated in the provincial media. During the 1918 campaign, for example, the *Rugby Advertiser* mocked the female voters' electoral choices, commenting that 'women's logic is perplexing' and citing a female canvasser who, when challenged, said 'don't ask me anything about politics!' even though there was an active branch of the Unionist Women's Citizens Association in the town. The failure of local newspapers to appeal to the new female voter may be an issue which explains the growing power of the London press in the inter-war years and the gradual decline of the provincial press, recently explored in Rachel Matthews' book *The History of the Provincial Press in England*. Much ink has been spilled recently on the advent of a 'national politics' between the wars, yet the success of the national media in adapting to meet the needs of a changing electorate remains significantly under-explored and Bingham's contribution is to be welcomed.

There probably needed to be some further reflection on the consequences of the extension of the suffrage for all the major parties, however. After all, historians such as Ross McKibbin have argued that the expansion of the electorate was far more significant in the sudden post-war decline of the Liberal Party than the Asquith–Liberal split or canny Unionist political manoeuvring. The Labour Party has been traditionally seen as the chief beneficiary of the expansion of the electorate by those who believe in the 'franchise factor'. But, as Michael Dawson has explained, the restriction of electoral expenses also meant that 'Labour could now afford to fight more seats than before the war, which created an insurmountable challenge for a divided and demoralised Liberal Party.' David Thackeray's chapter effectively explores the ways in which Labour managed to appeal to the female non-Conservative voter more successfully than the Liberals. However, a question not fully explored by the collection is why alternative parties such as the Women's Party, the National Democratic and Labour Party or the National Party failed to develop despite the propitious circumstances of post-war Britain. As Duncan Tanner has pointed out, 'there were no inherent sociological reasons why the newly enfranchised men should have voted solidly for Labour' and there probably needs to be more attention paid to the Labour churches, which, in certain regions, were highly effective at mobilising the radical Nonconformist voters who had been such a mainstay of the pre-war Liberal Party. However, one can too easily criticise an edited collection for what it omits rather than what it includes, and there is much evidence in this text that there is still plenty of heat left in debates on modern political history, as long as historians continue to ask such pertinent questions as they attempt to address here.

*Dr Ian Cawood is Reviews Editor of the* Journal of Liberal History *and Reader in Modern History and Head of History at Newman University in Birmingham. His books include* The Liberal Unionist Party, 1886–1912: A History *(I.B. Tauris, 2012).*

**Archive sources**

Dr J. Graham Jones describes the papers of Lord Davies of Llandinam held at the Welsh Political Archive at the National Library of Wales

# Lord Davies of Llandinam Papers

A very large archive of the papers of Lord Davies of Llandinam (1880–1944) was deposited at the National Library of Wales in 1970 and 1992, and a small group of further papers was added to the collection in July 2012. The cataloguing of the papers has been woefully intermittent, extending over several decades and undertaken by several different archivists, but the task was finally completed in 2017. This is the largest personal archive in the custody of the National Library and is now housed in 180 large archival boxes and a further 47 small boxes (a total of 5.643 cubic metres of archives).

## Biography

David Davies (1880–1944), Lord Davies from 1932, was an industrialist, eminent philanthropist and Liberal politician, and grandson and heir of his namesake David Davies, Llandinam (1818–90) (popularly known as 'Top Sawyer' in Wales). He represented Montgomeryshire as Liberal member of parliament between 1906 and 1929, and after seeing active service on the Western Front during the First World War he was appointed parliamentary private secretary to David Lloyd George in June 1916. He was close to Lloyd George during this period, but the relationship soon soured after Lloyd George became prime minister, and in 1917 he was ignominiously dismissed from his government post by an outraged Lloyd George. He never held governmental office again. He was returned unopposed in Montgomeryshire in both general elections in 1910 and again in 1918, 1922 and 1923, and the local Liberal association went into moribund decay while Davies busied himself with his industrial and philanthropic interests.

Following his experiences in the war, Davies became a fervent campaigner for international order to prevent war, leading to his establishment of the New Commonwealth Society, his personal brainchild, in 1932. The society was active in a number of countries, formulating and promoting ideas for an international authority, police and air force to keep the peace until the late 1940s. Davies was also a leading figure in the fight against tuberculosis in Wales as an officer and funder of the King Edward VII Welsh National Memorial Association in 1910, and through endowing a Chair in Tuberculosis at the Welsh National School of Medicine at Cardiff. His two spinster sisters, Gwendoline Elizabeth and Mary Sidney, donated Gregynog Hall near Newtown to the University of Wales and a magnificent art collection to the National Museum at Cardiff.

Lord Davies awaits his modern biographer. A few years after his death, c. 1953, a typescript biography was prepared in all probability by Sir Charles Tennyson (now designated E2/1/21 within this collection). This has been digitised by the Library and may be viewed via the NLW web pages at https://viewer.library.wales/4683286#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0&xywh=-1099%2C-297%2C5720%2C5933.

## Description of collection

The papers of David Davies, the first Baron Davies of Llandinam (1880–1944), along with papers of other members of the Davies family, his grandfather David Davies (1818–1890); his father Edward Davies (1852–1898); Revd. Gwilym Davies (1879–1955); Lord Davies's two younger sisters Gwendoline Elizabeth Davies (1882–1951) and Mary Sidney Davies (1884–1963). The papers reflect Lord Davies varied business and political interests and include a very large corpus of the records of the New Commonwealth Society, papers relating to the League of Nations Union Welsh National Council, the first and second world wars, the Temple of Peace at Cardiff, the King Edward VII Welsh National Memorial Institute, the National Library of Wales, the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show, the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, Davies's coal and railway interests, international affairs, drafts and copies of Davies's publications mainly on international relations, papers of the David Davies Memorial Institute, and papers relating to the Gregynog Press.

The collection has been divided into thirteen sub-sections while cataloguing.

**Class A: David Davies: General and Political Correspondence, 1901–50 (13 boxes)**

Comprises letters to David Davies, from 1932 the first Baron Davies of Llandinam, 1901–44, mainly on domestic political matters and international issues. Some of the early letters are from David Davies while he travelled extensively abroad, 1901–5. From 1932 onwards some concern the affairs and the running of the New Commonwealth Society set up by Davies himself in that year, mainly the proceedings of its British Section, and these overlap the papers listed in Class B. Some letters also relate to Davies's researches and many publications in the form of monographs and journal articles. There are also references to the role and activities of the League of Nations Union and to the publication of the influential Welsh periodical the *Welsh Outlook*. There are also significant files of copies of letters sent out by Davies's various secretaries on a wide range of subjects. The group also comprises correspondence and papers, 1916–43, relating mainly to the Montgomeryshire County Liberal Association and political life within the county, including the circumstances leading to David Davies's decision to retire from parliament in 1926–27. There are, too, some interesting memoranda, 1918–44, deriving from the Liberal Party nationally during a crucial period in its history. There is also correspondence and papers, 1945–50, concerning E. H. Garner-Evans MP.

**Class B: Peace Movements and International Affairs, 1917–56 (106 boxes)**

Records relating to various peace movements. They include correspondence and papers, 1920–34, relating to the

establishment of the League of Nations Union (Wales) and its development up to 1934; various memoranda and policy documents, the minutes of various committees and sub-committees, papers concerning the organisation of conferences and meetings, monthly reports, and lists of local branches, their officials and their activities; correspondence, printed material (including some press cuttings), 1935–44, relating to the work and activities of the League of Nations Union (Wales), especially its council; correspondence and papers, 1917–49, concerning the New Europe Society, League of Free Nations, and the League of Nations Union; various papers, 1937–54, relating to the League of Nations Union and similar bodies and organisations, including the agenda and minutes of its Welsh National Council, and various committees and sub-committees, memoranda and reports, circulars and circular correspondence, and newsletters; documents, 1922–39, concerning the background to the establishment of the New Commonwealth Society, its administrative records, 1932–56, related papers and memoranda, 1929–56, extensive files of correspondence concerning its administration, activities, especially its expansion abroad, 1932–54; documents relating to early atomic energy initiatives, 1945–48; correspondence and papers, 1942–51, relating to the various campaigns to secure federalist solutions and a system of world government, together with some New Commonwealth publications.

**Class C: The World Wars, 1914–44 (6 boxes)**
Correspondence and papers relating to various aspects of the First World War and the Second World War. Most of the papers here relate to the First World War, but there is some material related to the Second World War as well. Despite being an ardent advocate for peace, Lord Davies did all he could to support the war effort from 1939 – there are files related to the use of Plas Dinam as a war hospital, the supply of water for industry, support for Finland (in the early stages of the war when Finland was fighting the Soviet Union) and proposals drawn up by Lord Davies to bomb the Romanian oil fields.

**Class D: Welsh Affairs, 1905–51 (25 boxes)**
Correspondence and papers, 1905–51, relating to many aspects of Welsh life and Welsh institutions with which Lord Davies was actively involved. These include the Presbyterian Church in Wales, the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth (especially the Wilson chair of International Politics at the college established in 1919), the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show, the National Library of Wales, and the Temple of Peace at Cathays Park, Cardiff. In the 'Welsh Affairs' group of papers there are also many boxes of material related to the King Edward VII Welsh National Memorial Association, which Lord Davies and his sisters founded in 1910 to treat and research TB.

**Class E: Davies Family of Llandinam: Family and Personal Papers, 1788–1954 (15 boxes)**
Documents, 1859–1910, mainly relating to David Davies, Llandinam (1818–90), commonly known as 'Top Sawyer', his son Edward Davies, Llandinam (1852–98); Margaret (1884–1963) and Gwendoline Davies (1882–1951); and source materials, 1863–1935, collected for the preparation of a biography of David Davies (1818–90), a draft biography prepared, c. 1900–10, by Goronwy Jones; and correspondence and papers relating to the preparation and publication of the biography by Ivor Thomas in 1937; files of papers, 1906–53, relating to David Davies, Baron Davies of Llandinam (1880–1944), and his immediate family; and correspondence and papers, 1922–37, concerning the administration of Merchiston Castle School, near Edinburgh; and correspondence and papers, 1944–54, concerning the Davies family of Llandinam, much of it relating to Edward Davies, son of Lord and Lady Davies; miscellaneous business, financial and legal papers concerning the Davies family of Llandinam, 1934–54, some relating to the Berthddu estate, near Wrexham, and the Coulin estate in Scotland; and miscellaneous Davies family records.

**Class F: Business, Finance and Industry, 1904–59 (12 boxes)**
Correspondence, papers and financial and promotional material, 1904–59, relating to the wide range of business and industrial interests with which Lord Davies or the Davies family were associated. These include the Gregynog Estates, the Ocean Coal Company, various property and commercial interests, and Canadian ranches and business interests.

**Class G: David Davies's Publications, Articles and Speeches, 1928–45 (18 boxes)**
Comprises papers concerning Lord Davies's writings – monographs, articles and essays, press columns and letters to the press, and to his speeches.

**Class H: Lord Davies: Subject Files, 1918–46 (6 boxes)**
Subject files, 1918–46, reflecting Lord Davies's interests and commitments, mainly international movements and affairs and foreign travels. Among the institutions represented are the Royal Institute of International Affairs, the Voluntary International Air Force, the International Refugee Organisation, the United Nations: General Assembly, the United Nations Organisation, the World Movement for World Federal Government, the Atomic Energy Committee, the European Movement and the Council of Europe, and the British Atlantic Committee.

**Class I: David Davies: Notebooks and Pocket Books, 1892–1944 (4 boxes)**
Notebooks and miscellaneous volumes kept by David Davies while at Merchiston School, near Edinburgh and at Trinity College, Cambridge University, and during World War One, notebooks containing notes made by David Davies in preparation for various speeches and writings, and miscellaneous, stray volumes.

**Class J: Rev. Gwilym Davies Papers, 1915–52 (4 boxes)**
Papers relating to the Revd. Gwilym Davies (1879–1955), Baptist minister, promoter of international understanding, and the founder of the annual Goodwill Message from the Youth of Wales. They include correspondence, sermon and lecture notes, documentation relating to the League of Nations, the League of Nations Union and various other peace initiatives, the Welsh Book Festival, radio broadcasting in Wales, a pocket diary for the year 1934, printed material and press cuttings, and a substantial corpus of papers concerning the Annual Goodwill Message, 1922–56.

**Class K: David Davies Memorial Institute, 1947–60 (2 boxes)**
This class includes correspondence, 1947–54, and correspondence and financial papers, 1958–60. The papers relate to membership of the Institute and the

payment of subscriptions, the publication and despatch of its journal *International Relations*, and the publication and sale of books.

**Class L: Printed Material, 1917–57 (17 boxes)**
Comprises printed materials and press cuttings. The printed materials include a wide range of leaflets, pamphlets etc., 1917–57, many of these concerning the activities of peace movements and peace initiatives, including some of the publications of the New Commonwealth Society. Some of the material reflects various aspects of Welsh life. The press cuttings, 1918–51, comprise newspaper articles, mostly regarding international affairs, the build up to the Second World War, policies of the New Commonwealth Society, post-war international issues, the United Nations, the Cold War and the Marshall Plan.

**Class M: Gregynog Press, 1929–62 (1 box)**
Printed material from the Gregynog Press for events held at Gregynog including the Gregynog Festival, conferences and religious services. The material relating to the Gregynog Festival (M1) is arranged into three files: festival programmes, concert programmes and orders of service. M2 comprises files containing Orders of Services for religious services held at Gregynog as part of various conferences and meetings.

The Lord Davies Papers are not subject to any restriction of access.

## Reading matter on Lord Davies

The fullest biographical account hitherto available in print is J. Graham Jones, 'The Peacemaker: David Davies, Lord Davies of Llandinam (1880–1944)', *Montgomeryshire Collections*, vol. 101 (2013), pp. 117–148. A briefer overview of his life and career is also available in J. Graham Jones, 'The Peacemonger: David Davies, the first Baron Davies of Llandinam (1880–1944)', *Journal of Liberal Democrat History*, no. 29 (Winter 2000/2001), pp. 16–23. An excellent summary may also be found in Lord Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Davies, David, first Baron Davies (1880–1944)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* on-line version (accessed 17 November 2018). Still useful, though now somewhat dated, is Peter Lewis, *David Davies (Top-sawyer) 1818–1890 and his Grandson David Davies (1st Baron Davies) 1880–1944: A Biographical Sketch* (Llanidloes, 2007 reprint).

My friend and former colleague Mr Rob Phillips, who is now responsible for the running of the Welsh Political Archive at the National Library of Wales, delivered a very fine lecture at the NLW on 6 June 2018 entitled 'Lord David Davies: the Peacemonger' which provided a quite splendid overview of the Davies archive at the NLW. Mr Phillips has very kindly placed the text of his keynote lecture at my disposal and I am most indebted to it for several most valuable points of detail.

## Contact details

National Library of Wales, Penglais Hill, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, SY23 3BU. Replies are sent to postal enquiries within ten working days.

Telephone: 01970 632933 (9.30–17.00)
Email: enquiry@llgc.org.uk

*Dr J. Graham Jones was formerly Senior Archivist and Head of the Welsh Political Archive at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth and is also Archive Sources Editor for the* Journal of Liberal History.

# Letters to the Editor

## Liberals in local government

Mark Smulian's letter on the origins of *Focus* newsletters (*Journal of Liberal History* 99, Summer 2018) triggered my own memories of Southend. He suggests that Prittlewell ward Liberals there had circulated a local newsletter as early as 1962 and speculates that Prittlewell's David Evans, later on a well-known figure in the party, may have played some part in spreading the idea.

I joined the Liberal Party in early 1958, amidst a run of encouraging by-election votes (including Mark Bonham Carter's victory in Torrington). But between Summer 1958 and the October 1959 general election, the party fought only one in England (Scottish ones were too far away), in Southend West on a smog-blanketed day at the end of January 1959.

Having just left school, I was able to travel to what was my first experience both of an election campaign and of meeting Liberals outside my own local patch. On polling day, I was stationed in Prittlewell, learning what to do from a young Councillor David Evans. I was the more attentive as Southend was one of few boroughs where Liberals had recently gained representation on the council, and one of the largest of those few. How did they do it?

I came away, immensely impressed with the successful Prittlewell election machine, though I do not now recall a regular newsletter as part of it. But I suspect that I was among many English Liberals who came to Southend in 1959, taking home campaigning ideas to put into practice at home.

*Michael Steed*

## Liberal Party Council

I don't wish to prolong the correspondence (see Letters, *Journal of Liberal History* 99 (Summer 2018) and 100 (Autumn 2018)) but I must assure John Smithson that my reference to the 'chaotic' Liberal Party council had nothing to do with his contributions. I agree we often disagreed but I still respected his contributions.

No, what I had in mind was watching on TV the sight of Baroness Seear and other luminaries weaving their way past empty beer barrels to get into some student union which had been chosen for the Saturday meeting, and another occasion when I was present and a member of the council decided to do a dance on the floor – it was difficult to take the body seriously.

*David Steel*

A Liberal Democrat History Group evening meeting

# The Peterloo Massacre and Nineteenth-Century Popular Radicalism

On 16 August 1819, 60,000 peaceful protesters gathered on St Peter's Fields in Manchester to demand the right to elect their own MPs. The demonstration ended when local militia on horseback charged the protesters and cut them down with sabres, leaving at least eleven dead and hundreds injured. The episode became known as 'The Peterloo Massacre'. Lord Liverpool's ministry then cracked down on protests and dissent through the 'Six Acts', which stifled calls for reform.

Join **Dr Robert Poole** (University of Central Lancashire) and **Dr Jacqueline Riding** (Birkbeck, University of London) to discuss the importance and legacy of the Peterloo Massacre, particularly for the Whigs and their aspirations for parliamentary reform.

**6.30pm, Tuesday 16 July**
Committee Room 4A, House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW

### Writing About Paddy

*continued from page 19*

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3 Matta Busby, 'Political figures celebrate Paddy Ashdown's energy, bravery and humour', *The Guardian*, 24 Dec. 2018.
4 https://institute.global/news/tony-blairs-tribute-paddy-ashdown
5 Tom Nellist, 'Former Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown dies aged 77', *Daily Express*, 23 Dec. 2019
6 Andrew Gilligan and Tony Grew, 'Paddy Ashdown – the peacemaking liberal who could kill you with his hands', *Sunday Times*, 23 Dec. 2018
7 https://www.christiantoday.com/article/archbishop-of-canterbury-pays-tribute-to-paddy-ashdown/131306.htm
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11 Stephen Bates, 'Paddy Ashdown obituary', *The Guardian,* 22 Dec. 2018
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 'Lord Ashdown of Norton-sub-Hamdon obituary', *The Times*, 23 Dec. 2018.
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16 *The Guardian*, 'Paddy Ashdown obituary'.
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22 Busby, 'Political figures celebrate Paddy Ashdown'.
23 https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2018/12/paddy-ashdown-leaves-behind-legacy-profound-decency-and-kindness-0
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25 *The Times*, 'Lord Ashdown obituary'.
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31 Ibid.
32 *The Times*, 'Lord Ashdown obituary'.
33 *The Telegraph*, 'Lord Ashdown obituary'.
34 Mance and Parker, 'Paddy Ashdown, politician 1941–2018'.
35 *The Times*, 'Lord Ashdown obituary'.
36 Ibid.
37 Valerie Hopkins, ' "He put Bosnia back together": Paddy Ashdown's efforts in war-torn country hailed', *Financial Times*, 23 Dec. 2018.
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40 *The Telegraph*, Lord Ashdown obituary'.
41 https://www.somersetlive.co.uk/news/somerset-news/a-deeply-loyal-friend-loving-2399914
42 Miranda Green, 'Paddy Ashdown: a tribute to Britain's irrepressible internationalist', *Financial Times*, 22 Dec. 2018.
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