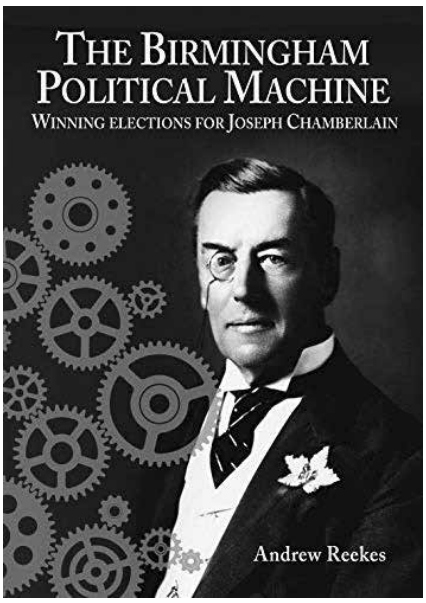

Chamberlain, his Liberal Unionism, which was influenced by the ideal of the Civic Gospel. The strength of Liberal Unionism in Birmingham, and in the West Midlands more broadly, was a direct result of the political machinery forged by Chamberlain and his allies. A question that Reekes wishes to resolve is how this group of politicians achieved long-lasting success.

The book is organised chronologically with each chapter charting a specific phase in the group's development. Whilst Joseph Chamberlain is the central figure, he shares the stage with other important personalities. For instance, each chapter concludes with a biography of key individuals who were crucial to a certain era of the organisation. The first chapter provides the context. Here we see the influences on the Machine from Thomas Attwood and Joseph Sturge, to John Bright and George Dawson. With the assistance of William Harris and Jesse Collins, Chamberlain would build on the political structures that had been present in Birmingham. Following this we have Chamberlain's fight for education reform via the National Education League. Here lies the importance of Nonconformity in the character of Birmingham's politics as he fought against the Forsters proposal which favoured Anglican schools. Chapters 3 and 4 deal with the Machine's capture of the Birmingham School Board and the development of municipal politics respectively. The next two chapters focus on the Machine's application on a national level through the National Liberal Federation and the Home Rule Crisis. Interestingly, both highlight the Machine's appeal to other political parties as Conservatives began to emulate the Birmingham group (p. 111). The final chapter discusses the Machine's work on Tariff Reform. Here Reekes explores the ways in which the Birmingham Machine utilised printed material and appealed to women through the Women's Unionist Association (p. 167). Reekes concludes by noting how the Machine continued to fashion electoral successes up to 1945.

The arguments made in this study have similarities to E. P Hennock's *Fit and Proper Persons*, and Anne Rodrick's *Self-Help and Civic Culture*. Both acknowledge the importance of this group of politicians in directing the development of municipal politics in late nineteenth-century Birmingham. However, Reekes delves slightly deeper by detailing the contributions of certain individuals during specific phases of the Machine's development. There are instances, admittedly a minority, where personal relationships are shown to be rather more tense. The first example is the problematic relationship between Joseph and Arthur Chamberlain over the issue of tariff reform. The second instance can be found in the biography of William Harris who supported Gladstone after the 1886 Home Rule Crisis. These demonstrated how big political issues could have major consequences for the Machine.

This work is part of an impressive research output that includes *Speeches That Changed Britain* (2015) along with *Two Titans, One City* (2016). However, it is inevitable for minor errors to occur. For instance, on page 19 he refers to George Dixon's attempts as mayor of Birmingham to calm the 'Catholic riots' of 1867. This is a reference to the Murphy Riots whose leader, William Murphy, was a Nonconformist preacher. This unrest was directed against the Catholic population, and therefore the terminology may be misleading. Furthermore, on page 126 he writes that Mrs George Dixon had been a key part of the Birmingham Women's Liberal Unionist Association, formed in October 1888. However, records demonstrate that her death occurred three years before the founding of this organisation.

Regardless, this is a fascinating contribution to our understanding of electoral machinery. The continued legacy of Joseph Chamberlain, as demonstrated by references made by modern politicians, demonstrates the relevance of this Machine. Reekes expands our understanding of the key figures and influences of Joseph Chamberlain's career. These underpinned his political success and saw great transformations within Birmingham's municipal politics. The arguments presented are accompanied by a number of colour illustrations drawn predominantly from archives in Birmingham, such as the Cadbury Research Library. These are a great addition and add to a work that will appeal to both general and specialist readers.

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Liberalism in world history

Helena Rosenblatt, *The Lost History of Liberalism: From Ancient Rome to the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton University Press, 2018)
Review by **Alex Tebble**

What we assume liberalism to mean can often obscure more than it clarifies. From the crudest individualism to the most intrusive collectivism, many 'true' liberalisms are distinguished from some ill-fated perversion or façade. It is an omnipresent term used not only to describe a variety of incompatible and incommensurable meanings, but also to both revere and revile those meanings with equal ferocity: 'it's morally lax and hedonistic, if not racist, sexist, and imperialist', and yet responsible for a great deal that is politically valuable within 'our ideas of fairness, social justice, freedom, and equality' (p. 1).

The Lost History of Liberalism aims to illuminate what the word meant to those who originally used the term and gives an account of how those meanings have evolved through a 'world history' of its

uses from ancient Rome to the twenty-first century – an ambitious scope for a relatively short book. Helena Rosenblatt suggests 'we are muddled by what we mean by liberalism', and that we frequently 'talk past each other, precluding any possibility of reasonable debate'. To provide some clarity and grounding, Rosenblatt aims to neither attack nor defend liberalism, 'but to ascertain its meaning and trace its transformation over time' (pp. 1–2).

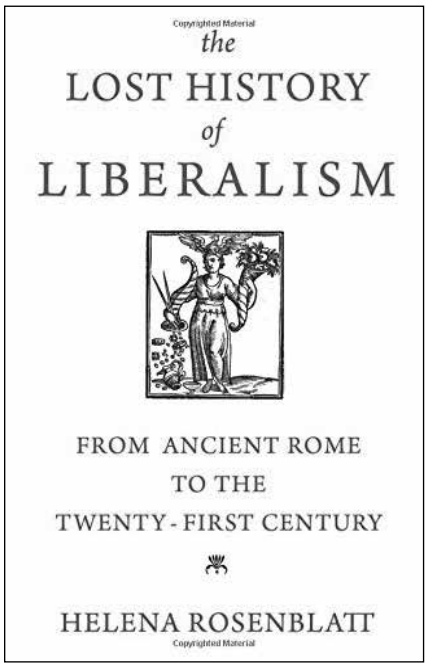
Rosenblatt begins with what it meant to be liberal. Demonstrating 'the virtues of a citizen, showing devotion to the common good, and respecting the importance of mutual connectedness' were indicative of the term. Both duty and self-discipline were necessary requirements for the moral fortitude of a liberal character (pp. 8–9). From the aristocratic ethos of Cicero and Seneca, we are taken on a swift tour of the Christianisation, democratisation and politicisation of liberal virtue. From St Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, to the Spanish and Italian renaissance humanists to Machiavelli, Montaigne, John Donne, the Earl of Shaftesbury, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Adam Ferguson and Adam Smith, we find an overview of the evolution of what it meant to be a liberal citizen in terms of virtue, education and civility. The familiar liberal hero John Locke is briefly mentioned, but only in relation to the meaning of a liberal education, rather than the innate right of individuals to pursue their life and liberty as they see fit with which his name came to be associated. As a pre-history of liberalism, 'by the mid-seventeenth century Europeans had been calling liberality a necessary virtue for more than two thousand years. If ever there was a liberal tradition this was it' (p. 19).

The Lost History not only gives an account of the different meanings that have been ascribed to liberalism and evoked in its uses, but recovers some of those meanings that have been eclipsed, distorted and eroded. Rosenblatt intends to steer clear of historical anachronism, the common pitfall made by those who 'stipulate a personal definition' and shape the past through the lens of the present by 'construct[ing] a history that supports it' (pp. 2–3). Rather than the Anglo-American tradition that has come to be indicative of the term, Rosenblatt turns our attention away from this twentieth-century construction primarily toward the Franco-Prussian origins of liberalism: in nineteenth-century French and German reflections on the American and French Revolutions. Here we find a liberalism of a different hue. Rather than an atomistic individualism concerned with the rights and interests of those individuals, we find liberals concerned with social justice, civic values and the moral development of communities. Where rights were spoken of, they went hand in hand with duties – often as a prerequisite for rights. These liberals were not free-market fundamentalists, but self-avowed moralists.

The bulk of the book explores how liberal ideals came to be distinguished from – but not wholly separate to – a tradition of liberal virtue. Rosenblatt emphasises the key roles played by Marquis de Lafayette, Madame de Staël and Benjamin Constant in setting out influential articulations of liberal ideas, sentiments and constitutions. Liberalism, on this account, was 'forged in an effort to safeguard the achievements of the French Revolution and to protect them from the forces of extremism' – against accusations of illiberalism from Edmund Burke – by prioritising the rule of law, personal freedoms and public morality (pp. 52, 66). These were fundamental to liberalism as a wider political and moral doctrine.

As Rosenblatt has previously explored, Constant's liberalism held a close relationship to religion and an ambivalent one to democracy – a reversal of the relationships we might have come to expect. Early liberals were keen to avoid too close ties to a volatile force that threatened to undermine public morality and the political institutions necessary for upholding the personal freedom required for such moral development. The book then follows liberalism's continental contortions as liberals tried to restate and distinguish their views following the 1848 revolutions and the rise of socialism. Liberals often committed to more collectivist and interventionist ideals – never wholly nor uniformly committing to laissez-faire – in an effort to cultivate the moral character of the majority. This, however, partly led to the darker sides of liberalism in the elitist, imperialist and eugenic territory which some of its key figures tread.

In an interesting and informative read, the book covers an impressive scope of material. Whilst at times, due to its relative shortness, the book cannot always fully illuminate why liberalism held a particular meaning at one moment for an orator – to see things their way,



to borrow Quentin Skinner's phrase – or the tensions and ambiguities within these, it nonetheless maps a clear range of meanings that liberalism historically held, showing the gaps between what these proto-liberals might have meant and what we assume liberalism to mean.

Rosenblatt then briefly turns to how this history was lost. Whilst the meaning of liberalism continued to be hotly contested, its grounding became no longer associated with its French and German heritage. Between two World Wars, Carl Schmitt, Hannah Arendt, John Dewey, Isaiah Berlin and Friedrich Hayek contributed towards purging liberalism of connotations of duty, patriotism and self-sacrifice – gladly, for some liberals, in the context of the totalitarian threat. This shifted liberalism toward a more individualistic and rights-orientated framework with a British heritage, in contradistinction to a now supposed French and German illiberalism. But out with the bathwater went generosity, virtue, the common good, the state as a promoter of that common good and a communal ethical life. Rosenblatt ends by suggesting our task is one of reconnecting with and finding conviction in the resources of this lost liberal tradition.

Across the twentieth century, many liberals articulated a distinct set of meanings, values, practices and prescriptions under the moniker of liberalism, claiming to be the true heirs of a liberal heritage with an accompanying list of genealogical heroes and villains, prophets and charlatans. The strength of the book is in challenging some of the

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presuppositions regarding where to look when embarking on this endeavour and revealing some of the historical depths of why we have become muddled with these assumptions. Which liberalism has greater claims to rule the present is often unclear, premised on what is perceived to be threatened and receding from view. The problem is that some histories are irretrievably lost and some are more complex than the stories we tell as we try to piece a tradition from fragments, given the shifting and incompatible definitions and accounts of liberalism's history. Liberalism has perhaps always been an elusive tradition.

Alex Tebble is a PhD student in Politics at the University of York; the title of his research is 'On the Genealogy of Liberalism'. This review was originally published on the LSE Review of Books blog at: https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks/2019/01/04/book-review-the-lost-history-of-liberalism-from-ancient-rome-to-the-twenty-first-century-by-helena-rosenblatt/.

How the Liberal Party in Eastleigh grew in the 1970s

Martin Kyrle, *The Liberals in Hampshire – a Part(l)y History: Part 3 Eastleigh 1972–81: The thorn in the flesh bursts into flower* (Sarsen Press, 2017)

Review by **Mark Pack**

Following on from his two previous volumes, Martin Kyrle's latest foray takes the story of the Liberal Party in his part of Hampshire through to the years of growing political success.

Kyrle's volumes add vital colour to the political historical record, featuring the sort of detail of politics at the grassroots that is vital for understanding how the overall political system really works, but which is often not preserved in the historical record. Even the leaders of local councils, let alone the charismatic first councillor from a party or their demon-organising election agent, frequently leave very little trace behind in conventional records, and although social media means there is more data for future historians to mine, the decline of local media coverage cuts the other way. Obscurity continues to beckon for the personalities who played a key role in shaping the long-term politics of communities. Unless, that is, local histories such as this one preserve them.

But it is not only the people who tend to be forgotten. So, too, the developments in electoral tactics that tell a broader picture about how the operation of elections was changing in the eyes of voters.

The shift from politicians only doing much to contact voters at election time to (outside of safe seats) having to be active all year round has been a major alteration in how politicians spend their time and how voters interact with politicians. It is also a shift that gets only little attention, and even less detail, in more general political histories. It is only local histories such as Martin Kyrle's and *A Flagship Borough: 25 Years of a Liberal Democrat Sutton Council* which help record and explain this shift in a way that many grander political histories from professors completely miss.

This volume of Kyrle's is more a scrapbook of useful information for other historians and interested political activists than a conventional history in its own right. The book is dominated by appendices full of past election leaflets (often reproduced in colour), election results, and other scraps of information (including how the Conservatives ended up paying his election expenses in one general election). There are plenty of names and events here to be enjoyed by those whose memories stretch back to some of these times, and also plenty for future historians to make good use of. There is rather less of the prose retelling of events than in earlier volumes, but the wealth of detail provided by the leaflets and other information means the story is still clearly there to be send, enjoyed and learnt from.

Dr Mark Pack worked at Liberal Democrat HQ from 2000 to 2009, and prior to that was frequently a volunteer member of the parliamentary by-election team. He is co-author of 101 Ways To Win An Election.