

they were regarded by their Unionist opponents as revolutionaries and traitors, who had made a corrupt bargain with the ‘disloyal’ Irish in order to retain power.

Yet home rule was less than popular with British voters. After it was adopted as party policy in 1886, the Liberals suffered a series of defeats, and only managed to win an outright parliamentary majority again in 1906 after repudiating any intention to introduce home rule in the subsequent parliament. It only became a live question again after the 1910 elections left the Irish parliamentary party holding the balance of power. But it was still an electoral liability and the Unionists had a point in arguing that it lacked a proper electoral mandate. As the home rule crisis approached its climax, the Unionists won a series of by-elections, culminating in a significant victory at Ipswich, after a campaign in which home rule had featured prominently. Curiously, Dr Doherty does not seem to have read Daniel M. Jackson’s important study *Popular opposition to Irish Home Rule in Edwardian Britain* (Liverpool University Press, 2009), which highlights the extent of the anti-home rule campaign in Britain, and which would have given him a clearer idea of what Asquith and his colleagues were up against.

The government was pushing an unpopular policy through parliament. Not only were the opposition party questioning its mandate to do so, they were attempting to persuade the king to refuse royal assent for the legislation. In addition, there was the threat of armed resistance in Ulster with the army unwilling to coerce Ulster loyalists into coming under the jurisdiction of a Dublin parliament. No wonder Asquith and his colleagues sought a compromise that would exclude all or parts of Ulster from home rule. Dr Doherty presents evidence that ultimately the Unionists would have backed down rather than risk violent conflict in Ireland, and he may be right. But that would have been an enormous risk for any government to countenance being responsible for the outbreak of civil war. In this case, it was all the more dangerous as lack

of patriotism was an accusation that Unionists levelled at the Liberal Party.

None of which is to suggest that the Liberal government’s handling of the home rule crisis is above criticism. Asquith had his faults as a statesman, among which Dr Doherty correctly diagnoses a tendency to avoid personal confrontation, to triangulate around difficult issues and to blow with the prevailing wind. But he and his colleagues had grappled with major political challenges up to and including the home rule crisis. By the summer of

1914, they were close to enacting Irish home rule, the heroic cause that the party’s great leader William Gladstone had been unable to deliver. This would have been a better book if the author had engaged with this reality rather than treating Asquith and his ministers as pantomime villains.

Iain Sharpe is an administrator at London University. His PhD thesis was a study of the career of Herbert Gladstone as Liberal chief whip.

Hampshire Liberals

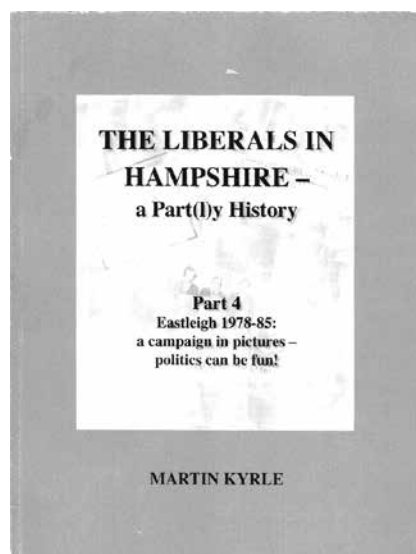
Martine Kyrle, *Liberals in Hampshire: a part(l)y history, Part 4, Eastleigh 1978–85* (Sarsen Press, 2020)

Review by Gianni Sarra

THIS BOOK IS the latest in a series tracking the development of local Hampshire politics – including sagas such as protecting historic buildings and protesting new developments. Martin Kyrle, a long-time liberal activist and former borough councillor, has a unique perspective on the history of the Liberal Party and how, over the decades, they established themselves as an electoral force in Eastleigh. After setbacks, this particular period of time begins with only one Liberal councillor – Margaret Kyrle, the author’s wife – on the borough council; but others soon join her, with Margaret Kyrle ultimately becoming the borough’s first Liberal mayor. This story is told through a focus on the **AD LIB** quarterly broadsheet newspaper, tracking a form of literature that is now relegated to the past. Funded by advertisements, it was a vital part of how the Eastleigh Liberals came to achieve prominence.

The **AD LIB** quarterlies contained many features familiar to anyone who’s seen modern political literature: introductions to political candidates, updates on campaigns, opinion pieces on local and national developments. It wore its political affiliation on its sleeve and made no pretence otherwise: when

Martin Kyrle won election to a council seat, he recalls how the next issue published carried the headline ‘Editor elected!’ As a result, it does serve, too, as a history of sorts of the Liberal Party at large, though from a more grassroots perspective than most party histories. **AD LIB** was a useful way of both laying out Liberal opinions and describing Liberal campaigns. European integration, rising environmental movements, voting reform, and the emergence of the SDP and the Alliance are just some of the issues explored from the often-neglected local



perspective. The book thus provides an interesting, albeit often fleeting, look at how Liberal policy and philosophy has developed, or stayed constant, over time.

AD LIB was very much a local newspaper, though. In the author's words, it was intended to be 'of wide general interest', and they consciously wanted to avoid becoming 'a party mouthpiece, and far less a party fog-horn'. The differences from modern political marketing are stark as a result. There were letters to the editor, joke and caption competitions, and satirical cartoons lampooning the decisions of

Eastleigh's Conservatives – and these contests and cartoons are all reprinted. Articles were in depth, going into issues with a complexity and a detached journalistic rigour that would be anathema in the shorter, snappier format favoured by most political marketing these days, touching on topics such as local history and international development.

The issues being discussed and references being made are explained well – it's to the author's credit that those unfamiliar with the intricacies of the era's politics and popular culture can follow along. The work is quick to read

and easy to follow as a result. It's also of immense benefit that the reasoning behind each new feature is explained in detail – something you couldn't just get from flipping through an uncurated archive.

The newspapers were heavy on local advertising too, the reliability of the delivery network and the large print runs making the **AD LIB** an appealing marketing tool for local businesses. As Mark Pack points out in the foreword, this style of literature 'has come and gone'. I was left curious, however, about the advertising side of the equation – how adverts were chosen, what

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.*

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.*

Anarchism and Liberalism 1880–1980

Some anarchists were successfully influential in liberal networks, starting with many New Liberal networks around the beginning of the 20th Century. My thesis focuses on this earlier period but I am interested in anarchist influences on liberalism throughout the twentieth century. If any readers can help with informing me of their own personal experiences of anarchist ideas or works in liberal networks or relevant historical information they might have I would greatly appreciate it. *Shaun Pitt; shaunjpitt@gmail.com.*